

Hello Temple Sinai!

It's great to be back after having had the creeping crud cold/fever for a week. I am sorry I missed services last Shabbat, but I want to offer a sincere thank you to Mark Leopold and Bruce Hicken for leading those services.

SERVICES

This week we have a FOLK SHABBAT at 6:30 on Friday, and our regular **Shabbat Morning service at 9:30 on Saturday, followed by Torah Study at 10:30**. This week, our Torah Portion is "Va'era" in which includes the first seven plagues sent against Egypt, as well as Moses' own self-doubt and even anger at God. We will talk about the nature of the plagues, the historical reality behind the Exodus, and consider Moses' anger and resistance to his new role.

I am also working on a complete activities calendar for this Spring and will get that to you in the next few days. Please note that next Friday Night is a school service, (grade 6-7), with a POT LUCK at 5:30 and Service at 6:30.

SOCIAL ACTION

We will be having an organizing meeting of the Social Action Committee on Jan 15 at 6:30. If you are interested in attending, please contact: David Shiman David.shiman@uvm.edu, 802-881-4583

WOMENS' MARCH VT and Anti-Semitism of National March Leadership- *Letter Writing and Call Action*

As many of you know, the Women's March will be taking place on Jan 19. While I know that I and MANY other Jews and our allies supported and attended marches last year, it has become painfully clear in the past few months that there is significant anti-Semitism in the national leadership of the movement. The leaders of Women's March Inc. have demonstrated a pattern of repeatedly embracing anti-Semitic and anti-LGBTQ movements and leaders, and refusing to accept responsibility or to be accountable for their own anti-Semitic statements. The events of the past several years indicate that this is not a matter of isolated incidents or misstatements, but a pervasive pattern. Even more troubling have been the dismissive responses from the Women's March Inc. leadership, indicating an unwillingness to examine their own implicit or explicit biases, and a hostility to any criticism.

Below you will find links to two articles (there are many others) covering this pattern of behavior by the Women's March Inc. leadership. These articles also contain links to primary sources including statements by individuals in question.

- TABLET MAGAZINE: "Is The Women's March Melting Down?"
<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/276694/is-the-womens-march-melting-down>
- NY TIMES: Women's March Roiled by Accusations of Anti-Semitism
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/23/us/womens-march-anti-semitism.html>

I believe that almost all of us support the goals of the women's march, but we have a responsibility to call out this systemic participation in anti-Semitism. Already, such efforts have results in several marches being cancelled while others have distanced themselves from the national leadership. The national movement also recently added Jewish women to their Principles of Unity.

However, the Vermont Women's March has made no statements distancing themselves from the national movement. *I want you to consider writing a letter/email or making a call to the leaders of the Vermont Women's March and their sponsors asking them to make a public statement separating the Vermont march from the anti-Semitism of the national leadership, and taking a stand against anti-Semitism in the movement in general. You can also send the letter to the leadership of the Peace and Justice Center, their fiscal sponsor, and express your concern to the as well.*

As progressive Jews, we want to partner with such movements but that requires them to face their own anti-Semitism and bias against Jewish people. Your voice would be an important part of that movement for inclusive coalitions and against anti-Semitism. Below are two 'sample' letters and addresses for them.

ADDRESSES:

- **Vermont Women's March:** *Kristen Vrancken*, kvrancken@gmail.com
- **Peace and Justice Center:**
 - Executive Director: *Rachel Siegel* 802-863-2345 x1; rachel@pjcvt.org
 - Programming Director; *Kyle Silliman-Smith*, 802-863-2345 x6 kyle@pjcvt.org
- BURTON: info@burton.com (they refused to give the name of a PR person)
- **Planned Parenthood:** *Lucy Leriche*, VP Of Public Policy, 802-448-9736; grassrootsvt@ppnne.org

SAMPLE LETTER ONE:

Dear _____;

While Women's March chapters across the nation (Washington State, New Orleans, Houston) are condemning the antisemitic rhetoric and affiliations of Women's March leadership and severing their ties, Women's March VT has made no statement disavowing national leadership's antisemitic rhetoric or their support of Farrakhan.

Absent from Women's March VT chapter's Facebook and Twitter pages is any condemnation of the now well-documented antisemitism of Women's March leadership, which has demonstrated a pattern of repeatedly embracing anti-Semitic and anti-LGBTQ movements and leaders, and refusing to accept responsibility or to be accountable for their own anti-Semitic statements. This is not a matter of isolated incidents or misstatements, but a pervasive pattern, as the following articles show:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/276694/is-the-womens-march-melting-down>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/23/us/womens-march-anti-semitism.html>

<https://twitter.com/photobytali/status/1076594602067611649>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/opinion/womens-march-progressives-hate.html>

<https://nypost.com/2018/11/04/dont-join-this-years-womens-march-unless-youre-good-with-anti-semitism/>

*<https://bit.ly/2GMNDGh>

In addition, Women's March VT has engaged the **Peace & Justice Center**, as their fiscal sponsor; The Peace and Justice Center has been actively supportive of the BDS (Boycott, Divest Sanction Israel) movement, and furthered anti-Semitic rhetoric in pressuring Vermont State Police to cancel an anti-Defamation League sponsored police training in Israel.

If Women's March Vermont is to be a safe space for all people - a space free of bigotry in all its forms including antisemitism - then Women's March Vermont must immediately:

- **Condemn in no uncertain terms the antisemitic rhetoric of Women's March leaders and the antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ rhetoric of Farrakhan.**
- **Sever the fiscal sponsor relationship with the Peace & Justice Center.**

Many state chapters have separated from the national Women's March Inc. organization, either to operate independently or to join the March On Network, and we believe the leadership of Women's March VT should follow a similar path so that all women in Vermont feel welcome and safe joining in this important movement.

Thank you,

Name

SAMPLE LETTER 2

Dear Vermont Women's March,

As a Jewish woman, (as a Jewish support of the Women's March last year), I have been heartbroken to see the Women's March movement crippled and divided by the anti-Semitism of the national leadership. This leadership has repeatedly made anti-Semitic comments, including statements in support of Louis Farrakhan, a blatant anti-Semite who, among many other statements in the past year, has said, "Satanic Jews have infected the whole world with poison and deceit." Clearly, any one making a similarly racist or Islamophobic statement would be immediately decried; yet, those in National Leadership have continued to stand by Farrakhan and call him a 'great man. This is absolutely unacceptable and intolerable. Furthermore, as the articles below make clear, the national Women's March Leadership has trafficked in other anti-Semitic behaviors and language.

- <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/276694/is-the-womens-march-melting-down>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/23/us/womens-march-anti-semitism.html>

As the events in Pittsburgh showed, and as the hate-crimes statistics for Vermont confirm, anti-Semitism is among the most virulent forms of hatred in the US today, and any organization involved in combatting racism, homophobia, sexism and other forms of hate MUST EXPLICITLY decry anti-Semitism in all its forms, whether from the extreme right or left. Jewish women have been in the forefront of the women's movement, so to make it so that now, of all times, Jewish women do not feel comfortable or safe participating in the Women's March is an avoidable tragedy.

I am asking **Women's March VT and its sponsors** to make a clear public statement distancing yourselves from the national leadership, and to consider separating entirely from that organization. Furthermore, we are asking that supporting Jewish women and combatting anti-Semitism be explicitly included in your materials, as it is now in the national Principles of Unity (but not on your website.)

Let's find a way to march together in unity.

Sincerely,

Name