

April 2023

Dear Fellow Clergy and Friends of Faith,

You have probably seen the bumper sticker: "What would happen if there were a war, and no one showed up?" We are proposing a new sticker that reads: "What if there were a genocide and everyone spoke up to stop it?"

Our voice, a gift given by God, may be our greatest weapon to stop current atrocities and prevent the next genocide. No, we cannot go back and restore the lives of those who died, but we can change the future and prevent another genocide.

Make no mistake. Genocide is the ultimate crime against humanity. As we have become more sophisticated as a civilization, we have come to recognize that genocide is an egregious crime committed to destroy, in whole or in part, ethnic, racial, or religious groups.

Last year, Governor Jared Polis proclaimed April as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month in Colorado in recognition of citizens' desire to combat acts of genocide and crimes against humanity. The state declared that in order to prevent future genocides and crimes against humanity, effective prevention measures must be implemented before a crisis has erupted and educating the public can help to protect individual rights and promote a culture of lawfulness to prevent future genocides.

Why April? The world has witnessed many genocides that all began in April. Millions of people perished; cultures were destroyed; communities and nations were ruined

April 3 - Darfur 2003-today; 400,000 lives lost
April 5 - Bosnia 1992-1996; 200,000 lives lost
April 7 - Rwanda 1994; 800,000 lives lost
April 8 - Holocaust 1933-1945; 11,000,000 lives lost
April 17- Cambodia 1975-1979; 2,000,000 lives lost
April 24- Armenians 1915-1923; 1,500,000 lives lost

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the United Nations after World War II. While the definition of genocide was only adopted in the 1940s, we know that genocides were occurring well before this time. Today, in the 21st century genocide occurs against Darfuris in Sudan, and crimes against humanity to the Rohingya minority in Myanmar, the Uyghars in China, the Tigrayans in Ethiopia, the indigenous Christians, and Yezidis in the Middle East.

We must also remember and commemorate the atrocities that happened in our own country-the United States of America. When European settlers arrived in the Americas, historians estimate there were over 10 million Native Americans living here. By 1900, their estimated population was under 300,000. In the 19th century, 4,000 Cherokee people died on the Trail of Tears.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries African people were kidnapped from the continent of Africa and forced into slavery in the American colonies. Millions of Africans were enslaved, tortured and treated as tools to build this country. The economics of enslavement, the violence of slavery, sexual violence against enslaved Black women, the commodification of people, and last words of lynching victims dramatize the suffering racial terrorism imposed on entire communities. Very unfortunately, today civil violations and discrimination persists in both populations.

Dennis Prager, a noted ethicist, writer, and TV personality, penned a blog post asking that if you were in danger of losing your life and had to choose one person to save you, who would it be?

His response was a 'clergyperson', for they are often tuned into the pain of others and likely would be the most moral and most sensitive, even risking their lives to save yours.

The Coalition Against Global Genocide in partnership with the Archdiocese of Denver, Colorado Council of Churches, Greater Metropolitan Denver Ministerial Alliance, Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of the Rockies, Northeast Denver Islamic Center and Rocky Mountain Rabbis & Cantors, are reaching out to invite you to join us as we launch this very special month of April as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month as well as Sermon Weekend which will take place on April 28-30.

We are writing to you because people are dying today at the hands of others, and you are among those most likely to speak up to save them. We are asking you to let your voice be heard by bringing forth our message to your congregants to make them aware of what continues to happen this very day. Our obligation today is do what others have failed to do by bringing forth the stories of those who cannot speak for themselves and are lying in the graves of history. It is our hope that in turn members of your congregations will help stop and prevent these horrendous atrocities so that one day all people will be able to live in peace.

If you have additional questions, please contact Roz Duman at rozduman@aol.com or Michelle Hale Allen at mhaleallen@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Daniel A. Roberts, CoAGG Board of Directors/Chair, Sermon Weekend Roz Duman, Founder/Executive Director CoAGG