

Just a few short weeks ago, I went to the the Indiana Repertory Theater to see their production of the Diary of Anne Frank. The truth is I have not seen that play in years. I know that I read the diary, and that I saw the movie, but most of the memory of it was gone until I saw it again here in Indy. There were countless powerful moments in the play, but there's one that moved me more deeply than any other, and that rests right in the front of my memory. It's a scene in the play, shortly after the intermission where Anne climbs up the steps in her family's hideaway. She gets about halfway and then stops, and has a seat right there facing the audience. If the play were on television, she would be right in the middle of the screen. In that moment the lights dim and a spotlight shines on Anne. She looks up, as if she could see the sky through the roof of the building and delivers an intimate monologue about coming of age, and about having feelings for a young man in the same hideaway. And it actually heightens the horror of the moment, the young woman is humanized amidst a sea of violence and chaos. There's a shift that happens in that moment. Up until that point Anne is just a character, a figure in the play, but after that she becomes someone any one of us might have known, a young person in our

community, the daughter of a dear friend. A human being. There's something so vivid in my mind about that moment, actually about all of the moments that Anne steps forward to offer her words alone and directly to the audience. Those were the moments when we, the audience, spent time with Anne, met Anne, just by herself. There is something so profound to meeting just one person, deeply. In the many years since it was adapted from the diary, the play has been performed across the globe, introducing members of our world to the horrors of white supremacy by telling us the story of a single person.

And we are here tonight after our world has suffered another tragedy. One week ago today 50 Muslim people were murdered in Christchurch, New Zealand by the very same white supremacy. And among the news feeds and articles one thing keeps playing itself over and over in my mind. Abdul Aziz. One person. His story is actually a heroic one. Abdul saw the attacker come toward the mosque and began to throw things at him, luring him away as his children watched from the window begging him to come back inside. He said he was willing to give his life to keep everyone in that building safe. The New Zealand police

estimate that he saved a great many lives by doing so. Amidst the wash of news, photographs and videos I keep thinking of him, of his story and his heroism. He himself moved to New Zealand fleeing the violence in Afghanistan and was instead confronted with it again. His courage, and his story, moved me so deeply.

There is a peculiar saying in our Jewish tradition that states that when someone saves a single person, it is as if they have saved the entire world. I first learned this quote from one of my teachers, a bright man with round features and a beard that seemed to go all the way around his head to the other side. He loved that quote. Referring to Adam, the text reads that first “a single person was created in the world, to teach that [...] anyone who saves a single soul from Israel, they are deemed by Scripture as if they had saved a whole world. [A single person was created] for the sake of peace among humankind¹” He taught us, that because the Torah says that everyone is descended from a single person, Adam, a whole world can come from any one person. And that

¹ Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

the entire world, is carried in each and every body of this Earth. We know the world, one person at a time.

This past week we celebrated the holiday of Purim. Like many of our Jewish holidays, Purim is centered around the retelling of a classic story in our cannon, one that has captured our hearts for millenia. This past Sunday we heard the story retold according to the Beatles. The plot still rings true, with of course a little help from our friends. I love this story, it's complete with villains and heroes and to me hinges on one moment. Many of us know the story. The adviser to a grand king is embarrassed when a single person won't bow down to him as he parades through the city. Incensed, he convinces the king not only to punish the one who wouldn't bow to him, Mordecai, but every Jew in the entire kingdom. Every Jew in a significantly vast empire is slated to be killed, until one moment. It's that moment. The queen reveals to the king that she too is a Jew. In that moment it's as if a veil is lifted from the king's eyes. It's in that moment, and I am certain not before, that he realizes that he has decreed that real humans are slated to be killed at his bequest and he sees a vast group of people as exactly that, people.

Here the entire story changes, the king reverses the decree. Its through the vantage point of a single person, that we see the entire world.

And today, we gathered at Masjid Al-Fajr, a mosque here in Indianapolis, to join with the Muslim community as they prayed. We began by standing outside and received a warm welcome from Dr. Halima Al-Khattab the president of the congregation. After that we were invited to come into the mosque. We naturally formed to the sides of the hallway leading to the Masjid, the sanctuary. And as members of the community came in to join the prayer service, they found a line of members of the Jewish community on either side of them holding up signs of love and support. In this moment, exactly one week after the events in New Zealand, a time of heightened anxiety for all of us, the members of Al-Fajr walked into their place of worship with solidarity and friendship. It's very important to note that they were here when we gathered after the Pittsburgh shooting. We never wanted to have to reciprocate, but here we were. After prayers members of the Muslim and Jewish communities joined together in conversation, meeting and talking with one another. As I was walking

to my car a member of the mosque community came up to me and said that he had had a wonderful conversation with a member of our IHC community , and that he was wondering if he could come to join us sometime for services or an event, just to continue to build the connection between our communities. One relationship, one person.

We can't possibly know every person in our world, but at the same time we cannot afford to live in a world where we don't know each other, because from ignorance comes hate and from hate comes the violence we see all too often. So I invite us, each of us, to meet someone new this Spring, someone we don't normally talk to, someone who has a different life story than us, and meet the whole world, through a single human being.