



SAPIR FLANK

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Our modern world of the 21st century is an open society, justice for all and the rights and respect of each individual. This was totally lost upon those who verbally attacked us in the line while we waited peacefully, quietly and respectfully to buy tickets to the Eifel Tower. In the summer of 2007, it was a hot day in Paris, and my family and I were tired and seating, yet we patiently stood in line among hundreds of other tourists. We noticed a dark, modern-looking couple standing in line behind us, having a conversation in Arabic. We had felt uncomfortable and, in all honesty, slightly threatened. We used Hebrew to offset the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty. Hebrew became the bridge between our insecurity and establishing our identity as proud Jews. At that moment we felt the necessity to expose who we were.

Moments later their response was verbally violent and accusing—"Yehud" they yelled at us. The tone of their voices was hostile indicating a feeling of deep dislike and hatred towards our people. They then pointed and spat at us. This behavior certainly indicated a very noted and deep seating hatred. As the conversation between the couple continued we heard Arabic words, which my father told us were offensive. He recognized these words, as he had grown up in Israel and had served in the Israeli army; therefore, these expressions were familiar to him.

They did not even know us; how could they have said such offensive things! Up to that moment in my life, I had never been exposed to any form of anti-Semitism. This was a huge shock to my subconscious and with full understanding, I, for the first time, realized what it was to be discriminated against. As we all know, Jews throughout the centuries have been exposed to the most horrifying prejudice, torture and expulsion, which has played a significant part in our history. We responded politely to this incident in a cultural and respectful manner, in a tone that was firm, definite, yet not unfriendly. We responded "No matter who we are, no matter which ethnic group we belong to, no matter which religion we practice, we are all free and equal and deserve the right to be respected as individuals."

The task of fighting discrimination is one which has been fought by minority groups over the centuries with little progress being made. That does not mean that we, the youth, should give up. Modern technology has given us the tools, by using a wide variety of internet websites to create situations where we can educate others and promote goodwill. The hope is to generate a better attitude towards people who are different. Something that I could do to help stop the hatred would be to open a YouTube account, asking people worldwide to send clips of discrimination that they have seen in their own neighborhood and opening a discussion to stop hatred in the world.