

The Continued Need To Combat A Climate of Hate

The Tompkins County Office of Human Rights (TCOHR) condemns recent murderous acts, nationally and internationally, inspired by hate, religious and ethnic bigotry and unknown motives. A shooting at the University of North Carolina Charlotte on 30 April 2019 left two students dead—one of whom heroically tackled the assailant, leading to his capture and arrest—and four wounded. On 27 April, the last day of Passover, a 19-year old white nationalist attacked the Chabad of Poway (California) Synagogue, killing a woman worshipper and wounding the Rabbi, a child and an adult worshipper. Six days earlier, on Easter Sunday, three Christian churches and three luxury hotels in Sri Lanka were bombed, killing 250 persons. Three historic black churches in St. Landry Parish, Louisiana were destroyed by fire on 26 March, 2 April and 4 April, the 51st anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. During Jumu'ah (Friday or congregational prayers) on 15 March two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand were attacked, leaving 51 persons dead.

These tragic events of recent days and weeks remind us of the ever-present need to combat a climate of hate, the theme of a TCOHR panel discussion at the Tompkins County Public Library on 28 February 2019. These attacks constitute an assault on human rights—to exercise freedom of thought; to embrace a religion (or a philosophy of life); the right of peaceful public assembly; the right to education; to a fair and free world; the right to life and to live in freedom and safety. Figuratively, we stand in solidarity with the communities in North Carolina, California, Sri Lanka, Louisiana and Christchurch in their efforts to recover from trauma and support of their exercise of human rights. Literally, we resolve to affirm the dignity and worth of all human beings as they pursue education, the practice of their faith or philosophy of life, their affirmation and manifestation of ethnic identity. We encourage all persons of goodwill to join us in this effort.