FUNNY YOU DON'T LOOK JEWISH
Rabbi Dan Moskovitz
Temple Sholom, Vancouver BC Canada
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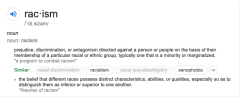
This sermon was pre-recorded and produced like an extended television news segment, including on camera interviews and archival footage. The script is below but it was really written for the screen. That video is here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVsbCvWYUN4

IMAGE	WORDS
Rabbi Dan -	Have you ever heard the phrase, "Funny, you don't look Jewish"? Have you ever said it?
Video **Lower Third: Vanessa Hidary, "The Hebrew Mamita"**	**"I meet a guy at a bar that's cute.** **He wears LL Bean Duck Boots and guards my bar stool when I have to go pee.** **He asks me out for dinner for the following Tuesday I decline;** **Tuesday's Yom Kippur I will be fasting.** **You're Jewish? Wow!** **You don't look Jewish.** **You don't act Jewish.** **And he says it in this tone that sounds like he is complimenting me,** **And I say, and I say** **Nothing!"**
Rabbi Dan -	That poem by Vanessa Hidary, the Hebrew Mamita has over half a million views on YouTube. Clearly it touched on something deep within the Jewish experience. Since the late 20th century, there has been a general assumption that Jewish means white and of Eastern European descent. So if you're black, asian, hispanic or any other Jew of color, you may have been told that you don't look Jewish. Or perhaps worse. Take as just one example what happened to Rivka Campbell, when she sat down in a Toronto synagogue on Kol Nidrei.
Rivka Campbell (1:26 - 2:45) **Rivka Campbell Toronto, ON**	*"I love Kol Nidrei. I think of all the services on during the high holidays, Kol Nidrei, I love so when I go Kol Nidrei, I am focused. I am centered. I am deeply involved in the service. And what had happened was, we are sitting in our seats.*
Re-enactment closeup of a tap on a shoulder,	*And then during the service, when I am, you know, in my spot, there's a tap on my shoulder.*

Rivka Campbell (1:26 - 2:45)	*So I turn around and I'm like, yes. And the person says to me, Oh, I've never seen you here before, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I looked at them and I said, that's interesting because I come every Shabbat and I've never seen you here before. And I turned it around because just the way they asked the question, it was that that feeling of, you know, they wanted to say more is a completely inappropriate question to ask, not just merely for the fact that I'm there and it's Kol Nidrei and you with your entitlement, tap me on the shoulder to ask me this question; what does it matter to you? Um, I hope you're tapping everybody who you've never seen before and asking them the same question, but somehow I doubt it.*
Rabbi Dan -	Rivka was born and raised in Toronto to Jamaican Jewish parents, whose matrilineal Jewish lines start with the Jewish expulsion from Spain to Jamaica. She is a Jew of color and she is not alone.
Rabbi Dan -	Last year the UJA conducted a study on Jews of Color in North America. That alone was significant because in the last 20 years only 41% of Jewish community studies even included any questions about race and ethnicity in the first place.
"12-15% of North American Jews are Jews of color."	The UJA study found that "at least 12-15% of North American Jews are Jews of color.
Rabbi Dan	That means 1 out of 7 Jews in North America is a Jew of Color and yet, when we meet one, in one way or another, we say the words:
Rabbi Dan **Put words on as I say them**	Funny, you don't look Jewish.
Rabbi Dan -	It may sound innocent... but it's racist. I am ashamed to admit that I've said it. It was Purim, days before the COVID lockdown, we were rehearsing the Purim spiel, I was trying to be funny, I wasn't even really thinking; but the pain I caused was real, I apologized, it was accepted and still the shame weighs on my conscience. Uncomfortable Truths, Al heyt shechatani - forgive me; I am guilty of this sin.

Definition card 	Racism not only means that one believes in the superiority of a race. It also means racial prejudice. Assuming that “Jewish” means “white” - that’s racist.
Rabbi Dan -	Darren Parris is a Temple Sholom member, new father and a Jew by choice.
Darren Parris 33:47 **Lower Third: “Darren Parris - Vancouver BC”**	*“Ever since converting, I've had some interesting moments that people are either shocked that I've suffered racism or they've said to me, racism doesn't exist. It doesn't happen often, but it has, or someone's told me that I haven't experienced racism and, and they were all Jews, all those interactions were from Jews and it blew my mind.*
Rabbi Dan -	Though in our community, discrimination is not only based on looks. It can also be based on culture.
Rabbi Dan - **Definition card on screen**	“You don’t look Jewish” has an equally hurtful and cancelling counterpart, “That’s not Jewish” Where the word “racism” means to hold a racial prejudice, another word -*Ashkenormativity*- is used to describe the dominance of Eastern European Jewish culture, heritage, and experiences in representing what many believe to be “normal” Judaism.
Rabbi Dan - **Images flash on screen: Herring, Kugel, Lox & Bagels,**	In the askenormative worldview: Herring, kugel and bagels are “Jewish.”
Rabbi Dan - **Images flash on screen: Lachmagine, kubbeh and Khachapuri**	Lahmjoons, kubbeh and Khachapuri – traditional Sephardic foods – are not.
Rabbi Dan - **Video from fiddler Tevye dancing (4:21)**	*Fiddler on the Roof*, klezmer music - that’s Jewish.

Rabbi Dan - **Video of yeminite wedding**	Music from the Mediterranean basin played with the Oud, qanún, tambourines and other percussion instruments and sung in an Arabic melodic mode - that's not Jewish.
	"Ashkenormativity" can be just as powerful a force in 'othering' and marginalizing members of our community as racism.
Rabbi Dan -	The rabbis of the Talmud argued that this human weakness, to judge people by how they look or to make assumptions based on dress or culture rather than their values, goes back to the story of creation.
Rabbi Dan - **Talmud page with pull quote**  ומפני שלום הבריות שלא יאמר אדם לחבירו אבא גדול מאביך ושלא יהו המינים אומרים הרבה רשויות בשמים The mishna cites another reason Adam the first man was created alone: And this was done due to the importance of maintaining peace among people, so that one person will not say to another: My father, i.e., progenitor, is greater than your father.	According to the Talmud, Adam and Eve were created alone, without a sibling, so that one person wouldn't say to another, "My father was greater than your father"
Rabbi Dan - **Heschel and MLK photo** 	The great theologian and civil rights activist Abraham Joshua Heschel, gave a similar answer when he was asked about the root cause of racism in one of his final interviews only a few weeks before he died.
Video Heschel interview: "racism is eye disease" @ (10:54 - 11:20)	*"As a person committed to biblical faith I would say what keeps humanity alive is the certainty that we have a father. But then I supposed I have to remember that God is either the father of all men or no men. And the idea of judging a person in terms of black, or brown or white is an eye disease."*
Rabbi Dan -	Whether our community discriminates based on race, food, music or traditions in general, the consequences of what Heschel called an "eye disease" and we might call "inherent bias" or "systemic racism" are the same: our community weakens and divisions between human beings grow deeper.
Rivka Campbell (13:15)	*""My children mentioned it to me. They said, you know what, mom, people are asking if we're Jewish and you know, how are we doing? And they had never asked that before… When they saw me as a black mother, it flipped their thinking.*
Rabbi Dan -	Experiences like those of Rivka's children are not uncommon

Bema Sermon	amongst young Jews of color, a disconnect that stems entirely from how the Jewish community "sees them" – Heschel's eye disease; not how they see or practice Judaism.
Rivka Campbell (15:07 - 15:20)	*And it's sad. It's sad because they're members of this family and they should feel, they should feel comfortable in going into a Jewish space and not having the questions, not having the looks, not having anything, just being just existing.*
Rabbi Dan **v1**	Annamie Paul recently ran for the leadership of the Green Party of Canada. She is the first black woman to run for a federal party leadership since 1975, and had she been elected she would have been the first Jewish party leader since David Lewis of the NDP in 1971.
V2 (18 seconds)	Annamie Paul is the newly elected leader of the Green Party of Canada. She is the first black woman to be elected to federal party leadership since 1975, the first Jewish leader of a Canadian political party since David Lewis led the NDP in 1971.
Annamie Paul (6:09 - 6:24) **Annamie Paul Toronto, Canada**	*"I think the other day someone said to me, 'You know, this is remarkable. I really had to speak to you because you are already a black woman in this world. And then you just thought, I'm just going to add Judaism on top of that. Like, you didn't have enough problems.'"*
Rabbi Dan -	Being Jewish and a person of colour in 2020 where both anti-semtism and anti-black racism are rising provides an important perspective on this moment of social conflict
Darren Parris (11:06 - 11:35) Interview2	*Being a black person and Jewish, I feel even more compelled to fight the stereotypes and negative stereotypes that are portrayed for both cultures. And there's definitely parallels that run between them. And, uh, and the great thing about Judaism. It not only gives me the tools to do that, but it actually helps me, with the reason why*.
Rabbi Dan **Images: Anti Israel protest signs from BLM marches** **Images of the St Louis and the book cover** **Images from sites of attacks on Jews images**	The Passover Haggadah reminds us that in every generation they rise up to destroy us. We know who THEY are, every era has its Pharaohs but how we define US is our question on this holy day of questioning and examining our souls. The rallying cry "Black Lives Matter" has divided communities, and Jews are no exception. Some in our community are unable to separate a unifying slogan from subgroups within the movement that promote an anti-Israel agenda.

of memorials to George and breonna	Others have shown instinctive discomfort with the fact that the slogan focuses on the lives of a single ethno-racial group. I understand the concerns but we cannot let valid concerns become invalid excuses. The Jewish people, more than perhaps any other group, should understand the demand of Black Lives Matter. We need only look to our own historical experience of distinctive discrimination, violence and oppression, specifically due to our ethno-religious identities. At this moment US is all of us. We of all people should be able to relate to this powerful three-word statement for what it is: an echo of our own outrage and disbelief when the world and Canada in particular said, “None is too many.” Did we not scream “Jewish Lives Matter” as the world closed its borders to us?! Yes US is all of us Black people and Jews have vital commonalities in our history; it is more than some Black folks are Jewish or that many Jews were active in the civil rights movement. If we truly look more than skin-deep our communal experience of being considered "other" over many centuries remains a searing and defining collective experience that feels ever-present. The fact that the White Supremacists in Charlottesville were chanting "Jews will not replace us" is a pretty powerful reminder that when it comes to targets of hate groups Jews and Blacks are bound together. My colleague Rabbi Jeff Salkin observed:
Rabbi Dan Put quote on screen in 2 slides	“Jews experience the wave of violence against Jews – Pittsburgh, Poway, Jersey City, Monsey – as the continuation of the darkest moments of Jewish history. As one long pogrom. Black Americans experience the wave of violence against them – George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake – as the continuation of the darkest moments of American history. As one long lynching.
Rabbi Dan	We have an opportunity as Jews that a lot of people don't have, to go from our own history of being beaten, murdered, targeted and systematically

	discriminated against and enter with empathy into what blacks, indigenous and people of colour are experiencing everyday. There is no doubt systemic racism is a huge and complicated problem - one sermon will not solve it; Martin Luther King's dream is not yet reality; but we are not powerless either. Our torah reminds us, לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לִגְמֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן חוֹרִין לִבָּטֵל מִמֶּנָּה it is not upon you to finish the task but neither are you free to neglect it. There is so much we can do and must do to address the experience of Jews of Colour in our community and the systemic racism experienced by people of color in Canada; the people I spoke with suggested these three important actions we can take right now, especially now.
Rabbi Dan	(1) Assume every person that walks in the shul belongs there, knows why they are there and has a reason to be there. Open arms; not closed minds.
Darren Parris Bullet Point #1 18:47 interview2	*I want people to realize when I walk through those doors, I want to be there. And that's what you should take from that. And, and thus greet me with the same, hopefully enthusiasm*
Rabbi Dan -	(2) Empathy - this moment is not about us as Jews, it's about us as Canadians and human beings. But while its not about us there is a very specific Jewish response. As Jews, our generational experience of discrimination and suffering compells us to be allies to this movement; Black Lives need to matter to us!
Rivka Campbell 31:29 **Bullet point #2**	*People should be better at not othering others, regardless of whether it's about race, about gender, sexual orientation, whatever it may be about. We as Jews have an obligation to not other others.*
Rabbi Dan -	*(3) Its not enough to not be racist, we have to be anti-racist - to actively and proactively disassemble structural racism and racist policies and implement policy and elect leadership that furthers those goals. We cannot sit idly by.*
Annamie Paul 18:45 **Bullet point #3**	*Given the, the, the hundreds of years of, of racism in this country, whether it's anti indigenous or anti black racism, or, you know, other communities as well, that suffer from racism, if you're not proactively seeking ways to be an ally seeking ways to use your talents, uh, uh, for instance, uh, against, against actively fighting against that racism and working towards the kind of systemic change that is going to bring true equality, then, uh, you know, you really couldn't consider yourself to be anti-racist either.*

Rabbi Dan	Ellie Wiesel powerfully observed that the greatest threat to humankind is not hatred but indifference.
Elie Wiesel **Video** **(0:08 - 0:50)**	*"I came to a conclusion that the peril threatening humankind today is indifference, even more than hatred. There are more people who are indifferent than there are people who hate. Hate is an action. Hate takes time. Hate takes energy. And even it demands sacrifices. Indifference is nothing, but indifference to hatred is encouraging hatred, and is justifying hatred. So what we must do — I mean your peers and mine – is fight indifference."*
Rabbi Dan **Lower third:** **"**The opposite of a racist is; not, not a racist. The opposite of a racist is to be anti-racist." **Lower third:** Tzedek, tzedek tirdof the Torah urges "justice, justice you shall pursue." (Deut. 21)	To be aware of the injustice and indignity experienced by people of color in our society and in our shuls and to respond, "All lives matter," or to state defensively, "I am not a racist" is to deny the complicity of indifference. The opposite of a racist is not, not a racist. To be the opposite of racist is to be anti-racist. Judaism demands this of us. It's a commandment, not a suggestion. "Tzedek, tzedek tirdof," the Torah urges "justice, justice you shall pursue." The word is repeated because it's not enough to only be just, we must pursue and fight injustice, we have to go looking for it and eradicate it; anything less is indifference. Anything less is to answer by saying it's about them not us, not me. We of all people who have felt the pain of indifference, who have been told and shown that our lives don't matter; we cannot, we must not allow that to happen to anyone, any people, ever again; never again.

Good Material that I am leaving out:

(27:14) Balarama Holeness on What we can do

So what could we do? Well, it's conversations around the dinner table, ensuring that people in our immediate environment are aware of these issues, the way that you treat people in the streets, the way that you treat people in the workplace, the way that you treat people throughout your environment, simply showing respect is the first step to solving systemic racism and systemic discrimination. We do not want as a society for people to be treated equally, but before we can ask a judge to treat everyone equal before under the law will us in our everyday lives and our everyday social lives, we have to treat everyone equally. And that is the first, most simple step to tackling systemic discrimination. And to end on that point is that there is not going to be one hero. That's going to come up with one policy or one action or one organization that's going to complete eradicate systemic racism. We're going to have to make connections and collaborations across Canada, across religions, across gender, across race. And we have to ensure that everyone from synagogues to mosques, to churches, or regardless of your religion, or regardless of your background, that we all come together to collaborate, to tackle this issue,

to ensure that there is more just this here in Canada.

(33:10) Rivka on George Floyd & Discovering that her white Jewish friends were racist
Sure. Yeah. George Floyd, that's still a really difficult thing for me to speak about as a black person take away even the Jewish part, even though you really can't, but let's put that aside for now as a black person, I have almost become desensitized to all the stuff that happens to us as a people. I have, you know, when I hear in the news, Oh, this person was shot by police broken into the house, whatever it may be in my mind, I'm like they got another one, they got another one of us and nothing's going to happen. George Floyd was different for me. George Floyd was different. And I'll tell you how I got to this part. When I heard the news of George, George Floyd, I did think they got another one of us and another one of us use that sentence. I can't breathe, but I still didn't really process it.

Other than to think that I didn't even watch the video for a couple of days, because why, but as a momentum was building up on, you know, social media and so on, I said, okay, let me at least see the video. So I went and I watched the video and it wasn't even, I'll tell you what did it for me? Wasn't George Floyd. It was the police officer. And the, if you'd seen the police officer, if you didn't see, mr. Floyd had just saw from, you know, let's say waist up, even you would have thought that man was waiting for a bus. And I don't think any of us had, had seen something like that before the, I like to say it is, um, there's a term that they used the Holocaust during the Nuremberg trials. And it was a coin that a, um, a woman, I think I cannot remember her name, but nonetheless, she coined the term banality of evil. And that's all I can think of when I looked at that police officer and his expression of nothing, actually, nothing, nothing. And I think that's what made me break. That's what actually hurts my heart was that here you are crushing a human being to death and you have no expression. Your hand is in your pocket. Your hand is in your pocket. Like you're waiting for a bus and it broke me. And I, I cried for a day. I'm sorry.

Cause it hurt my heart. It hurt my heart. And so I started posting about it and I don't normally post about those topics on Facebook is Facebook supposed to be my happy place. And I started posting about it. And what hurt me even more was the reaction of my community was my Jewish community. And the reaction, you know, we had the support. There's no doubt. I think it was the obvious racism being spewed on my page that was like, wow, wow. Um, things like, well, you know, those people, if they weren't in that position, then you wouldn't have a problem. And um, you know, look at his record. Uh, and I would say so because of things in his past, he deserved to die. We have a concept of tshuva and he had was making that and you've discounted that. And really, and truly, it doesn't even matter.

We are not judged. We're not police judge, jury and executioner, but they didn't care. And I kept seeing these posts. And let me tell you, I lost real friends. I was fine to Facebook friends because you know what I saw them for the first time in years, I saw them. I saw exactly who they were and I did not want them in my world because no matter how many times I explained it and I would like even do, I would even do comparisons to us as Jewish people and what we went through. And how would it feel if somebody said, well, we deserve to die because we did this, that and the other, we would lose our minds. We would lose our minds or even, um, when somebody were bright, black lives matter and somebody would say, well, this and that. And I said, well, how would you feel if the authorities, if the authorities, the government decided to kill Jews and Jews started saying Jewish lives matter and somebody said, yeah, but all lives matter. How would you feel? Nobody's saying only black lives matter. Nobody would have been

saying only Jewish lives matter, but you think how that would feel if you were in a position where the government were killing Jews because they were Jews and you said help us because Jewish lives matter and somebody countered it with all lives matter.

(41:02): Rivka - there is hope

Out of all of this, I do believe there is hope. There is hope for us. I've noticed I've been doing this for years now, years. And normally when I do this, I feel like I'm sometimes feel like I'm talking to myself. Sometimes I feel like I'm talking to people are smiling and nodding, but not really hearing the words that are coming out of my mouth. For some reason, it's like everything came into place and people in my community, my family are listening. I am getting people who, cause there'd been other incidences like this, but now I got, I got calls straight away from people who've said, Rivka, are you okay?

Are you okay? I'm the president of my synagogue called me. Are you okay? I don't know what to say, but I'm here. And, and the other piece is not only are people listening, they are, they are, I have this thing. It's called not about us without us. And the community is doing that. They are saying Rivka. We would like to make some lasting change, but we recognize that we can't do it without you. We can't do it without you because for two reasons, first of all, it's not my job to fix fix. The problem is not my job to fix the racism. It's not the victim's job to fix it. However, I know how it feels. And I know what the microaggressions are. I know what I would like to see as a, as a person of color. And it's an, it's a unique view and it is refreshing and hopeful to me and to us that you want to hear from us, what would make things better, as opposed to saying, look, we've decided to put up this sign. I hope that makes you happy.

Because if you had asked me, I'd probably say, nevermind, the sign, nevermind the sign. Don't even do a statement. I'm more interested in the walk that you will walk. I am more interested in the fact that you're going to involve me in this conversation because you cannot do it without me. I am more interested in the fact that you're recognizing it's not a sprint. It is a marathon. And that putting up a sign, um, is not enough and that you need to make some lasting changes. And that will take time. That will take time. And I saw, for example, somebody said, you know, in good intentions that said, okay, you know, we're going to look to find, see if we can shake up our board and get some people of color. And it's like, Whoa, no, that is performative. And what you are actually doing is you're setting us up to fail. And it's a process. It's a process. Plunking me on a board of directors is just performative. Look at, look bigger than that. Look at your policies. Look at the ways that you can encourage people like me to come in and participate. And then maybe one day we'll take that other step and say, Hey, I'd like to be on the board of directors. Don't start here. Start here. Don't start here. Start here. Because the thing is, it took a lot of years to get where you are. It's going to take quite a bit of time to get things the way it should be. So be kind, also be kind to yourself, but never have the conversation without us.