

Message from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
for inclusion in the STUC St Andrew's Day Anti-Racism Brochure 2005

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities supports the STUC's march against Racism and Fascism, and applauds initiatives intended to tackle inequality and racism such as the STUC's 'One Workplace' programme.

One Scotland Many Cultures is an aim, not yet a reality. Debate rages about immigration and asylum, about economic migrants, about integration, New Talent, race relations and (in)equality.

Many of us have stood in the same shoes, many members of Scotland's Jewish community arrived as refugees from Nazi Germany, Eastern Europe or elsewhere, and they faced the same struggle to carve out a new life in an unknown country as do today's asylum-seekers.

Racism can only exist in a society that permits it space to exist. It is the responsibility of each of us to ensure that racism is not allowed that space. Each of us, whether our family has lived in Scotland for 500 years or 500 days, each of us, whether Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Sikh; man or woman; adult or child; employer or employee must individually assume responsibility for ensuring that no-one has to endure the shout in the street, the fist in the face or the whispered remark at the office.

Jewish tradition tells of a certain 1st century Rabbi Hillel, who was asked, whilst waiting for the start of an important ceremony, "is everyone here?"

"If I am here" he replied, "then everyone is here".

Egotistic? Uncaring? Not bothered about anyone else?

Not at all, as he went on to explain to his bemused companion: "If everyone accepts personal responsibility, if everyone says 'I am here' then everyone will indeed be present. But if everyone thinks s/he is not important, that his/her contribution does not count, that s/he will not be missed; if no-one is willing to say 'I am here' then no-one will be here and the ceremony will not, indeed cannot, take place."

Let us each accept on ourselves the responsibility for outlawing racism. Let each of us step forward today and every day affirming that "I am here, and I will not allow racism" so that racism will truly find no place in Scotland, enabling us all to live in a society that respects and appreciates people of all nationalities, faiths and ethnicities.

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