

Is It Trump's Fault That We Are a Nation of Haters?

Last Saturday at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, a man armed with an assault rifle and three handguns interrupted the worship service shouting, "All Jews must die!" He then killed 11 people, including a 97-year-old woman, Rose Mallinger. Her family fully expected her to live to be 100.

Before the first funeral of the Tree of Life victims had been performed, media pundits were blaming President Trump for the shooting—saying his caustic tone and hateful tweets have fueled today's climate of violence. They did the same the week before, when a 56-year-old former male stripper named Cesar Sayoc was arrested in Florida. He was accused of mailing a dozen crude pipe bombs to various critics of Trump.

So let's pose the question: Is our president guilty of throwing gasoline on this fire? Is he the reason there's so much hate in America these days?

I'll admit I often cringe when I see President Trump's insensitive tweets. But if I'm objective (and objectivity is something we lack these days in the media), I have to admit there is plenty of hate being thrown around on both sides of today's nasty political feud. Consider this summary of the past year and a half:

- Just hours after President Trump was sworn in as president, the singer Madonna told a crowd at the Women's March on Washington: "Yes I'm angry. Yes I'm enraged. Yes I have thought a lot about blowing up the White House." She then spewed so much profanity that CNN had to stop airing her speech. Something shifted that day. America's Era of Hate officially began.
- In June of last year, a crazed gunman from Illinois,

James Hodgkinson, began shooting at Republican lawmakers on a baseball field in suburban Washington, D.C.—seriously wounding Congressman Steve Scalise of Louisiana. Investigators searched Hodgkinson’s online history and found that he was militantly opposed to President Trump and Republicans in general.

- Meanwhile, President Trump kept up with his insensitive tweets and comments. He used choice words such as “clowns,” “dummy dope,” “lightweight” and “low class slob” to describe his political enemies. He called Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky a “spoiled brat” and Meryl Streep “one of the most over-rated actresses.” Then he described California congresswoman Maxine Waters as “an extraordinarily low IQ person.”
- Maxine Waters fired back last June. In a speech to supporters, she urged them to attack and harass members of Trump’s administration. She was caught on video saying: “If you see anybody from that Cabinet in a restaurant, in a department store, in a gasoline station, you get out and you create a crowd. And you push back on them.” Fellow Democrats chastised her for encouraging mob violence.
- More celebrities jumped into the fray. In June of this year actor Robert De Niro went as low as possible when he launched a profanity-laced tirade at the Tony Awards in New York. “It’s no longer, ‘Down with Trump,’” De Niro declared. “It’s [Expletive] Trump.’” The crowd cheered. The hate reached a boiling point.
- Earlier this month, Democrats were surprised when former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton told CNN that there is no longer room for civility in politics. “You cannot be civil with a political party that wants to destroy what you stand for,” Clinton said, noting that “civility can start again” when Democrats win the

midterm elections.

- Even President Obama's former attorney general, Eric Holder, shocked his colleagues by striking an uncivil tone. On Oct. 7 during an event in Georgia, he said he could no longer abide by the rules suggested by former First Lady Michelle Obama, who famously said of her enemies: "When they go low, we go high." Holder said: "No, no. When they go low, we kick 'em. That's what the new Democratic Party is about."

There's no question that President Trump has poured fuel on this fire. But there's also no question that both Democrats and Republicans have taken hate to a new level in today's political war. It's no wonder that mentally unstable people are mailing bombs and shooting up synagogues. The hate is contagious. Our air is toxic from all the verbal venom that has been released into the atmosphere.

I've prayed about what my response should be in this Era of Hate. The Lord took me back to the scene when the prophet Isaiah saw the Lord's glory in the temple. Isaiah said: "Woe is me, for I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the middle of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

When Isaiah had his encounter with God, he didn't point a finger and blame anyone else for the ugliness around him. He knew he was part of the problem. He was convicted about his own words. He took responsibility for his own attitudes.

Ask yourself: Are you pouring the fuel of hate on the fire that is raging in our country? Are you an agent of division, or a minister of reconciliation? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution?

I can't stop President Trump from tweeting. I can't stop mobs from forming. I can't convince politicians, newscasters or late-night talk-show hosts from spewing their hateful sarcasm.

But I can control my own tongue, and I can keep a lid on my own anger. And I can show a nation of haters that the love of Jesus is the higher way. I hope you will do the same.