

# ABRAHAM'S TABLE FORUM SERIES

Hate Crimes  
Anti - Semitism



Rabbi Joseph Potasnik

People simply detest those who they perceive as being different. It is the dislike of the unlike.

Rev. Dr. Elias D. Mallon

There is difference between education and training.

Dir. Interfaith Affrs. PII Ibrahim Sayar

The real fight is between the extremes of all traditions and moderate people.



## What is Anti Semitism? Why? What can we do?

Abraham's table is a forum series organized by the center for interfaith affairs of Peace Islands Institute. It aims to establish a common ground among Abrahamic traditions. This month's topic was (Hate Crimes and Anti-Semitism)

Hate crimes are committed all over the world. Nowadays we are experiencing a rise of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia based hate crimes in USA. In this session we will examine anti-Semitism. What really is anti-Semitism? How do Abrahamic traditions perceive Anti-Semitism and other discriminations? Why is this crime committed? What can we do to prevent such crime in our society as a faith community?

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Rabbi Joseph Potasnik**, raised in Lynn, Massachusetts, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik is the only child of two Holocaust survivors. Rabbi Potasnik graduated from Yeshiva University in 1972 and continued on to receive a master's degree from Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, a division of Yeshiva University. He then obtained a law degree from Brooklyn Law School. As a co-host of Religion on the Line since its beginning in 1982, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik is noted for his passion, his warmth and his humor. A popular guest and commentator on local and national radio and television programs, he couples enthusiasm for social issues with the wise insights of the Jewish tradition. He carries these unique skills over to his work at Congregation Mount Sinai in Brooklyn Heights, NY; to his role as Executive Vice President of the New York Board of Rabbis; and to his chaplaincy of the New York City Fire Department.

**Rev. Dr. Elias D. Mallon, SA, PhD**, Education and Interreligious Affairs Officer at the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Rev. Dr. Elias D. Mallon, a native New Yorker, is an ordained member of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. Fr. Elias was first professed in August of 1963 and was ordained in January 1971. He obtained a licentiate degree in Old Testament studies and a PhD in Middle Eastern languages from the Catholic University of America. He researched and wrote his dissertation at Eberhard Karls Universität in Tübingen, Germany. He has been involved in the Roman Catholic/Christian-Muslim dialogue on the local, national and international level since 1985 and has published several articles and two books on Islam. Muslims in North America (1989), Islam: What Catholics Need to Know (2006), which won second prize at the National Catholic Press Association 2007, and his latest article is "The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God"

**Ibrahim Sayar** is the Director of the Center for Interfaith Affairs at the Peace Islands Institute. He has his theological ordination from Harran University in Turkey and studied master's degree in Psychology at Concordia University in Chicago. He has been involved in interfaith and intercultural dialogue activities for the last 10 years in Chicago, Boston and New York. He is happily married with two children named Abdurrahim and Omer Rasim.

## KEYNOTES

It starts with Jews but it does not end with Jews. The person attacked me today will attack you tomorrow

We have to make it down to the congressional level

If there is Moses, there will be Pharaoh.

**Rabbi Joseph Potasnik**, Executive Vice President, New York Board of Rabbis. Rabbi Potasnik talked about a superficial and real, sincere dialog. He mentioned the raising anti-Semitism recently and questioned why? "Education, bad economy, extreme right seems to be reasons behind anti-Semitism" he said, "the root of anti-Semitism, islamophilia, anti-Christianity is because people simply detest those who they perceive as being different. It is the dislike of the unlike." Rabbi suggested speaking louder to defend one another's rights. According to him people are selective with their anger." We have to build stronger coalitions" he said. "It starts with Jews but it does not end with Jews the person attacked me today will attack you tomorrow"

**Rev. Dr. Elias D. Mallon, SA, PhD**, Education and Interreligious Affairs Officer, The Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Rev. Mallon talked about the change in people's attitude since 9-11. "Some things have changed, I do not know why" he said. He suggested that people are less tolerant than 10 years ago. He suggested education as a solution. "There is difference between education and training." He said against Rabbi's point. Yes we have to work more closely together and louder however, he said, "We have to make it down to the congressional level."

**Ibrahim Sayar**, Director, Center for Interfaith Affairs at the Peace Islands Institute. Mr. Sayar, talked about the sources of evil or hatred according to Islam. He summarized these as Satan and evil soul (nafs); he also gave examples from Quran and Hadith [sayings of prophet Muhammed, pbuh]. He later talked about the motivations of hate crimes with a self-criticism as Muslim. He underlined the real fight is between the extremes of all traditions and moderate people. As part of a solution Mr. Sayar offered continuous dialog, establishing trust, providing first hand information and working around solid projects together.

