

Disarm Hatred

Editor's note: Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs, issued the following statement on Wednesday, May 18 in response to the tragedy in Buffalo:

At the Tops market in Buffalo, New York on May 14, people were doing ordinary things. Picking up groceries after visiting a husband in a nursing home; buying a birthday cake for a son. We don't often think about the ordinary people around us, about how they enrich the life of our communities. But in that viciously cruel moment at the Tops market, ten important lives were ended – people whose days were filled with support for their families and communities.

Aaron Salter, Ruth Whitfield, Roberta Drury, Hayward Patterson, Pearl Young, Margus Morrison, Geraldine Talley, Celestine Chaney, Kat Massey, and Andrew MackNeil. Even in the brief descriptions of their lives, there is so much generosity and love. They were helping their families. They were making their communities stronger.

Their generous lives were cut short by virulent hatred, recklessly armed. A bitter repetition of the murderous racial hatred rending our nation. The lies fueling this hatred are entrenched in large and obscure media outlets. They are spouted by people seeking, and gaining, power. They are increasingly lethal because we are awash in guns.

Senator Murphy (D-CT), a ceaseless advocate for using the law to reduce the supply of guns, is calling for a vote on such legislation in the Senate. The Senate should vote. Let us see the senators who stand in the way of even modest progress towards reducing the weapons of war and terror so easily available. Let us hold accountable the senators who will not even strengthen laws to do background checks and preserve their records.

President Biden expressed the hope of most Americans when he asserted "I promise you, hate will not prevail. White supremacy will not have the last word." But passive hope against violent hatred will not prevail. By our determined words, our actions, our votes, we must defend ourselves and our neighbors' rights to live full, strong, generous lives. Only in action can we diminish and disarm hate.