

Thoughts by Rabbi Companez, Temple Beth-El

"I can't let this occasion pass without saying a few words about what is currently going on across our country. I think I speak for most, if not all of us, when I say that as Jews or people of another faith, we are devastated by the loss of the lives of George Floyd, Dreasjon Reed, Ahmoud Arbery, Eric Logan, Breonna Taylor and other citizens.

Our Torah teaches that we are all created b'tzelem elohim, in the image of God, and also, that central to our Torah is the notion of kavod habriyot, the sanctity of living beings. Nobody deserves to be treated how George Floyd was this past Memorial Day. Our nation is grieving, our nation is outraged, and our nation is calling for justice.

We are taught tzedek tzedek tirdof – justice, justice, shall you pursue. We all deserve to live in a world where all lives are valued and all of our loved ones are safe. Our hearts go out to the loved ones of George Floyd, Dreasjon Reed, Ahmoud Arbery, Eric Logan, and Breonna Taylor.

Zichronam livracha – “may their memories be for a blessing.”

If you are wondering what you can do that might help, consider reaching out to your African American friends, colleagues and acquaintances, offering your condolences, and just listening. We felt comforted after the Tree of Life massacre in Pittsburgh by people who were not Jewish reaching out to us. Their actions told us that we were not alone, that other people did care, that others were not standing idly by. Now it is our turn to reach out in the same way, with friendship, with consolation, and with empathy.

And you can also seek justice. Email Mayor Mueller and urge him to reform policing in South Bend. And seek justice in whatever other ways you can.

This virus of racism can be lethal just as Covid-19 can, yet it is not equally dangerous to all of us. Just as we are trying to eradicate Covid-19, so too must we all do our best to eliminate racism in all its forms.

Tzedek tzedek tirdof - justice, justice, shall you pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20)