

More Jewish Blood Spilled in Crown Heights - Tablet Magazine

Armin Rosen

Jews are still routinely being beaten on the streets of New York City. On Aug. 27, a young man heaved a large brick at Abraham Gopin, a 63-year-old member of the Chabad Hasidic community exercising in Lincoln Terrace Park, toward the eastern end of Crown Heights. Gopin was then approached by a man who yelled an anti-Jewish slur and then began punching him before hurling a large paving stone, knocking out Gopin's front teeth and fracturing his nose. Benny Friedman, a Hasidic musician and Gopin's son-in-law, tweeted a [photo](#) of the victim's blood-stained tzitzit. "This is absolutely frightening," Friedman [wrote](#), "and obviously something that a civilization should never tolerate."

Like others attacked over the past year and even over the past month—including three members of Williamsburg's Satmar community [assaulted](#) the day after Tisha B'Av—there was no mistaking Gopin for a member of any other ethnic or religious group, and no discernible motive or provocation on the attacker's part, other than his target being a Jew.

The attack on Gopin was especially violent—the brick left a gash large enough to require staples in his forehead. There have been dozens of violent incidents targeting Jews in New York over the past couple of years, but few have produced images of blood-soaked religious objects, an especially visceral reminder of how any outward expression of identity can endanger Jews even in some of the most Jewish places in the most Jewish city in America. And yet the daily experience of anti-Semitism in the city is often more routine. Later on the morning of Gopin's attack, an East Flatbush resident named Yossi Blachman [tweeted](#), "My 12 year old was just at that park 2 hours ago. As soon as he gets there he sees an Anti Semite talk to his friend pointing at my son saying those F****ing Jews.... he was frightened and immediately left the park."

When Tablet reached him, Blachman explained that the people who had pointed and cursed at his son were in their teens or early 20s. "It happened to my kid today, but it happens so often," Blachman added, explaining he'd had almost identical language directed at him near his home one year earlier. "It's not like a one in a million thing. It's something that's happening to people daily." Still, it was the first time his son had experienced anti-Semitic harassment of this kind, in a place not far from where a man in his mid-60s had been bludgeoned just a few hours earlier.

Yesterday's incidents offer a snapshot of the city's [ongoing anti-Semitism outbreak](#). Jews of all ages are subjected to violent attacks, along with daily cases of more mundane forms of harassment. The incidents aren't exactly a secret. It didn't take long for Mayor Bill de Blasio to [tweet](#) about the attack on Gopin, announcing that the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force was on the case. Of course, this is about the bare minimum one could reasonably expect in reaction to an incident in which the attacker allegedly called his

victim a “[dirty Jew](#)” before smashing him in the face with a large stone. Everyone knows that violence against Jews in the city has climbed sharply over the past couple of years, and yet City Hall has offered little in the way of a specific or organized response to the problem.

The causes of the epidemic are difficult to pin down with precision, and the city has hardly treated the incidents as a crisis—last month, Tablet [found](#) that a proposed mayoral office on hate crimes prevention, the creation of which has been de Blasio’s primary response to the violence, had barely progressed beyond the planning phase and had no dedicated staff. [De Blasio has also repeatedly insisted](#) that the attacks against Jews in New York are driven by a white supremacist movement connected to Donald Trump despite clear evidence that this is not the case and, in fact, many of the attacks are being carried out by people of color with no ties to the politics of white supremacy.

On the national level, discussions of anti-Semitism rage without apparent reference to the violence in Brooklyn, which defies any easy categorization, has little apparent relationship with national politics or political figures, and involves members of racial minority groups rather than white nationalists or other more expedient villains. Each successive outrage invariably gives way to a passive, citywide acceptance of Jews being routinely targeted in 21st-century New York for no reason other than their religious and ethnic identity, along with a general shrug at whatever factors are driving the outbreak. Looking at the blood of Abraham Gopin, it is disturbing to consider what it might take for this dynamic to finally change.

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