

Why I Wear a Kippa (Part Two)

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Oh, you're back!

I started wearing a kippa only six months ago. I surmise, "How's that workin' for yah?" Well, no one has done any of those pesky hate crimes to me or my property - yet. And it's strange, people who've known me for 5, 10, 25 years - out of the azure - here comes Mark with a Jewish religious symbol on his noggin, and they don't say nothin'. They glance up, it registers and is DOA as a topic of conversation.

This is okay. I wear it more as a silent ambassador. I'd prefer the locals to see a person who is polite, kind, courteous, generous and breathing normally and them say, "Oh, you'll never believe this! I saw a Jew today. Yes, right here in Spokane! Couldn't believe it myself." (Pause.) "What? Yes, he was breathing normally, too."

It's rare when a stranger stops and comments. Usually it's a person who identifies themselves as a Christian and feels a certain affinity to the "Jewish people." That's fine, "affinity" accepted.



The double takes I spy are fine, too.

I visited the country of Israel in 2010. I took with me my father's kippa and my Bar Mitzvah tallit (prayer shawl) given to me by my parents at age 13. Though I wore my tallit only while praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, I wore the kippa sparingly. I am not a hot fan and the heat in that desert country periodically overruled my kippa wearing. Besides at the time, I had made no personal kippa wearing commitment.



While there, something odd and unexpected happened to this California native of Brooklyn, New York parentage. I found myself feeling like the only black person visiting an all-white church. Now, when I was younger I visited an all-black church, and been the only white person. That particular experience, though awkward, I enjoyed. But in Israel and during a day trip into Jordan (to see the ancient city of Petra) I found myself recognized as a Jew! (No beanie remember.)

Apparently, the Israeli Arab DNA in them can size one of us up in a blink - at least the DNA of this one! Something like this had never happened to me before. I wore regular American clothes, etc. But with the Middle East as a backdrop they knew I was a Jew. In California or Spokane - no. A few incidents bore this out, as did the flipside. Meaning, if I did wore a kippa, the Israeli Jews immediately knew me to be genuine. That felt good; the other uncomfortable.

In Spokane, I doubt that two Muslim school girls will pick up items to throw at me as happened on the Temple Mount at the Old City, in Jerusalem. Here, with a kippa on my cranium, I might get the rowdy, "You people killed Christ!" crap and some violence following –



I hope not. (This, of course, from wayward adherents of their supposed Lord's teachings.)

In the junior and high schools my children recently attended, they observed strange trend. The teens – undoubtedly existing in a Jew-less youth, and possibly devoid or just unfeeling towards the unjustified cruelty done to centuries of Jews – openly mocked the Jewish race!

Now, to be clear, no visible Jews were there. But the phrase, "You're a dirty Jew!" or "Stupid Jew!" was a popular banter among the student population. This condemnation of an ethnicity flowed more easily due to the anonymity of the subject. Certainly racial hatred happens with all parties in attendance. Yet, children (or adults) fail to lampoon or harpoon Eskimos for example, simply because they are rarely sighted in school halls.

Sorry to say, the alarming words of our local young minds spurred me to no action.

To be continued...

