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# The Virtue of Hate



By Marty Kaplan

"If he didn't hear from her at night, he'd go frantic." This is Carmen Bachan, speaking through tears about her husband James and her daughter Adrianna.

"That night he told her to be careful, and she was. She was crossing on a green light until that animal took her life and injured that beautiful young man." That young man is Marcus Garfinkle, who was thrown onto the windshield of the car of the hit-and-run driver who killed Adrianna Bachan. He was carried 300 to 400 feet until the car stopped, and a passenger got out, dislodged him from the windshield, dumped him on the street with two broken legs and then sped away.

I know very well the intersection where it happened, Jefferson and Hoover. It's right by my parking spot at USC, where Adrianna Bachan, 18, and Marcus Garfinkle, 19, were freshmen.

Now 30-year-old Claudia Cabrera has been booked on suspicion of being "that animal." "I hope she rots in hell," Carmen Bachan told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Police say that Josue Luna, 31, Cabrera's husband, was the passenger who got out and pushed Marcus Garfinkle off the hood of the green 2000 Infiniti, after Luna's wife ran a red light and killed Adrianna Bachan. Also in the car: the couple's 7-month-old baby.

Said Carmen Bachan about the arrest of the suspect, "Nothing can bring Adrianna back, but I do want justice."

It is as easy — and terrifying — for me to put myself in the place of the parents of Adrianna Bachan and Marcus Garfinkle as it is impossible — and terrifying — to put myself in the place of the parents of that 7-month-old baby.

I, too, would want justice. And I would also want those animals to rot in hell. I would feel righteous for channeling my vengeance into the rule of law, but I would also feel justified for hating, not forgiving, the perpetrators of my grief.

This is not what some religions teach. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy,’” Christ says in Matthew. “But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” On the cross, Christ absolves his crucifiers: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Pope John Paul went to the prison cell of Mehmet Ali Agca, who had attempted to assassinate him, in order to forgive him. Gandhi embraced those who would destroy him: “Hate the sin, love the sinner.”

But the Jewish tradition I grew up in is considerably more ambivalent. There is “a time to love,” says Ecclesiastes, and there is also “a time to hate.” God may chide the angels for celebrating when Pharoah’s army is swallowed by the sea — “My creatures are drowning, and you wish to sing a song?” — but David, in Psalm 139, hates God’s enemies with “a perfect hatred.”

As Rabbi Meir Y. Soloveichik, then a Yale Divinity School student, pointed out in his 2003 essay, “The Virtue of Hate,” the Hebrew Bible brims with examples of perfect, righteous hatred.

Samson’s revenge on the Philistines is to kill more of them at his death than he killed during his life. When Agag, the captured king of the slaughtered Amalekites, is brought to the prophet Samuel, he asks for mercy: “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” But Samuel “hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.” After Haman’s ten sons are killed in battle, Queen Esther asks King Ahasuerus to hang their dead bodies from the gallows. The prophetess Deborah, writes Soloveichik, “appears to relish the gruesome death of her enemy, the Philistine Sisera, who had, fittingly, been executed by another woman. Every bloody detail is recounted in Deborah’s ebullient song.”

It will be up to our secular legal system, not our religious traditions, to decide what justice means to the driver who killed Adrianna Bachan and the man who pushed Marcus Garfinkle onto Jefferson Boulevard. The law draws distinctions between homicide, manslaughter and murder. Mens rea — intent — matters. This may be helpful for distinguishing different kinds of punishment, but it is useless for distinguishing different kinds of hatred, and it is worthless for understanding either the help or the harm that hating does.

Psychologists say that carrying hostility around can kill us. Wanting someone to rot in hell, we are told, does more damage to ourselves than to the objects of our anger. Healing comes from letting go of the hatred.

Really? Rabbi Soloveichik begins his essay by citing Simon Wiesenthal’s account in *The Sunflower* of the day that he, a concentration camp prisoner, is brought to a dying Nazi’s bedside. The German wanted some Jew, any Jew, to hear his confession of torture and murder, and to grant him forgiveness. Wiesenthal can’t do it, and walks out of the room. Did he do the right thing?

When Wiesenthal asked that question of theologians, the answer he heard from Christians was no, but not from Jews. The most vivid response, Soloveichik says, came from the Jewish writer Cynthia Ozick. “Reflecting on how Wiesenthal, in a moment of mercy, brushed a fly away from the Nazi’s broken body,” Ozick wrote this: “Let the SS man die unshriven. Let him go to hell. Sooner the fly to God than he.”

I pray that Adrianna Bachman’s parents will find peace, and that Marcus Garfinkle will fully recover, and that the friends and families of those beautiful freshmen will find comfort in their love for them. But I am unable to understand, and unprepared to believe, that their path to healing must pass through the country of forgiveness.

*This is my column from The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles. You can read more of my columns here, and e-mail me there if you’d like.*

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