Senators, Shandas and Stoopers

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Imagine a candidate for public office who is an outspoken member of the Ku Kux Klan, who preaches hatred of Blacks, who calls on America to penalize Black African countries economically, militarily and politically. Do you think Black politicians would endorse such a racist? Do you think they would welcome this person into a “big tent” coalition of “progressives?”

Of course not.

Black leaders would have the courage and self-respect to repudiate racism; they would refuse to endorse or coddle up to haters. They would make public statements calling on the American public to renounce racism of all kinds, not to allow racist poison into the American political system. Bravo Black leaders!

But now imagine a candidate for public office who is an outspoken antisemite who preaches hatred of Jews and the Jewish State of Israel, who calls on America to withhold all support of Israel – financial, political, military. Imagine this hateful candidate praising or condoning terrorism against Israelis/Jews. Do you think Jewish politicians would endorse such an antisemite? Do you think they would welcome this person into a “big tent” coalition of “progressives?”

We would think that Jewish leaders – like Black leaders – would stand up mightily against the haters. We would think that they would use every forum to call for a civil society that strenuously rejects racism, antisemitism, and bigotry of all kinds.

Shockingly, though, some Jewish politicians actually endorse and kiss up to blatant antisemites who openly despise Jews and the Jewish State. Isn’t it a “shanda” that a senator of Jewish ancestry is one of the most vocal critics of Israel and has sponsored legislation that would seriously endanger Israel’s security? Another Jewish senator is a “stooper” who bows down to antisemites for the sake of his party’s “big tent.” Such “leaders” not only betray the Jewish People, but they betray the very values upon which American democracy is based. Although they may pay lip service to the notion that

“hatred has no place in America,” they condone, encourage and endorse hatred.

How wonderful it would be if instead of shandas and stoopers, we had courageous leaders who refused to be part of any “big tent” that included antisemites, racists and those who would slander and undermine the state of Israel. Wouldn’t it be heartening to have Jewish profiles in courage instead of defilers of courage?

When the Jews of the ancient Persian Empire were threatened with extinction, Mordecai sent a message to Esther, the Jewish Queen of Ahasuerus. He asked Esther to intervene on behalf of the Jews but Esther was reluctant. Mordecai told Esther: “Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s house any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain silent at this time then relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from elsewhere; but you and your father’s house will perish; and who knows whether you are in the royal estate for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13-14).

Mordecai’s advice was relevant to Esther … and to Jewish leaders of all generations, including our own. When the Jewish People face peril, unflinching courage is required. Those in positions of power have the unique opportunity to defend the honor and safety of the Jewish People. They must come to understand that antisemitism is also aimed at those Jews who act against the interests of the Jewish People and the Jewish State. If they remain silent at this time, deliverance will arise for the Jews from elsewhere. And the Jewish shandas and stoopers will go down in perfidy.

It doesn’t have to be this way. The shandas and stoopers might see the light and rise to their historic challenge.