

Anti-Semitism in 2010

BY RABBI HANOCH HECHT

Last week, I was walking in Manhattan, going from one meeting to the next, when I heard a voice say the words “dirty Jew” at me. As I turn around to see who had said them, I was slightly surprised to see a young Caucasian boy of about 11 or 12 years of age. What’s even more astonishing is that his mother was standing right behind him, apparently not caring about what her son was saying, nor rebuking him in any way or even apologizing to me on his behalf.

Living in the 21st century, where it is all about equality and tolerance, about acceptance and love for a fellow human being, no matter their age, race, religion, background or anything else that might make them different from you, had me mistakenly thinking the world is improving.

The fact that this mother let her son say what he said without reprimanding him makes me wonder what this new generation is being taught. When an 11-year-old boy has no clue about tolerance and respect and thinks that calling someone “dirty Jew” is

acceptable or even cool, I think it is safe to say that we are in big trouble.

Anti-Semitism alone isn’t the only problem, albeit quite a significant one. In truth, and simply put, it is the lack of acceptance of another human being for whatever reason. These reasons are unjustified and irrelevant. No matter what our differences may or may not be, and at the risk of sounding too idealistic, we can and must overlook them for the sake of living in peace.

Being a sixth-generation American, my family has had the pleasure and honor of living in this blessed country for the past 130 years. I sincerely look forward to continuing to reside in this great nation, happily and peacefully.

Therefore, it is the job of parents everywhere to educate their children to become accepting and respecting individuals. We must teach our youth how to love and care for a fellow human being, for the country they live in and the planet they live on. We must instruct our future leaders and world inhabitants how to live in harmony among one another. It is the only way to survive.

Rabbi Hanoch Hecht is director of the Rhinebeck Jewish Center.

Ask not what your town can do for you

BY CATHERINE FORBES

Look around Hyde Park. Where you see fresh trees planted, crisp signs welcoming you to our town, or restored stone walls, chances are volunteers helped make it happen. From leading Scout troops to caring for homeless animals to delivering Meals on Wheels, Hyde Parkers’ volunteer spirit just keeps on giving. Our town may be renowned for its famous inhabitants and historic homes, but equally remarkable is the wealth of ordinary people who give their time to make an extraordinary difference for their neighbors.

Early in his administration, President Barack Obama asked Americans to “stand up and play your part.” To support his call for volunteers, he signed the Serve America Act, expanding the opportunities for Americans to serve their local communities. Building on these themes, the Town of Hyde Park Democratic Committee has taken 2010 to celebrate service to the community.

This year, volunteers and elected leaders were feted at our annual May dinner, where County Legislator Dan Kuffner was recognized for his lifetime of service to the people of Hyde Park. The committee celebrated service by marching in the Memorial Day parade and did so again for our Fourth of July parade that featured a theme of civic engagement. Throughout 2010, we are focused on helping residents stay connected to local government and find roles in our community that help us build a better Hyde Park.

Some of the service done by committee members aligns with our shared political agenda. Members are working to ensure the police have the new building voters

wanted them to have. They volunteer to help preserve Hyde Park’s natural resources and to support the concept of a strong town center. They work to provide recreational activities for seniors and youth and they work to help all Americans have access to quality health care and public education. Some service is simply about reaching out to neighbors who need a hand.

No, Democrats don’t have a lock on giving back to the community. Part of what makes Hyde Park such a wonderful place to live is the strong sense of civic duty and the strong safety net we’ve all woven to catch our neighbors when they fall. Lately, though, Democrats have seen their offers to serve rebuffed by the current administration. Undaunted, our work will go on.

No matter your politics, we hope 2010 is the year you’ll get more involved in Hyde Park. Here are some ways to find a volunteer role that suits your skills:

- <http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/Community/VolOpportunities.htm>
- Dial 2-1-1 or check the website at <http://www.hudson211.org/cms/>
- <http://www.handsonhv.org/>

HOW TO STAY ENGAGED IN TOWN ISSUES:

- www.hydeparkny.us – click on the notification tab and sign up for information about upcoming meetings and catch up on minutes from previous meetings
- <http://www.hydeparkdemocraticcommittee.com/> - sign up for our monthly e-newsletter

Catherine Forbes is Recording Secretary of the Hyde Park Democratic Committee, which supports public discussion of issues affecting our town. Contact the committee at hydeparkdems@gmail.com. Respond to this column at editorial@thehudsonvalleynews.com.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

BY JIM LANGAN

• Tired of the traffic on Route 9 and the Thruway? Say hello to the Terrafugia Transition. It’s a 1,440-pound car/aircraft that only requires a ¼ mile runway and can fly 460 miles at 115 miles per hour. You can be soaring over rush hour traffic after only 20 hours training. The wings fold up so it fits in your garage. On land, it gets 35 miles per gallon and comes equipped with airbags and crumple zones. It’s available for a modest \$194,000.

• Larry King is mercifully hanging up the suspenders. The aging talk show host has told CNN he will retire in September. While that’s good news for viewers, it might really put a fork in Larry’s troubled marriage having him home all day with nothing to do.

• A Philadelphia school crossing guard decided he’d had enough guff from one kid who had been taunting him all year. Gerald Kelly saw the 14-year-old hanging out in front of a drug store and gave the kid a little whupping. The 6-foot-4 Kelly was heard shouting, “This is for calling me fatso all year.” Kelly was arrested for assault.

• Did you know President Obama has 469 people on his White House staff pulling down a collective paycheck of \$38,796,370?

• California officials recently discovered that ATM cards issued by the state in the name of “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families” are being used to get cash at strip clubs around the state. The governor is attempting to take these strip joints off the approved list of places these people can get money.

• A 54-year-old German was arrested at an airport while waiting to board a flight. Apparently, the man’s ring tone is a fiery speech of Adolf Hitler from the 1930s. The startled passengers were also offended by the swastika on his cell

phone. It’s a criminal offense to display the swastika in Germany.

• A couple of entrepreneurs in Florida are selling Gulf spill water for \$9.99 a bottle. They were originally selling the real thing but found shipping it too expensive, so they just mix motor oil and tap water!

• Score! Authorities in Bogota, Columbia seized a replica of the World Cup awaiting shipment. The statue was constructed with 24 pounds of pure cocaine made moldable by mixing it with gasoline.

• Might be time for Mel Gibson to pack it in. The increasingly volatile star is on tape ranting at his estranged girlfriend and using the N-word. Mad Max, indeed. Hope he can live off his residuals because he’ll never make another movie.

• In the “Three G-strings and you’re out” department, actor Kelsey Grammar and his third wife have called it quits. All three wives have been “exotic dancers.” Might be time for a librarian or teacher.

• As expected, Joey Chestnut took home the Roloids at the Nathan’s Famous Annual Hot Dog Eating Contest on the Fourth of July. He inhaled 54 dogs in 10 minutes. The woman who won a qualifying event at Splash Down last week had a mere 28 dogs by comparison.

• The gang at Red Lobster is not going to like this report. Scientists have begun detecting oil in lobster and crab larvae. It’s presumed the first step in an ugly food chain reaction.

• Went to a holiday barbeque in Hyde Park over the holiday and met my first Olympic gold medal winner, Bryan Volpenhein. Bryan won a gold rowing 8s for the U.S. at the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Also in attendance were two other world-class rowers, Sarah Trowbridge and Reilly Dampeer. (See photo in sports). I went for the gold myself by attacking the host’s fabulous short ribs and chicken!

READERS RESPOND:

E-MAIL US: EDITORIAL@THEHUDSONVALLEYNEWS.COM

TO THE EDITOR:

The Poughkeepsie Journal must provide Hyde Parkers with more thorough and balanced coverage of the outrageous actions our elected officials are taking.

The way the town board treated Joanne Lown was despicable. Joanne came in every day for over 20 years and did her job. This board wants their own person in charge of finances, so they dug up some dirt, dragged Joanne’s name through the mud, and cleaned out her desk without giving her a chance to respond. If eliminating the bookkeeper position was a business decision, there was no need for Mr. Martino to go on television and criticize Joanne personally. It’s inhuman. Martino, Athanas, Monks and Taylor should be ashamed of themselves.

Further, it is appalling the board has resorted to intimidating residents by calling in the police during public meetings. They say they are running a business, but our town is more than that: it is a community, a democracy. Leaders of all political parties have respected people enough to let them speak before decisions are made. Prohibiting people from speaking and threatening them if they do is simply cowardly.

Hyde Park deserves better. We deserve to have our voices heard. We deserve leaders who respect dedicated town employees and volunteers. We deserve careful consideration before our zoning policies are abandoned to allow more strip malls to scar our landscape, leaving existing strip malls empty. We deserve fiscal responsibility, not wild spending increases.

Hyde Parkers, don’t take my word for it – watch the Town Board meetings. And *Poughkeepsie Journal*, please step up the coverage – Hyde Park is in crisis.

Michael P. Rohr
Hyde Park