

# Editorial: Antisemitism: Are you tempted not to care?

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Within days of each other, two North Texas news stories gained global attention. We likely care about one more than the other.

On Jan. 13, Stewart Rhodes—founder and leader of Oath Keepers—was arrested in Little Elm on charges of “[seditious conspiracy](#).” On Jan. 15, a man identified as Malik Faisal Akram—a British national—held Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three others [hostage](#) at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville.

Rhodes, though only recently moving to Texas from Montana, holds at least one view in common with many Texans who believe Donald Trump won the 2020 presidential election and Joe Biden’s win should be overturned. It seems Rhodes was willing to see that happen violently.

The other story may have gained less attention among Texans, because it involved a synagogue and a British national. Neither seem to be particularly high on Texans’ give-a-rip meter.

## Finding comfort where there is none

When we encounter news of Rabbi Cytron-Walker and his congregants being held hostage, we might distract or comfort ourselves with the idea no one was killed, it wasn’t one of us, and Akram was a [Muslim](#).

As [grateful](#) as Rabbi Cytron-Walker is to be alive, the fact he and his community live with pervasive and persistent antisemitism that can turn violent at any time offers little comfort for them. It should not be any

comfort to us, either.

The fact a foreign national was the perpetrator—this time—is no comfort, either, because there have been plenty of incidents of homegrown antisemitism. You can read a record of them [here](#).

Nor does a foreign national being the perpetrator relieve us of our responsibility to look after the welfare of our Jewish neighbors here.

Furthermore, any notion of finding some comfort in the hostage-taker being a Muslim obscures several facts. It insinuates the incident somehow makes sense by virtue of a Muslim being involved, as though we forget many American Christians have a very low view of Muslims. It ignores the fact many Muslims do not wish Jews harm, while overlooking the fact many Americans *do* loathe Jews. We should find no solace or quarter in shifting the blame.

We must care about antisemitism, but how will we come to care?

## **Two paths to giving a rip**

The numbers don't seem to generate much concern among us. The simple fact antisemitic incidents continue unabated in the United States suggests the overwhelming volume of hateful actions and words aimed at Jews here is not enough to raise our level of concern to the point of stopping such harm.

Unfortunately, we are not likely to care about our Jewish neighbors as we should until one of two things happens: (1) we become friends and/or (2) we become targets.

One reason some people pull back from interfaith friendship is a fear that non-Christian convictions will weaken Christian ones. Bob Roberts Jr. and others like him have been showing us for years this doesn't have to be and

isn't necessarily the case.

Pastor Roberts co-founded [Multi-Faith Neighbors Network](#) with Imam Mohamed Magid and Rabbi David Saperstein. Their working relationship is built on personal relationships of trust and respect developed with intention over years.

[The mission of MFNN](#) is to build “neighborhoods and cities that are more interconnected and resilient to hate and violence,” even among “faith groups that are suspicious and even antagonistic to each other.”

In doing so, “MFNN believes that multi-faith relationships allow everyone to hold onto their own beliefs while still building deep bonds with other faiths and serving their city together.”

Roberts and his co-laborers' work to build trust, respect and friendship across faiths produced [positive results](#) during Congregation Beth Israel's terrifying ordeal.

Not everyone chooses the path of friendship, however. Seeming to choose a much harder route, some only begin caring when they begin suffering, too.

Martin Niemöller is one of the best examples. Niemöller gave up his support for the Nazis in 1930s Germany when they took control of the churches. He is perhaps most famous for “[First They Came](#),” his poem describing his change of heart.

“First they came for the Communists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Communist  
Then they came for the Socialists  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Socialist  
Then they came for the trade unionists

And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a trade unionist  
Then they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out  
Because I was not a Jew  
Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me”

History and human behavior suggest as long as Christians are not regular targets of hatred and violence, we aren’t likely to get too worked up about Jews being held hostage in a synagogue—even when it’s in our own neighborhood. We’re more apt to tune in to arrests for “seditious conspiracy.”

But here again, we are comforting ourselves with falsehoods. We cannot claim to follow Jesus and simultaneously be callous or indifferent to hatred against others.

We cannot look away from hatred against Jews here because such hatred is not directed at us. To do so is not only to deny our Jewish neighbors; it is also to deny millions of our brothers and sisters around the world who experience just such hatred [regularly](#).

We do better to learn the path of friendship, not because it will prevent violence—it won’t—but because it reflects Christ’s love for people.

We do better to reject the temptation not to care.

*Eric Black is the executive director, publisher and editor of the Baptist Standard. He can be reached at [eric.black@baptiststandard.com](mailto:eric.black@baptiststandard.com) or on Twitter at [@EricBlackBSP](https://twitter.com/EricBlackBSP). The views expressed are those solely of the author.*