

Trump Backers' Anti-Semitic Taunts and Threats

I'm 25 and Jewish, and never once in those 25 years have I personally experienced anti-Semitism. Until this election cycle.

I wasn't ignorant. I knew the atrocities of the past, knew Jews were still targets here and around the world, but I never experienced it. I grew up in an Atlanta suburb. There were Jewish kids in all of my public school classes, so not only did I never experience anti-Semitism, but I also never experienced the unsettling feeling of being "the other."

Then a month ago Donald Trump tweeted a graphic using the Star of David. You probably saw it. Hillary Clinton. Piles of cash in the background. The caption inside the star read, "Most Corrupt Candidate Ever."

The image first appeared on a neo-Nazi message board. Draw what conclusions you will from that.

The Trump campaign quickly took down the tweet and replaced it with the exact same graphic but with a circle pasted on top of the Star of David. The image was changed, but it's the Internet. We saw it. You can't erase it.

So, OK. Let's give Trump literally all the benefit of the doubt. Maybe *he* didn't pull it from the neo-Nazi site, or he didn't *know* the tweet was going out, or he didn't *realize* it was a Star of David. After all, the star is red and filled in.

But even with all that leniency, any decent politician, or person, would've apologized after receiving the backlash that the message was akin to Nazi propaganda. Trump could've even gotten away with a fake, halfhearted apology like "I'm sorry if your feelings were hurt."

But he offered nothing. Why? Because his supporters loved it.

Hate has always been in this country, but Trump brews and boils it. When I tweeted my outrage at the anti-Semitic graphic, I expected a few responses calling me an overreacting liberal Jew. What I ended up receiving was far worse.

Trigger warning for the rest of this article.

One person sent me a picture of a frog wearing Nazi garb and standing in front of Auschwitz's gate with the caption "You get a gold star!"

I was disgusted, so I took a screenshot of the picture and asked my followers to report the account to



Guest Column

By Laura Silverman

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Twitter.

I thought that was the end. I went downstairs to have dinner with my family. When I got back online, I had dozens of hateful and threatening notifications.

Many told me to take a nap in an oven. I was sent more pictures of the Auschwitz gates, one Photoshopped so the words we all know instead read, "Not an argument."

My first instinct was terror: Report the offensive tweets and put my account on private. But then I remembered the words of Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, who had died that very day: "Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

I understand why many people go private and silent. It's triggering. Terrifying. Just decades ago we were slaughtered by the millions for our religion. There's no shame in fear and wanting to hide.

But I knew silence would help only me, and I wanted to help many, so I posted screenshots and asked people to please report and share.

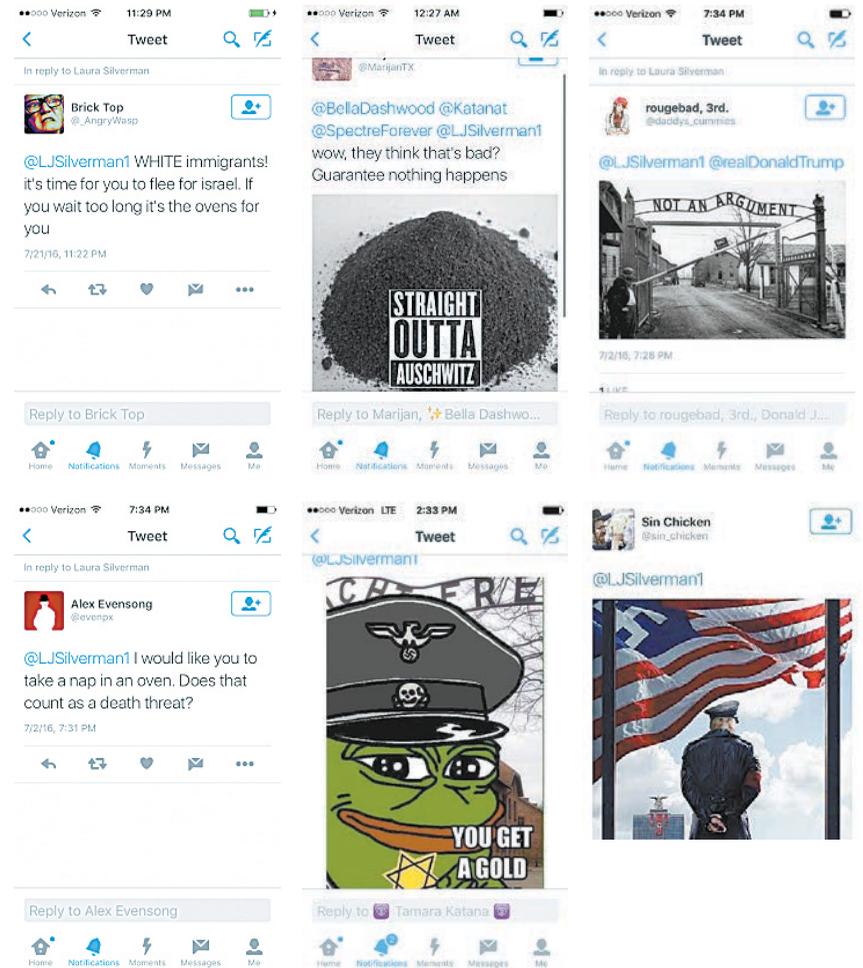
The flood of support was overwhelming, from friends, authors I admire and older Jews who've been fighting this fight since before I was born.

But the threats still sneaked in through the support.

The images in particular terrified me. Pictures of starved men from concentration camps. A picture of a pile of ashes with the words "Straight outta Auschwitz."

This wasn't a one-time incident. While I watched and live-tweeted the Republican National Convention, the flood of hate came back. Messages like "It's time for you to flee for Israel. If you wait too long it's the ovens for you" and images like Trump standing in front of a photoshopped American flag with a swastika instead of 50 stars.

And it continues. While writing this article, I received an email from "Annudah Shoah" which read "They know about you! You Zionist K***. Do you really think you can stop Mr. Trump? You Israeli supremacists have



These are barely fit-for-print examples of the Twitter hate flung at Laura Silverman.

no chance."

OK, I want to step back for a second, because this is just my experience. My Jewish experience. I'm not even the main target; I just know the signs.

My Muslim friends, my LGBTQA+ friends, my friends of color, my female friends and so on also receive threats from Trump supporters. Many of them also experience this hatred in real life; so far, I've had the privilege of enduring it only online.

People say Trump isn't really racist, Islamophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic, etc. People say he just does and says inflammatory things for votes.

People don't understand that's just as dangerous.

Trump has created a toxic atmosphere where death threats from white supremacists are the new norm, where former KKK leader and infamous Holocaust denier David Duke is running for the U.S. Senate, something he hasn't tried since the 20th century, where everyone understands exactly whom Trump and his supporters want to "take back" their country from.

And don't say Trump supporters aren't Trump. A leader is his followers,

and he is nothing without followers. Trump blows the white supremacist dog whistle, and his bigoted supporters respond, gain power and threaten others because — why? They're sick of being politically correct? No.

I'm not deluded enough to think I can persuade a Trump supporter to get off the train, but if you're planning to abstain or vote for a third party in this election because you refuse to vote for Hillary Clinton, please think hard about that decision.

I hope Clinton will move the country forward, but at worst she'll keep the status quo. Trump wants to move the country backward and set it on fire.

Do you care that I'm being threatened? Are you being threatened without realizing it?

Dangerous words lead to lethal actions. So, please, reflect hard on your vote this November; if not, you might accidentally vote against yourself. ■

Laura Silverman is an author, freelance editor and publishing consultant. Her debut novel, "Girl out of Water," comes out in May. Follow her on Twitter at LJSilverman1.