



"Rise above the hatred"

AN OPEN LETTER FROM CINCINNATI HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS TO STUDENTS

As we approach the anniversary of October 7, a group from Jewish Family Service's Center for Holocaust Survivors wrote a letter to students who might be experiencing antisemitism in their own lives. With permission, we are sharing their letter with **our Jewish community**. Although it is addressed to students, we believe it conveys a universal message of courage, fortitude, and positivity.

Dear Cincinnati Area Students,

We, a group of Holocaust survivors affiliated with Jewish Family Service of the Cincinnati Area, write to you today with heavy hearts but unwavering spirits. We have seen the darkest depths of hatred and persecution, and we know all too well the pain that antisemitism causes. As you face the hostility that has erupted in the wake of Hamas's horrific attack on Israel on October 7, we want you to know that we stand with you in solidarity and share your grief, anger, and determination.

The world may have changed, but the poison of antisemitism, sadly, remains a constant threat. It is heartbreaking to see that even in places that should be safe havens for learning and growth, you face prejudice and hatred simply because of who you are and what you believe. We understand the fear and frustration that comes with being persecuted for your Jewish identity, but we also know that you have the strength to overcome this adversity.

"We have found hope where there seemed to be none, and we know that you, too, have the strength to rise above the hatred directed at you."

We have endured the unimaginable, but we have survived. We have rebuilt our lives, our families, and our communities from the ashes of despair. We have found hope where there seemed to be none, and we know that you, too, have the strength to rise above the hatred directed at you. It is important to remain strong in your identity, to be proud of your heritage, and to never allow the voices of hate to drown out your own.

Remember, your Jewishness is a source of strength, not weakness. It is a rich heritage of resilience, wisdom, and compassion. It is your connection to a people who have faced persecution throughout history but have contributed immeasurably and disproportionately to the world because of the values that Jewish parents have passed down to their

children from generation to generation. Your very existence is a testament to the resilience of the Jewish people.

You may think that erasure of your Jewish identity or capitulation in the face of adversity will lead to safety and a more peaceful existence. Many thought that in the 30s and 40s, but you know how that story turned out for 6 million. The history of our generation teaches us that silence is not an option, and that it is the unique responsibility of each Jewish person to spread the message of truth and justice in the world.

We encourage you to seek out and support one another during these difficult times. Surround yourself with friends, family, and allies who understand your pain and who will stand by your side. Reach out to local and national Jewish organizations for support. Cincinnati alone has a wealth of resources like Hillel, the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Service, to name just a few examples. Don't be afraid to speak out against injustice, educate others, and demand the respect and dignity you deserve. Arm yourselves with facts, both historic and of current events, during this time of mass disinformation so that you can speak out with the confidence and strength that can only come from knowledge. The Jewish community has always thrived when we have stood together, and now is the time to build on that unity.

We survived because we did not lose hope, and neither should you. The world needs your voice, your presence, and your contribution. Keep shining your light and do not let the darkness of hatred dim your brilliance.

From the bottom of our hearts, we send you our love, our support, and our prayers for a future where you can live proudly and freely as Jews, without fear. Be strong in your faith, be proud of your heritage, remain true to yourselves and stay unified -- that will let you overcome all obstacles.

Sincerely,

Holocaust Survivors

Jewish Family Service of the Cincinnati Area