

Summer of Love / Summer of Hate – Love is What We Need

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I was 8 years old in the summer of 1967, 50 years ago – but I remember it as a remarkable time. Too young to really understand the cultural ramifications, I remember being caught up in the brightly colored power of the Moment. The Movement. The Revolution. It was a heady time.

In the Middle East, the Six-Day War in June 1967 transformed Israel from a fledgling nation in constant fear of annihilation into a military power able to overcome all of the mighty armies arrayed against it – within the timeframe of the six days of creation. This moment transfixed my parents' household as so many family members and friends were standing in harm's way. In outcomes both good and bad, the ramifications of those six days echo 50 years later. It seemed, at the time, that further war in the region would be unthinkable and that peaceful coexistence would soon prevail. The disappointments and the terrible, lingering effects of Occupation would not be understood for years. It was still a naïve time of optimism. Later that summer, my father and my brother travelled to the war-torn region and prayed at the Kotel, the sacred Western Wall, something my father had been unable to do in the land of his birth since it's founding as a Jewish state.

I remember that summer of 1967 also with the release of the Beatles album "St. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" – the record that opened my ears to music and, I would only learn much later, revolutionized pop music. Politics transformed. Music Transformed. All in one summer's moment.

June of 1967 also saw the first live global television special with the production of "Our World" – artists and singers including Maria Callas and Pablo Picasso contributed to the 19 nation event, using brand- new satellite technology to link the world in a single extravaganza. Some 400 to 700 million people watched that broadcast – a record for its time. For a summer's moment, technology united the world and optimism prevailed. Maybe our world *could* become One World. The concert ended with Great Britain's contribution - a new song composed for the occasion, performed live by the Beatles. The song was called "All You Need is Love."

It was the Summer of Love.

Throughout that summer, as colleges emptied out, young people from around the country drove or hitchhiked to San Francisco. Perhaps 100,000 descended on the rundown Haight-Ashbury district. The Hippie Movement came into view that summer. I was too young and too far away to understand the gritty reality: the drugs and sex and overcrowding that stretched resources. But I did understand, as I watched the nightly news with my family, that there was a power united around one concept: Love. Love is All You Need.

The Summer of Love was 50 years ago. 22 years after the Shoah, 3 years after the summer signing of the Civil Rights act. The Summer of Love began a movement which led to the resignation of a President and an end to an endless war. It challenged the institutions of authority and began a series of revolutions to bring those who had been pushed into the shadows, into the light. Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning united under a Rainbow flag; marginalized communities from African-American to Native American claiming full civil and human rights. There is still so much to do, but much began in those heady days. The hate of segregation and homophobia transformed by love. Love is not just love, it is dignity and respect and compassion. Love is All You Need, because it is so much more than love.

For the American Jewish Community, the summer of 1967 was transformative as well. Jewish pride flourished after the Six Day War and the movement of inclusion, which had started decades before, finally saw many of the remaining restrictions and quotas American Jews had lived under fall away. We Jews were part of the Love.

50 years have passed since 1967. The eyes of childhood which allowed me to see only the bright colors and free expression have grown weary. We have all seen the harsh reality of an unfinished revolution whose many victims have suffered from continued discrimination, racism and sexism, and wage stagnation in the Globalized economy. Wars continue to ravage and the new scourge of Climate Change threatens us all.

But nothing prepared me, or any of us I suspect, for the past few months. 50 years on we have moved from the Summer of Love to the Summer of Hate.

Now, I grew up in the South. My father was an outspoken proponent of the Civil Rights Movement; not a popular position for a rabbi in Texas. We knew the Ku Klux Klan. And they knew us. They knew where we lived and they were not ashamed to let us know it. My parents shielded us kids from the middle of the night phone calls and bomb threats. But it was still part of my family experience. And I know the history of White Supremacists, Neo-Nazis and the KKK here in Oregon. Many here have experienced it. But I did not imagine that in 2017, more than 50 years later, I would witness the explosive, public, violent, resurgent vitality of these discredited and empty ideologies. As White Supremacists rallied this summer in downtown Portland and on my child's college campus, I found myself in shock. As hundreds gathered in a

“Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia this summer – like you, my blood grew cold. Torch-bearing marchers chanting the Nazi slogan of “Blood and Soil” and the White Supremacist rallying cry of “Jews Will Not Replace Us,” made me question our Jewish safety. Knowing that these marchers stood outside the Charlottesville synagogue and that the police refused to offer protection to the worshipers there made me question some of our basic assumptions about the role of peace keepers. And yes, the refusal of the President of the United States to quickly and clearly condemn White Supremacists, White Nationalists and Neo-Nazis without also conflating them with those protesting their hate-filled ideologies, made me question the promise of America. That true American promise was articulated by the first President of the United States in his letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, RI – filled with flowing prose:

. . .happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens . . .

“To bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” Those are the words we long to hear today.

That letter to the tiny Jewish community of the colonies was written in August of 1790. Almost exactly two hundred and twenty-seven years later, the actions of today’s President call President George Washington’s founding promise into question. Through inaction and inarticulation, Bigotry has been given sanction. Persecution has been given assistance.

But I am not discouraged. I am optimistic. I know the goodness of this country and I know that the shouted hatred of a few, even when it turns deadly, is far outweighed by the kindness in the hearts of the many. I know we are witnessing the last gasps of a dying ideology, which hopes to turn back the clock to some poorly imagined golden age. I know goodness will win.

What we need is a little more love.

I witnessed this love directly earlier in the summer, this remarkable and frightening summer. Before the summer began, I received an invitation from the German Consulate General in San Francisco to visit his country. I was to join a small group of West Coast rabbis and cantors invited to experience the reality of Jewish life in modern Germany. Most of us were from California or Nevada. One was from Seattle. I was to represent the Oregon Jewish community.

Accepting this invitation was not easy for me. I was, as it turned out, the only child of a Holocaust Survivor invited. I grew up on very personal stories from my mother of surviving the brutality of German soldiers and the SS. The images were very clear. I saw her, standing on a line, scared and exhausted after the horrific cattle car train journey from Hungary to Auschwitz.

I saw the German Nazi Officer pointing left or right – life or death – as the crematorium chimneys billowed grey ash in the background. Through her stories I saw the depths of inhumanity represented by German efficiency. Decades after the horrors, I grew up in a household in which buying German products was never considered, where debates were active about whether German composers should be played by the Jerusalem Symphony, where even the spoken German language was a trigger for me, if not for my mother. The idea of traveling to Berlin as a guest of the German government filled me with trepidation. I was, to put it mildly, ambivalent.

But, after a great deal of consideration, I accepted the offer and joined the team.

We were a *minyán* – 10 of us. Male and female, Rabbi and Cantor, Reform, Conservative and Ultra-Orthodox. We were diverse. And we were unprepared. At least, I was.

The trip began in Munich. I wanted to see the site of the Olympics where in 1972, 11 Israeli athletes were brutally murdered by Palestinian terrorists; but we were unable to go. Instead we began by touring Dachau – Germany’s first Concentration Camp and the model for those which would follow. While not an Extermination Camp, as Auschwitz was, the Nazis used Dachau to test out new technologies, like gas chambers and crematoria, which would come to horrific use elsewhere. These we saw. Also the tightly crowded barracks and the SS’s prison and interrogation rooms. The Post-War German government built several chapels on the extensive grounds, including a Jewish memorial space. Our chapel was below ground-level, like entering a grave. The interior soared up to an open hole, like the inside of a chimney. There, in that dark and confining space the two cantors in our group sang the haunting Holocaust Kaddish bringing us all to tears.

We learned that in Germany, all high school students are required to take an educational tour of a Concentration Camp. We saw several groups of them there in Dauchau. At first they were like any group of teens: boisterous and goofy. But we watched as group after group quieted down and absorbed the enormity of that experience. I wondered if they were thinking about what their grandparents, or great-grandparents did during The War. Ordinary teens would consider those thoughts too distant. These kids were intentionally placed in a setting where they had to confront their history.

And this was my experience of Germany, a country actively confronting a painful, brutal past. We met with leaders of the Jewish community – in Munich where the main synagogue has been beautifully restored and sits on a campus with the Jewish community center, Jewish museum, Preschool, Day school and a Kosher restaurant, all in the most central part of downtown. We met with Jewish leaders in Berlin, representatives of the American Jewish Committee, and an organization which brings American Jews in “upclose” experiences with Modern Germany.

Everywhere we went we saw that rather than turning its back on the past, the German government and the German people were attempting to deal with the trauma. And Jews are returning and thriving in ways they are not in many other European countries.

One striking element one sees all over Berlin are the brass colored "*stolpersteine*" or "stumbling stones." A project of the artist Gunter Demnig, they are markers placed on the cobblestone streets outside the last known residence of Jewish and other victims before their deportation and extermination. These permanently placed markers bearing their names are slightly raised so that one has to literally stumble over them. They cannot be ignored. The memory of these people cannot be ignored. The truth of the Holocaust and German responsibility cannot be ignored. The German people have chosen not ignore.

I could not help but think that if America had confronted its racist history the way Germany has, we would be a very different country today.

My experience in Germany gave me hope and a vision of a way forward. Because - sorry John, Paul, George and Ringo – all we need is not only Love. We need justice. We need understanding. We need to confront the voices of Hate not with violence – violence is their path - but with a better vision. We cannot turn our backs, or hide in our rooms – we have to be present.

But it is hard to give love when what you feel is outrage.

Coming back from Germany, I experienced that outrage just a week and a half ago, right here in Downtown Portland. I marched with a group of interfaith clergy at the head of a rally in response to the "Patriot Prayer" gathering scheduled in Waterfront Park. This group draws both White Nationalists and Supremacists to their side, as well as Antifacist counter-protesters violently opposed to their hate-filled ideology. We knew it could be tense, so we clergy of many faiths wanted to stand for peace and love, marching at the front of a rally with a banner reading "Portland Stands United Against Hate." Even in our peaceful rally some of the chants were chants of hate. I couldn't join in. I wanted to match the hate of the White Supremacists with the love of our diversity.

Although our march was peaceful, others protesting were not. Outrage led to acts of violence, and in Vancouver a Patriot sympathizer came close to running down protesters with his truck, in an eerie echo of the Charlottesville attack which took the life of Heather Heyer.

Protesters waving Trump signs and American flags tried to confront our group. The police kept them back. Young people clad all in black with faces covered weaved in and out of our march – and ultimately some of them engaged with the so-called "Patriot" group and with the police

away from our rally. It is one of the few marches I have participated in where I did not feel safe. But we can't pull back from naming the evil and claiming the good.

We are in a place of outrage coming out of this Summer of Hate. And outrage has its place. But outrage alone is not enough. It has to lead to Action – actions which lead to justice. Justice anchored in Love. The prophet Amos taught:

שְׂנֵאוּ-רָעַל וְאַהֲבוּ טוֹב וְהִצִּיגוּ בַשַּׁעַר מִשְׁפָּט

Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate (Amos 6:15)

Hate evil – be outraged, *love the good* – bring love, bring optimism, find the good – *establish justice in the gate* - make sure that the actions we choose are positive and good and lead to more justice.

The Prophet challenges us and we must respond. Not just to match hate with hate but to stand united in love and to establish justice, freedom and equality for all. To confront our past and to reject the hate-filled ideologies we thought we had buried. They will be back, they will continue to espouse Anti-Semitic and racist slogans here in Portland. How will we respond?

Outrage keeps us in a place of hate. What we need is love. Love, not anger, to confront the hate. Love of each other is stronger than the hate which wants to tear us apart. Love the stranger and welcome them into our midst. Love the other who is different and let them know they are loved. Let those who are the objects of hate feel the love. All you need is love. We stand united in diversity, united in acceptance, united in Love.

So let us be willing to stumble over our own memories. Let us confront evil with good and let that good be the defining reality of our great and good nation. Love is what we need.

We need not just feelings of love, we need words of love. We need actions of love. We need commitments of love which counter ideologies of hate. We need to build communities of love and justice which let everyone know that ours is a nation strengthened by diversity. Love is what we need.

The Summer of Hate has ended. In 5778, let us together create again the Summer of Love.