

Let Us Talk the Talk and Walk the Walk of Respect Together

We are pleased to join with the Anti-Defamation League, its Coalition for Mutual Respect, and the family of James Byrd, Jr. to present this Remembrance Service to you today.

James Byrd, Jr. was an African-American man murdered in 1998 by Shawn Berry, Lawrence Brewer and John King in Jasper, Texas. On June 7, James, who was then 49 years old, accepted a ride from these three men. Instead of taking him home, the three men chained him to the back of their truck and dragged him to his death simply because he was African-American. The world was shocked by this horrific hate crime, and today, 10 years later, the passage of time has not diminished the horror of his death. James was an ordinary man, who was a father, son, brother, and friend to many people. As we remember him, let us also remember the lessons that his death taught us – that racism and bigotry are alive and well in our country and that it is incumbent for each of us to promote peace, good will and understanding among all people.

At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., there is an inscription that records the famous words of the German Lutheran Minister, Martin Niemoller, who had spoken out against the Nazi atrocities of his day, and nearly lost his life because of it. There are many versions of these famous words that are commonly repeated. The version at the Holocaust Memorial Museum reads:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out -
because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out -
because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.

We light these candles in memory of victims of hate, prejudice, and racism everywhere whether perpetrated against one or many **and to** express support **for** the Golden Rule as expressed in the sacred texts of six of the world's major religions:

- Choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou chooseth for thyself – Bahai'i Faith
- Love thy neighbor as thyself – Judaism
- As ye would that men would do to you, do ye also to them likewise – Christianity

- None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself – Islam
- Make thine own self the measure of the others, and so abstain from causing hurt to them. – Buddhism
- Do not to others what ye do not wish done to yourself, and which for others too what ye desire and long for, for yourself. - Hinduism

As we end this special service, remember each of us can and should be AMBASSADORS for Mutual Respect and Understanding.

And, to quote Anne Frank, a young teenage girl whose Holocaust-era diary is known worldwide: “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”