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Beware Trump’s incendiary post-election words

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We are living in a dangerous time, and by we I mean us, the Jews living in the United States. Make no mistake about this.

Joe Biden’s victory may yet come back to haunt us in a way far different than the one imagined by the misguided 30 percent of Jews who voted for President Trump. Within hours of watching the electoral tide turn against him, the president lit a fuse that has the potential to blow up in our Jewish faces. We need to be aware of that and we need to find ways to deal with it.

There is a reason why most Jewish voters say they feel less secure than they did four years ago, as a survey conducted on behalf of the Jewish Electorate Institute recently showed. As I have noted in previous columns, almost from the moment Trump announced his candidacy in 2015, there has been a dramatic rise in anti-Semitic acts in the United States—with the perpetrators of those acts (a significant segment of Trump’s base) crediting him for giving them the green light through his tweets and his spoken words.

With each year since, the number of anti-Semitic acts rose. In May, the ADL released its 2019 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents. It showed an increase of 12 percent over 2018, “with a disturbing 56 percent increase in assaults,” the ADL reported. Even more frightening, it said, “The audit found there were, on average, as many as six anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. for each day in the calendar year—the highest level of anti-Semitic activity ever recorded by ADL.”

Among the over 2100 incidents were 919 incidents of vandalism and 61 incidents of assault. The latter resulted in 90 people being harmed and five people being killed. Incidents were reported in every one of the contiguous 48 states and the District of Columbia. Ranking the highest were New York (430), New Jersey (345) and California (330), with Massachusetts (114) and Pennsylvania (109) completing the top five. Together, they accounted for nearly 45 percent of the total number of incidents.

There are a whole lot of reasons for this trend, but the various Trump-supporting white supremacist movements head the list. Beginning on late Saturday afternoon, they were among the most visible participants in so-called “Stop the Steal” protests around the country and some even came visibly armed. They are clearly angry and it may not take much to get them to turn violent. If they do, Jews will be among their preferred targets.

Anti-Semitism was playing an ugly role even as the election was on-going. In the words of a study published on November 2 in MIT Technology Review, “Anti-Semitic narratives have become a core strategy for some groups.” The author, staff writer Tate Ryan-Mosley, noted, for example, that on June 12, a new channel called “Black Lives Matter Global” cropped up on an encrypted messaging platform called Telegram. According to Ryan-Mosley, the channel was “rife with anti-Semitic rhetoric…[that] was shared in many white supremacist groups on Telegram,” and even on Facebook.

that Florida, for one, was inundated “with disinformation this election, particularly targeted toward Hispanic voters,” Ryan-Mosley noted. Much of of it was anti-Black and anti-Semitic. A Miami-based Spanish station, Radio Caracol, ran a 16-minute segment suggesting that a Biden victory would lead to a dictatorship run by “Jews and Blacks.”

Then there are the conspiracy theorists. Ryan-Mosley noted, as one example, that a week after it was reported that Michael Bloomberg had donated $250,000 to help boost Biden’s support among Jewish voters in Florida, the Highlands County Republican Party, no less, began running ads on Facebook accusing Bloomberg and the liberal philanthropist George Soros of trying to buy Florida votes.

On October 26, a conservative group, American Action News, with over a million followers on Facebook, ran an ad there targeting Virginia voters. It showed a picture of Soros and carried the caption, “Burn It Down: Soros planning nationwide chaos if Trump wins.”

And that brings us to Trump, his rhetoric and his tweets. As has been his style since mid-2015, the president relies on so-called “dog whistles” to fire up his base. As defined by Merriam-Webster, a dog whistle is “a coded message communicated through words or phrases commonly understood by a particular group of people, but not by others.” Jewish law has another name for it: lashon hara, evil speech.

In his somewhat rambling discourse a week ago Thursday night, Trump repeatedly played into the kind of hate-filled falsehoods that drive the White Nationalists by twice referring to “powerful special interests,” and once referring to “Wall Street bankers,” both of which are White Nationalist code words for Jews in general and George Soros in particular. He also blamed “historic election interference from big media, big money, and big tech” in the vote count. All three are also code words for Jews.

“Big media” has long been a battle cry among Jew-haters that the Jews own the media. In 2016, for example, the website Real Jew News featured a rant headlined “Who owns the Trump-attacking media,” which concluded with the observation that “the Jew-owned press wants Trump dumped.” Such rants have been echoed repeatedly during the 2020 campaign.

The current personification of the Jewish control of the media is Michael Bloomberg. Even Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, buys into this, as a February tweet demonstrated: “It’s almost as if he owns the media,” Cruz said, which prompted swift condemnation from the ADL and others.

“Big money” almost always refers to Soros and/or the Rothschild family. According to the ADL, in just over four days in May, anti-Soros tweet jumped from about an average 20,000 a day to over 500,000 a day. Anti-Soros messages also spiked on Facebook that month, according to the London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue, which recorded 68,746 mentions of Soros in May, over 30,000 more than the record-breaking posts about himthat appeared in October 2018.

Last January, a tweet appeared claiming that Soros owned the lab in Wuhan, China, that developed and then released into the world the SARS-CoV-2 virus that is COVID-19.

Michael Caputo was a senior adviser to Trump’s 2016 campaign. In April, Trump appointed him as assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. Only weeks before, in late March, Caputo was claiming that Soros was behind the pandemic. In fact, he tweeted, his “political agenda REQUIRES a pandemic.” As JTA’s Ron Campeas reported in April after Caputo’s appointment, only days before, “Caputo tweeted a photo of Soros captioned ‘The real virus behind everything,’ and added skulls and crossbones” to the photo.

Then there is the Rothschild family. Also in March before his appointment, Caputo tweeted that the economist David Rothschild was “an inbred elitist sphincter whose family craves control.” That this Rothschild is not one of those Rothschilds is something Caputo apparently did not know.

Back to Soros. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the QAnon soon-to-be member of Congress who had Trump’s enthusiastic backing, has posted that “Soros funds the destruction of America by supporting BLM /Antifa /Fake News Media, the true enemy of the American people.” He also, she said, was one of “the puppet masters that fund this global evil.”

Most frightening is former House Speaker Newt Gingrich’s comment on Fox News on Sunday in which he openly accused Soros of financing the stealing of the election. “I think he [Biden] would have to do a lot to convince Republicans that this is anything except a left-wing power grab financed by people like George Soros, deeply laid in at the local level. And, frankly, I think that it is a corrupt, stolen election.”

What makes this so frightening is that Trump himself called attention to Gingrich’s comments in several tweets later that day.

It must be noted that anti-Soros tweets in 2017—including by the likes of Ann Coulter, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) and Donald Trump Jr.—prompted the October 27 massacre at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The tweets claimed that Soros was funding an immigrant caravan coming from Honduras that Trump had been railing about. Tweets are no laughing matter.

Finally, there is “big tech,” which boasts such names as Mark Zuckerberg and Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook), Sergey Brinn (Google), Max Levchin (Paypal), Jeff Weiner (LinkedIn), Devin Wenig (eBay), Andrew Mason (Groupon), and several score others.

As of this writing, Trump has yet to concede. Nevertheless, his tweets and post-election rants are out there for all to see, read and hear.

Sooner or later, his White Nationalist supporters will want to pay back those who were responsible for Trump losing. Trump already has told them who their targets are: “big media, big money, and big tech,” meaning any Jew they come across.

Trump’s post-election rhetoric and tweets have been filled with dog whistles, and there are reports that he is preparing to hold campaign-style super-spreader rallies to further incite his base. Dog whistles are classic lashon hara, evil speech, and lashon hara can kill. We saw that at Tree of Life. We saw that when nationalist rabbis in Israel classified the late Prime Minister as a “rodeif,” a pursuer out to kill someone, which led to his assassination 25 years ago last Wednesday.

Psalm 120:3-4 states, “What can you profit, what can you gain, O deceitful tongue? A warrior’s sharp arrows, with hot coals of broom-wood.” A commentary by the 18th century scholar Rabbi David Altschuler explained it this way: A warrior’s arrows kill from a distance. “So, too, do you, who speaks lashon hara,  kill someone standing at a distance.” (See his Metzudat David commentary on the verse.)

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