Tackle intolerance where it starts

Thought for the Day
Ephraim Borowski (Director, Scottish Council of Jewish Communities)
Broadcast on Radio Scotland, 28 January 2019

Yesterday was Holocaust Memorial Day. This date was chosen by the United Nations to commemorate the millions of victims of the Nazis throughout Europe, because it's the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the largest, most efficient, state-sponsored, industrialised murder machine ever devised, where well over a million people, the vast majority of them Jewish, were massacred. In late 1944, the gas chambers and crematoria were killing a truly unimaginable 20 000 people a day.

During the past week, there have been many moving tributes to the victims in public ceremonies around the country, in schools, in Westminster, in the Scottish Parliament; and there will be many more this week. Some have focused on promising lives extinguished; others on tales of true heroism by people who risked their own lives to save others, or the incredible stories of the refugees – how they survived at all, and how so many went on to make such a success of their lives: of the 9 –10 000 children allowed into the UK on the *Kindertransport* in the last months before the war, no fewer than four won Nobel prizes.

That's something Britain can be proud of, but we should be less proud that 5% of UK adults don't believe the Holocaust really happened; another 8% believe its scale is exaggerated. We should be still less proud of the increasing intolerance of people who are different from ourselves – different in appearance, different in race or religion, different in opinion. And we should be downright ashamed and worried when politicians and other leaders <u>speak</u> against prejudice and bigotry, but normalise it by failing to <u>act</u> against hatred and intolerance.

The Holocaust didn't start with Auschwitz; it started with name-calling, discrimination, and active political encouragement. And if we are to avoid a return to where it ended, we have to tackle it where it starts.

Ephraim Borowski
Thought for the Day: Radio Scotland, 28 January 2019