



By adopting victimhood we betray our self-image

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It is impossible to predict how long it will take for the dust to settle after last month's general election. Deep anger and mistrust affected not only relations in our own community (including within families and between friends), but also, alarmingly, with other communities as well.

How do we begin to get back to a better place? We can start by recognising that diversity of thought in our community is a strength, not a weakness, and one that has always been central to Jewish life.

If we forget this, we risk 'othering' and alienating Jews who have different views from our own – even, sometimes very different views – and we undermine our own ability to participate fully in making this a better society for all (including asylum seekers and refugees, as well as members of other minority communities).

Then, we need to see our fight against anti-

semitism as part of a commitment to fighting all forms of racism, within all political parties and, more broadly, society generally, not solely confined to the racism that affects us.

And we have to take on board that, if we really hope to achieve this, then we need to make alliances with other minorities and work alongside and hand-in-hand with them.

Doing none of these things may result in two consequences: we risk isolating ourselves from the rest of British society by what can be seen as our indifference to the injustices facing others; and there is always a risk that other minorities feel that the racism that affects them doesn't get the same attention as anti-semitism, even when our concerns are similar.

We need to reactivate the Jewish voice on the broad issues of social justice in the UK. This requires us to stand shoulder to shoulder with those Muslims who, since the election, have said they fear for their safety and for the future of their children.

And we need to make our voice more prominent in the campaigns aimed at seeking justice for the Windrush generation, for



WE NEED TO REACTIVATE THE JEWISH VOICE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

allowing asylum seekers the right to work and for reuniting refugee families.

We need to make sure we are consistent in insisting that all political parties, not just one, have proper procedures to deal with all forms of racism, and then hold them to account.

These would be signs that we are a community that not only protects itself, which it must do, but also protects and looks out for others, which it also must do. As Rabbi Hillel taught, if we are only for ourselves, what are we?

But working to combat racism is only half the story. We have to avoid adopting victimhood as a dominant expression of our Jewishness. This is a betrayal of Jewish experience,

and damaging both to our self-image and to the identity we project to the outside world. A positive engagement with the wider society must be a better legacy for our children, and could be central to our post-election healing.

So I would like our community to come together by strengthening our work on social justice. Tackling child poverty would be a good place to start as it disproportionately affects minority communities, not excluding our own.

I know that many of us already give generously to food banks, but donating is not all we need to do. Jewish teaching requires us to practise not just charity but *tzedakah* (justice, righteousness, and fairness).

This means that we also have to look at how to decrease the number of children in Britain living in poverty (4.1 million, expected to rise to 5.2 million by 2022).

This should be a priority across all our communal institutions. Because, in addition to the good that may come out of such work, it also provides a tangible opportunity to come together, to heal our rifts and to put into action the values we all share.