

"Setting the Table: Patience & Persistence"

Before I begin would all Parents of boys and any cancer survivors either raise your hand or quietly recognize yourself.

Rabbi Latz assigned me this theme title and asked me to speak after we talked in May.

While I've thought about tonight from time to time I feel any responsibility for success is in my effort not the in the outcome. Unlike many in this room race and its affect on this city, state and country are part of my work every day. Since becoming a member I've listened and talked a bit about racial justice with Shir Tikvah's work. Regarding blacks and white Jews, I offer a perspective tonight with a task to assist racial healing and dismantling by defending one group without offending another group. Both groups have our biases because both have cultural issues that get in the way.

My family tree thus far can be trace back to about 1840 starting with Owensboro, Kentucky, Hanover, Germany, Stanardsville, Virginia and Waco, Texas. They all arrived in Chicago, illinois at different times through the Underground Railroad, from a ship across the Atlantic Ocean, the Great Migration and after the Spanish American War. As the saying goes you can pick your fiends but not your family and we all have family that for various reasons and moments we may not like them but we love them forever. At times patience and persistence is needed. What a better time than Sukkot to be more family friendly as Jews of all colors with the sheltering mother traditions and added trust in each other through the holidays meaning. Can we be more trusting, open and honest with ourselves over color?

Yes!

As Rabbi of Shir Tikvah, Michael Latz is like the hood ornament on an automobile. Though he may be the most visual symbol of what this building represents, like a Mercedes or Honda logo he does not make the car run, that is up to the transmission; valves, tires, etc. and those parts function through the persistence of the board of directors, committees and congregations; us! What may be lacking in dismantling racism in this building is more overall effort from ones "moral compass."

I asked about parenting earlier for two reasons. My father told me when I was about 8 years old that because I was black I would always work twice as hard to get half as much. In July this year I was in Oakland, California visiting my son the day before a white policeman in Minnesota killed Philando Castile. Wendy Goldberg reached out to me long distance to talk on behalf of her whiteness and this buildings racial direction. More recently, September 23rd after another black man was killed (this time by a white woman police officer in Tulsa, Oklahoma) I responded through this text to my son. "Continue to be safe out there in the world." His reply "Always...you taught me that many years ago though. In order to weave through their minefield, you must educate yourself to their tactics and be aware of the pitfalls at every turn! Love You. Be Safe as well!" This what parenting in my community requires.

Regarding Cancer, while riding my bike recently, I notice a community event that featured pink wearing apparel as a unifying symbol for Brest cancer awareness. And a proponent of the event mentioned that 'Brest cancer affects all of us,' which is true. Some how our culture allows too many in this build to choose not to see how racism affects all of us too. I'm not an authority on implicit bias in this building but I have an opinion. There is a price to pay with the contract we all cosign to be the chosen people especially with the leaven laced addictiveness of whiteness as part of your makeup. I do not believe there is fine print on that contract that excludes dismantling racism. I believe in the course of action that this building and beloved conversations is trying to take to dismantle racism.

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