

I Hate...

by Guy Arseneau

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholics | <input type="checkbox"/> Jews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protestants | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslims |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wealthy People | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black People | <input type="checkbox"/> White People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Democrats | <input type="checkbox"/> Republicans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay People | <input type="checkbox"/> Sick People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All of the Above | |

“...Worst mass murder in U.S. history. According to the latest news reports from police, the FBI and state law enforcement personnel, 49 people in the Orlando, Florida gay bar known as Pulse are confirmed dead, dozens more are injured. More details to follow as this tragic story develops.”

Another random act of violence-senseless, tragic and traumatizing-played out once more on the world stage. Condemnations against mass murder poured in from the Vatican, national and international gay organizations, the White House, politicians of various partisan stripes, those in favor and those against gun control. Islamophobia and homophobia once again took center stage to prove/disprove God's love, hate, wrath and indifference of and for homosexuals, Islam, ISIS, American decadence and homegrown terrorism. Media pundits, news anchors, members of the clergy, psychiatrists and forensic crime experts sought to explain, define and analyze the actions and history of this latest martyr to hatred and speculate when and where the next attack will occur.

Almost two decades earlier, in the bucolic town of Columbine, Colorado, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold brought a clarity and focus to mass killings during their murderous spree at Columbine high school. In 2012, James Holmes picked up their mantle of violence in Aurora, Colorado when he opened fire in a crowded movie theatre, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. Now, mass murderer Omar Mateen adds his name to the growing list of virtual unknowns who have achieved infamy over fame and notoriety over nobility in their passion to show the power of hate.

As horrible as these crimes were and are, they will soon fade from memory as the media moves on to cover the more critical and lingering issues of our day, such as what dress Kim Kardashian will wear to an obscure awards show and a web page offering a virtual tour of Leonardo DiCaprio's bathroom. The “tragic losses and unspeakable grief” that currently define the city of Orlando, Florida will rapidly fade as the world gets back to its pastime of self-absorbed pleasure seeking; one that is aptly described as a hedonistic quest that is tantamount to cultural masturbation.

For the most part, the examination of pathological hate will be sidelined and marginalized. Yet hate, as an historical corollary to the human condition, is the driving force and common denominator element behind these latest atrocities. Without regard to race, religion, ethnic background, gender or economic status, hatred serves as a haven, catalyst and excuse for the darkest realms of the soul. Targets of hatred from other eras may seem quaint and bizarre today. But their reality was an inherent part of daily living. By way of example, in twelfth century Spain, hatred of the Jews was widespread and commonplace; Catholics seeking medical attention from Jewish doctors of the time incurred automatic excommunication from the Catholic Church for this “crime.” In the early days of America, the village of Salem, Massachusetts became synonymous with hatred and intolerance. A firm belief in witchcraft, woven into the fabric of the early settlers, became a focal point for distrust, murder and false accusations. The slightest deviation from “normal” behavior served as a danger point for those allegedly under the influence of the Evil One. Suspicion rather than due process of law, became the guiding force behind the actions of otherwise mature adults.

Ironically, religion in general and Christianity in particular, fostered hatred in its followers for almost two millennia. Animus toward the Jewish people only began to disappear at official levels under the relatively recent leadership of Pope John XXIII. His papal proclamation, *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Day) formulated in 1961 and formally put forth in 1965 by his successor, Pope Paul VI, absolved the Jewish people of guilt for the death of Christ and recognized Judaism as the “elder brother” of Christianity. This declaration, admirable as it was, represented a long overdue first step towards tolerance and respect for the spiritual beliefs and rights of all people.

In a spirit of absolute fairness, it must be noted that during World War II, staff members of Vatican City, along with members of convents and monasteries throughout Europe, provided shelter and safe havens for Jews seeking sanctuary from Nazi persecution. Yet in spite of these brave acts of individual courage and

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compassion, accusations against the "perfidious Jews" were still incorporated into Catholic prayers during the season of Lent.

In the early days of the twentieth century, when America opened its doors to immigrants from Europe, the large influx of people from Ireland created fear and mistrust among the more settled and assimilated middle class Protestants of the time, especially in large urban centers such as New York City and Boston. Unfortunately, when Italian immigrants began arriving, the Irish greeted them with the same level and intensity of hatred they had experienced a generation earlier.

As a social dynamic, hatred follows a predictable pattern of development and realization. Adolf Hitler and his view of the world demonstrated the perfect paradigm for the evolution and implementation of hate. A onetime homeless vagabond and starving artist of limited talent, he lived on the streets of Vienna in the immediate years after World War I. Embittered by Germany's humiliating loss and anxious to find a scapegoat for his wrath, he blamed the "Jewish bankers" of his day for their betrayal of the fatherland. Although he lived on the extreme fringes of society, as he and his political identity became stronger and more pronounced, his hatred of the Jews began to attract greater credibility and support as he and his ideas gained greater acceptance into the prevailing social order of that era. Ultimately, the racial paranoia and ravings of this mad man became the accepted laws of the land as he sought to validate his animosity for the Jewish people through "scientific" principles and theories taught on a mandatory basis in German schools. Beginning as an outsider who was considered a lunatic, Hitler's journey of hate moved ever inward as it evolved from the status of fringe group rabble rousing and propaganda into a national policy and eroded the soul of Europe, sparking World War II and a racial Holocaust unequalled in history.

As today's world amply demonstrates, the contemporary palette of hate is tragically diverse with

a broad selection and mix of targets to aim for and at: Gays, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Blacks, Whites, Latinos, immigrants, Democrats, Republicans, NRA members, the poor, the wealthy, old people, young people, Clinton lovers and Trump adversaries; the list of potential targets is almost endless.

For every object of hatred, there is an individual or organization that is more than willing to fan the flames of hate and call for even more violence in the name of God, country or family honor. Far too often, the ones calling for even greater condemnation and death claim to speak for God through the authority of their religious affiliation. Many may recall that shortly after the tragedy of 9-11, televangelist Pat Robertson of The 700 Club claimed the destruction of the World Trade Center and attack on the Pentagon was the result of God's wrath toward homosexuality. If that had been the case, why didn't the planes crash into Christopher Street, the epicenter of gay life on the west side of New York's Greenwich Village?

Reaction to the massacre at the gay bar in Orlando proved to be no exception for ultra-right wing religious groups. Roger Jimenez, pastor of the Verity Baptist Church in Sacramento, California, lamented the fact that Omar Mateen had "only killed 49 sodomites." In his sermon the day of the tragedy, and relying on inspiration from the teachings of Jesus Christ, who gave the world the Sermon on the Mount, he told his congregation, "I wish the government would line up all the gay people in America against a wall and blow their brains out. That way we would have decent people in the world and not have to worry about child molesters anymore."

While this level of hatred, justified by the speaker's "righteous wrath" is extreme, it by no means sets a precedent for hate. The greatest danger of hatred is not the immediate evil it engenders, but the ease with which it integrates itself into daily life. The most frightening aspect of hatred is that the crimes of today become the standard policy of tomorrow.

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