

We have to combine resources and eliminate hate

by MARK PAVILONS

?Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.? ? Martin Luther King, Jr.

Of all the beautiful emotions and reactions that our species is capable of, hatred reigns. It has been with us, like some unshakable callous, for millennia.

It may very well be our undoing.

Despite cries from prophets, seers and leaders of all shapes and sizes, this one aspect of humankind is most disturbing. And it seems it's always there, like a dark shadow, right behind us.

When certain actions are brutal, senseless, uncaring and malicious, there must a sense of hatred.

We see it on our nightly news but because it's oceans away, we don't give it much thought. But we should. Hate should never go unchecked.

?So we're different colors, and we're

different breeds

And different people, have different needs

It's obvious you hate me, though I've done

nothing wrong

I've never even met you, so what could I

have done?

I can't understand

What makes a man hate another man?

Help me understand ...?

??epeche Mode, People Are People.

Yes, help me understand.

Thanks to the efforts of those who, long ago, secured our freedom, most of us have never seen war, religious conflict, strife or upheaval.

But the rest of the world lives with it on a daily basis. Even our own downtrodden and homeless pale in comparison to the strife, disease and death encountered by men, women and children around the globe.

We 'safe' westerners got a real glimpse into it with bird's-eye views of the horrors of conflict in the Middle East.

I can't fathom living in a city where ruins abound, roads are filled with rubble and people are buried among the destroyed buildings. I don't know how these people do it or what gives them the strength to carry on.

All 'normalcy' is gone - no more shops, no more commerce of any kind. Just barren streets filled with throngs of refugees heading somewhere.

This is the result of hate.

Recent years have seen a rise in racist incidents and reported hate crime.

Last year Statistics Canada reported a 72 percent increase in the hate crime rate between 2019 and 2021. The CBC reported on a community-based survey, which found reports of racist incidents in Canada increased by 47% in 2021 compared to 2020. Seeing this rise and talking about the problem leaves many Canadians with a feeling of helplessness.

OCASI is the umbrella organization for immigrant and refugee-serving agencies in Ontario and the collective voice of the sector. Through a new ad campaign, OCASI is making it clear that there is no room for racism in Canadian society. In doing so, they want people to know it is important to speak up and be actively anti-racist, rather than merely recognizing racist behavior.

Working with Mass Minority on creative and media, they focused on the seemingly small acts of abuse we see and hear everyday that seed an environment of exclusion and hate," noted Debbie Douglas at OCASI. "To shift the conversation we also need to shift how we present occurrences of racism, and move beyond the expected indifference or lack of awareness. We needed to show everyday Canadians demonstrating everyday abuse that it is not okay."

There are numerous pitches on TV, radio and in print, calling for better behaviour from our fellow human beings. Unfortunately, good behaviour is next to impossible to legislate or mandate.

I will admit that it's difficult for me, as a Canadian, to fully understand generations of racism, mistreatment, hate, genocide. I suppose if my family tree was littered with such horrors, I would bear resentment and ill will, too.

But is that an argument or excuse for hate, conflict or war and the killing of civilians?

Tens of thousands are now dead because of one fateful day in October in Israel. Many more will die before the matter is laid to rest. And what will Gaza and the Middle East look like in the end?

Will there ever be a return to 'normal'?

This is one large-scale example of hatred gone awry. And it has spilled over into our communities, across the GTA.

Canada prides itself on being a welcoming, mosaic of cultures, religions and beliefs. It's not often they clash, but again, as a white Canadian, I'm not in tune with ethnic conflicts abroad that have carried on here.

Suffice it to say we are so damn lucky to have a semblance of democracy, a system where freedom, human rights and equality are paramount. If nothing else, Canada offers a refuge, a safe harbour if you will, from countries that oppress, arrest and execute people for simply disobeying the rules.

So, my friends, what do we, as average Canadians, do about it?

Well, we can educate others and call out the offenders. We have already made hate crimes a criminal offence.

Sure, there is zero tolerance in our schools, workplaces, etc. but how do we change the mindset of the masses? How do calmer heads prevail over emotional shouting at mass rallies?

I don't know if megaphones and placards send a strong enough message to end hate now and forever.

Maybe, if we instill all young people future generations with love not hate, it will lead to great things.

We haven't lived up to Martin Luther King's sentiments, but maybe someday we will make him proud.