Local

Shootout in Jersey City

Six dead in rampage, including detective, two murderers; anti-Semitism investigated as possible motive in market attack

JOANNE PALMER

The gunmen who entered a kosher supermarket in Jersey City, killed three people there, and wounded two police officers deliberately chose that store, the city’s mayor said.

Before they stormed the JC Kosher supermarket, the murderers killed another police officer, Detective Joseph Seals, shooting him in the head in nearby Bayview Cemetery.

At first, officials believed that the store was chosen at random, but that has changed as more information has been uncovered, in what is expected to be a long-term investigation.

A law enforcement official said that one of the suspects had posted both anti-Semitic and anti-police screeds online; although they are investigating the shooters’ motives, officials believe that the attack was motivated by the hatred those posts display.

“Investigators also found a manifesto-style note inside the shooters’ van, the law enforcement official and another official familiar with the case said, according to the New York Times on Wednesday; but the manifesto did not provide clear motive for the attack.

They also found a live pipe bomb in the van, the official added.

WNBC-TV in New York reported on Wednesday that the shooters were David Anderson and Francine Graham. Anderson was once a follower of the Black Hebrew Israelite movement, sources told WNBC. Members of the community believe they are descendants of the tribe of Judah. Various groups vary widely in their connection to Judaism and Christianity. They are perhaps most well known for preaching — some might call it hurling loud insults — in Times Square. Often those insults are anti-Semitic.

Online postings connected to Anderson’s social media accounts contained anti-Semitic material. Investigators could not yet confirm if Anderson wrote the material himself.

“Based on our initial investigation (which is ongoing) we now believe the active shooters targeted the location they attacked,” Jersey City’s mayor, Steven

A first-hand account of the gunfire

JOANNE PALMER

Yossi Steinmetz lives in Boro Park, but he does a lot of work in Jersey City, and he knows just where to go for his coffee.

On Tuesday, at about 11:25, he went to JC Kosher Supermarket to get some caffeine. “Fortunately for me, the coffee machine was off, so I went next door to grab a coffee.” Next door was a shul, called the Greenville shul, with a boys’ elementary school, called Moses of Greenville, on the second and third floors. There’s a coffee machine on the ground floor, and that’s where Mr. Steinmetz headed.

“And it all started at about 11:28,” he said. “The shooting. That’s when it started.”

He was in the shul’s front room, when the men in the back room “came running out. They looked white.” One of the men was Moshe Ferencz. He and his wife, Leah Minda Ferencz, owned the store; he’d left to daven, but his wife was still there.

“We heard shots for about five minutes. They were constant. We figured it must have been a gang shooting. I told him ‘Call your wife,’ and he kept calling her, to tell her to lock the door. But she didn’t answer.

“So after about 10 minutes, I said, ‘Okay, let me run into the grocery shop.’ I was standing by the front door of the shul, ready to walk over to the store, to make sure she was okay, and then there was another gun burst.

“It was so loud. I could hear the bullets. Each bullet. And he was frantic. He kept calling his wife, the workers, the grocery store land line. Nobody picked up.

“So then he said okay, let’s go in through the back door.” There were two fences to jump over, and Mr. Steinmetz wasn’t sure what to do. It was frightening, he said. “But he is a big guy, and he couldn’t really make it, and I’m a thin guy. I could. So I jumped over, and I got in.” He was by the store’s back door.
Fulop, wrote in a Twitter post on Tuesday night. “Due to an excess of caution the community may see additional police resources in the days/weeks ahead. We have no indication there are any further threats.”

The mayor’s tweet came hours after a news conference at which officials said there was “no indication of terrorism” or a hate crime.

At a press conference on Wednesday morning, Mr. Fulop said that “we do feel comfortable that it was a targeted attack on the Jewish kosher deli.”

The director of Jersey City’s Department of Public Safety, James Shea, said at the press conference that although the store was a target, authorities are not calling the crime anti-Semitism, because they do not know why it was targeted. “The motives are still part of the investigation,” Mr. Shea said.

At the press conference, Mr. Fulop described what he saw on the surveillance video. “We could see the van moving through Jersey City streets slowly,” he said. “The perpetrator stopped in front of there, calmly opened the door with two long rifles – him and the other perpetrator – and began firing from the street into the facility.”

Mr. Shea said, “We now know this did not begin with gunfire between police officers and the perpetrators and then moved to the store. It began with an attack on the civilians in the store.

“That was their target, and they intended to harm people inside there.”

Two police officers happened to be nearby, and had they not responded immediately, more people could have died, Mr. Fulop said.

The six victims included a police officer, Detective Joseph Seals, and three civilians; after they were shot, there was an hours-long siege and shootout at the supermarket. The officer had been shot earlier at a nearby cemetery trying to head off two suspects in a homicide. Those two gunmen were killed in the supermarket shootout.

On Wednesday morning, in a tweet before the press conference, Mr. Fulop wrote that “Last night after extensive review of our CCTV system it has now become clear from the cameras that these two individuals targeted the Kosher grocery location on MLK Dr.”

He added in a second tweet: “I’m Jewish and proud to live in a community like #JerseyCity that has always welcomed everyone. It is the home of #EllisIsland and has always been the golden door to America. Hate and anti-Semitism have never had a place here in JC and will never have a place in our city.”

**Rabbi Aaron Katz, until recently the leader of Congregation B’nai Jacob in Jersey City, posted this response to the murders.**

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**Jersey City**

FROM PAGE 6

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On Tuesday morning, officials say, Mr. Seals went over to a man and a woman who were inside a U-Haul van that was linked, in some as-yet-unspecified way, to a homicide the weekend before. Video shows the suspects shooting him and then driving away.

Mr. Seals was married and the father of five children. He was a 15-year veteran of the Jersey City police force, lived in North Arlington, and was promoted to detective in 2015. The Times reported that his neighbor, Joe Buocolo, a retired police officer, said that he wasn’t surprised that Mr. Seals had lost his life by confronting his assailants. “He’s that kind of guy,” Mr. Buocolo said, according to the Times. “I’m not surprised he ran toward danger. I don’t think he’d back down from anything, to be honest with you.”

The two injured police officers are Ray Sanchez and Mariela Fernandez.

Chabad.org identified two of the murdered civilians as Leah Minda Ferencz, 33, who owned the store in the Greenville neighborhood with her husband, Moshe, and Moshe Deutsch, 24. The third was Miguel Jason Rodriguez, a recent immigrant from Ecuador.

Moshe Ferencz had left the store moments before the shooting to pray the afternoon Mincha service at the synagogue located next door, according to the report.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced late Tuesday that following the shootout right across the Hudson, the New York Police Department would go on high alert.

“Although there is no credible or specific threat directed against New York City, I have directed the NYPD to assume a state of high alert. Tonight, NYPD assets are being redeployed to protect key locations in the Jewish community,” he tweeted.

He added: “History teaches us how dangerous it is to ignore this kind of hateful pattern. We must stop anti-Semitism aggressively and decisively, and I call upon all New Yorkers to join in rooting out this threat.”

On Tuesday evening, hours after the murderous rampage ended, there were more questions than answers in the neighborhood where it happened.

The crime scene was cordoned off, keeping onlookers far from it. Some two dozen local residents, several reporters, and many more police vehicles lingered outside the JC Kosher Supermarket on Martin Luther King Drive, on the western side of Jersey City. Some of the residents took video or livestreamed the scene on Facebook.

It was an ordeal that disturbed the heart of a small Orthodox Jewish community of nearly 100 families, most of whom had moved from the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, over the past few years.

According to locals, the JC supermarket is the only kosher one of its kind in the area. It sells basic groceries, sandwiches, and salads. Next door is Khal Adas Greenville, a building with a synagogue on a lower level and a yeshiva for children on the upper level.

“It’s a beautiful tight-knit community, very kind people, and it’s devastating that something like this happened,” said Rabbi Shmully Levitin, a Chabad rabbi who lives in Jersey City.

Officials have not released any specific information about the suspects or the civilian victims, but Rabbi Levitin says he spoke with someone who was wounded in the shooting but escaped through the back of the store. The witness told Rabbi Levitin that he saw the cashier — the wife of the store’s owner — fall down injured. He saw another customer also sustain serious injuries.

Chesky Deutsch has two children who attend the yeshiva next door.

“For the first few minutes, we didn’t know information about the school. Worried is an understatement,” he said about the moment he heard about the shooting. “My initial thought was, right away, is the community as a whole under some sort of attack? That was my initial fear.”

Greenville has a large African American population; now they are being joined by chasidim, many of them Satmar. The neighborhood’s very mixed now; there is a Catholic elementary school, Sacred Heart, right across the street from JC Kosher Supermarket. The students there, like all the other students in neighboring schools, were put on lockdown, and not released until after the shootout and standoff ended.

Mr. Deutsch, who moved from Williamsburg to Greenville because Jersey City is a less expensive place to live, says there is no tension between the relative newcomers in the Jewish community and its neighbors that would lead to suspicion.

“We get along very well with our neighbors,” he said. “Thank God there was no incident whatsoever in the past.”

Josefin Dolsten and Marcy Oster of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency contributed to this report.
“So I saw a man lying face down on the door jamb. He worked there, a Spanish guy; I’d bought something that morning, and I’d just paid him.” He was Miguel Jason Rodriguez. “And I saw him face down on the floor, the door was a little open, and I knew that I wasn’t going to go in there by myself.

“I am like, ‘Man, nobody is walking out of that place alive.’”

“So I went back to the shul. I didn’t want to tell him” — Moshe Ferencz — “exactly what I saw. I said that I saw a guy lying face down, and he was probably pretending to be dead. But I knew from the way he was lying there that he was dead. And then the shooting didn’t stop. I knew that no one inside could be alive.

“After I came back, we locked the back doors and barricaded them. And from about 12:30 on I would say the shooting was going on constantly. It was like clips of battles in Afghanistan. And it was so loud! And it feels that time goes so slowly.”

Eventually it ended. The police entered JC Kosher Supermarket.

“Once the cops busted into the store, there were no more gun shots,” Mr. Steinmetz said. “I assume that everyone was dead. There were so many bullets. There were shots from inside the store out, and from outside the store in.

“One thing I am still wondering is how come the cops didn’t secure the backyard.”

By the time the shooting ended, no one was in the shul on the first floor any more, he said; there had been four people there, but they all ran upstairs and locked the doors to the school, with its rabbis, teachers, and 6- to 12-year-old students. “We took them away from the front windows so they shouldn’t hear the gunshots,” Mr. Steinmetz said. Still, the kids knew something was wrong. “They constantly were asking what was going on.”

Finally, “the cops busted the shul doors open,” he said. “They came in with their guns drawn. It was scary.

“The principal of the school ran down to them to let them know that there were kids on the top two floors. The first cop who ran toward him was plainclothes, not in uniform, and he didn’t identify himself. The principle was terrified. He started yelling ‘Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!’ The teachers upstairs were terrified too; they thought that maybe it was the shooters from next door. They barricaded themselves in. No one wanted to open the door.

“I was on the third floor. I opened the door, and when I did a cop came up with his gun drawn, so I ran back in and closed the door. He said ‘Come back out with your hands in the air.’ I came out. He had his gun pointed at me. I said ‘Don’t worry. Nobody is up here.’ He started yelling, and I said ‘Calm down. There are a lot of kids here.’”

What he saw seemed entirely chaotic, Mr. Steinmetz said. “It didn’t look like there was so much coordination there, but I give them the benefit of the doubt. There was a lot of shooting with a high-powered rifle. They couldn’t take the chance.”

Next, “the police walked us through the back door, and took us four blocks away. I never in my life saw so many cops. Blocks and blocks of cops, Jersey City cops, SWAT teams, NYPD, state troopers, so many of them.

“When they took us out of the building, I was standing next to the owner, Moshe Ferencz. I spoke to the cops, asked them if I could talk to someone in charge, because this is the store owner. But they didn’t want to talk to us.

“Much later, someone, I’m not sure who, came to pick him up. By then they knew who he was. They took him and his kids – I’m not sure if there were one or two who were in school there, he lives in Jersey City – and they started talking to him.”

That’s the last that Mr. Steinmetz saw of Mr. Ferencz. How is Mr. Steinmetz feeling, the day after the shooting? “I’m okay,” he said. “I’m doing okay. I know that I still didn’t get in my head what happened. I purposely am not seeing any news. No news about it. So I am good. I am calm. And I am sure that in about a week or two it will hit me, how close to death I was.”
What happened in Jersey City
A look at what led up to the murders and what might happen next

JOANNE PALMER

A week after the murders in Jersey City, a few things are clear. The murderers’ impetus was hatred of Jews and of the police. Their actions were anti-Semitic. They had killed at least once before this massacre, and the arsenal in their van showed that they had not planned to stop with the four victims they slaughtered.

Jersey City can decide how to move on from here; its officials seem to be deciding to confront the tensions that do exist but also to acknowledge the very real desire for understanding and friendship that were there before and that this killing spree has brought to the surface. To be both clear-eyed and vigilant, and also open to hope.

That, at least, is what some of the community leaders, starting with Mayor Steven Fulop, believe.

Mr. Fulop is the grandson of Holocaust survivors and the son of immigrants to this country; his mother is from Ceausescu’s Romania, his father from Israel. As a 25-year-old, he was driven by the September 11 attacks, which he saw from downtown, to join the Marines, underwent training at Parris Island, and was deployed to Iraq. He knows about anti-Semitism and he’s seen carnage.

He called the murders in Jersey City anti-Semitism before any of the other, more cautious governmental officials did, because he knew what he saw.

He also believes that the murderers planned to attack not just the kosher supermarket but the shul and yeshiva next to it. They had planned to kill the little boys and their teachers inside that building.

Now, he retells the story as he knows it so far.

It started in Bay View cemetery, where Detective Joseph Seals, a 39-year-old 15-year veteran of the Jersey City police force and the father of five children, had been working on another case. Mr. Seals was “one of the best officers we had,”
Mr. Fulop said. “He was well known throughout the department. His track record speaks to his good judgment.” And he was always on the job.

He saw a van “that had been identified as being involved in another case earlier in the weekend,” Mr. Fulop said. This part of the story “will become more clear as we get more information,” but when he approached the van, the people inside it shot and killed him.

“And if he had not engaged them, there probably would have been a different timeline, and even more harm would have been done.”

And then the van drove off.

“The van traveled to Martin Luther King Drive, and then on to the grocery store and the yeshiva,” Mr. Fulop said. “It wasn’t speeding. It wasn’t being driven erratically. It wasn’t doing anything out of the norm.”

“And then it pulled up. They found parking directly in front of the store.” The JC Kosher Supermarket. “They got out of the van, took out long rifles,
and commenced to fire into the grocery store, while advancing simultaneously. They killed three people in the store— the owner, Leah Minda Ferencz, 33, the mother of three children; a customer, her cousin Moshe Deutsch, 24; and an employee, Douglas Miguel Rodriguez, 49, who’d immigrated from Ecuador a few years ago.

“We had a footpost one block away to the south,” where police officers patrolled on foot and knew the neighborhood. Two officers “responded. They ran toward the gunfire immediately. They were both shot, but because they engaged the perpetrators then, the perpetrators were stuck inside the grocery store. They couldn’t leave to do any more damage.

“If you look at what they had inside the van it would be hard to argue that they did not intend to do more than three murders. They hoped to kill a lot more people. They had a lot of ammunition, a lot of guns, and a pipe bomb. There was a three-hour standoff, with shots fired.

“Trenton has been slow to call this a hate crime, and anti-Semitism, but we did it right away,” Mr. Fulop said. “Because whenever you have anti-Semitism, you have to call it out for what it is. Because my family are Holocaust survivors, we are very conscious of it.”

He wishes that other officials would have made that point sooner too, although he acknowledges that different official positions come with different mandates. “I get paid to have an opinion, and to make a judgment call based on that opinion,” he said. “Law enforcement has to do an investigation, but I can connect the dots pretty clearly.”

The facts make clear that the murderers drove by “lots of potential targets along the way, but they drove deliberately to the store;” Mr. Fulop said. “They had high-powered weapons in the vehicle, and they had posted sentiments on social media that were favorable to anti-Semitic groups.

“You have to call it for what it is, and you have to do it while the world is still watching. It doesn’t help if you do it a week after the incident. Every day that passes, the impact is diminished a little more.” He doesn’t know that much yet about the murderers — “the actors,” as Mr. Fulop calls them — but it is clear that the two of them — David Anderson and Francine Graham, both now dead, shot by police in the supermarket where they’d killed three people— “had a great deal of familiarity with Jersey City. They more than likely lived here.”

He talks to reporters outside the supermarket on the day after the murders.
that down.” That reinforces the idea that when they drove slowly toward the supermarket, they knew where they were going.

The two lived together. He apparently was a Black Israelite, a fringe organization that has anti-Semitism at the core of its beliefs, and that the Southern Poverty Law Center has labeled as a hate group. “She wasn’t a Black Israelite until she met him,” Mr. Fulop said.

Mr. Fulop went to Ms. Ferencz’s funeral; like Mr. Deutsch’s, it was held the evening after her death. “Her oldest son was 11 years old,” he said. “It was his birthday. She had three kids, two little girls and the boy. The boy wasn’t talking. He was just crying. Crying a lot. The father was crying. It was tough to see.”

Like just about everyone else at the funeral, he cried too. “You see a cute kid on his birthday,” mourning his mother. “How do you not get emotional? For the rest of his life, his birthday will not be the same. It is hard watching these families suffer.”

Mr. Rodriguez, who was a commercial engineer in Ecuador, was buried on Saturday night; his 11-year-old daughter, Amy, spoke, through tears, to a tear-stained congregation.

Michael Wildes, the mayor of Englewood and an immigration attorney, is representing Mr. Rodriguez’s widow, Martha Freire, pro bono. “When he came to the United States, he started to work in the kosher supermarket,” Mr. Wildes said; his engineering skills
were’t particularly useful because his English wasn’t good enough. He quickly earned the Ferenccs’ trust. “His last act was to open the door to let someone else out”— that was another of Moshe Deutsch’s cousins, Chaim Deutsch, who had been shot three times, was taken to Jersey City Medical Center, and survived— “but he said that he’d stay to make sure that the kids were safe.” The murderers did not get through the door and over the fence to the neighboring yeshiva, with its 50 little boys. Instead, he died on the back doorjamb of JC Kosher Supermarket. “His body went back to Ecuador on Monday, and his family indicated to me that he would be remembered as a hero there,” Mr. Wil- des said. “Flags would fly there at half staff; our state and his nation standing in solidarity for someone who was a very special guy.”

Mr. Seals’ funeral, on Tuesday, drew huge, impenetrable crowds of mourn- ers on an icy gray day. Traffic in much of the city stopped, clogged by people— officials; police officers from munic- ipalities from across the country, on foot, on motorcycle, on horseback; just regular people touched by the scale of the loss to the community— wanting to honor Mr. Seals and the life-saving work he did.

“We could easily fill this room with the people that are alive today because of the police work he did preventing violent crime, removing guns, always seeking to interact with the most dan- gerous criminals and preventing them from harming our citizens,” James Shea, the city’s public director, said at Mr. Seals’ funeral.

The neighborhood where the mur- ders happened, Greenville, is changing rapidly. It’s got a gritty inner-city look, much like parts of the Bronx, with small houses and low-rise apartment buildings set close together, and small local businesses fronting the street. “It’s a rapidly changing community,” Mr. Pulop said. “It historically was Afri- can-American, now there are grow- ing Latino, ultra-Orthodox, and white non-Orthodox people moving in.”

The local chasidic community is Satmar, as were Ms. Ferenccz and Mr. Deutsch. The shul and yeshiva next door to the JC Supermarket are Satmar. There is no fulltime Chabad presence in Jersey City, although the group does maintain a shitebel there, and Chabad spokesmen are far more visible as rep- resenting the community than are the more inward-turning Satmar. The two

Memorial thoughts from Jersey City

RABBI DAVID-SETH KIRSHNER

This afternoon, at the Ferenccz family shiva outside their Jersey City home, and at the wake for Detective Joseph Seals, at a fu- neral home just a few miles from where his life was senselessly gunned down, throngs of people wrapped around the respective blocks to pay respects. Unlike at a grocery store or an amusement park, no one seemed annoyed at waiting on the long lines to offer consolation. Everyone waited pa- tiently in the cold and snow flur- ries to get a moment to express their sorrow to the surviving family, to pray, and to reflect. As I waited in lines at both places of mourning, I could not help but see the rainbow of faces that were assembled. Men and women, old and young, black, white, Latin, and Asian Ameri- cans, all gathered in unity. Sikh and Muslim and Christian and Jewish Americans shared tears and held each other closely. Law enforcement officials from all across the tri-state area wore a black ribbon over their badges of different shapes. Wreaths from churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues adorned the room

where the family gathered, and offered some sliver of solace. Food was stocked up in the shiva home to provide meals for long after the days of mourning will end. It was a powerful and unifying sight to behold. I was proud to carry with me the con- dolences of Temple Emanu-El to both places this afternoon.

In the strangest and most pain- ful ways, Leah Mindel Ferenccz and Detective Seals were able to galvanize humanity, unite Jersey City and our world of shared values and goodness. The hate- ful assailants sought to divide and instill fear, yet ironically the very opposite was achieved and strengthened.

On this sad day of memory, let us be bound by our unity and brightness by lights we all hold that is far brighter than the dark- ness haters tried to bring to our world. May this season of lights and memory burn brightly, and root out evil and darkness.

David-Seth Kirshneris the senior rabbi of Temple Emanu-El of Closter. This is an email he sent to his congregation on Monday.
groups might look interchangeable to outsiders, but they are distinct and different from each other.

Like many other groups looking for a place to settle, many Satmar chasidim looked to Greenville.

“It is affordable, and over the past couple of years we have invested a lot to make it safer, so people have moved there from other parts of Jersey City, and from across the river,” Mr. Fulop said.

Different parts of Jersey City are gentrifying at different rates. Greenville’s at the beginning stages of that process. Gentrification is a complicated process that generally brings resentment as well as money and energy along with it. “It’s easy to blame the ultra-Orthodox community for that because they are the most visible,” Mr. Fulop said. “They dress a little different, they look a little different, they act a little different.”

There had been some tensions of the last few years, he said, but “it had been almost a year and we hadn’t heard any meaningful issues, so we thought that was settling down.”

Instead, “the whole thing is just surreal,” he said. “But it is what it is.”

What is it? What’s going on?

“You would be hard-pressed not to argue that there is an increase of these kinds of incidents around the country, and you have to ask yourself why,” Mr. Fulop said. “Whether you decide that this is about guns, or about mental health, or about the rhetoric from Washington, you do have to decide that there is a problem.

“We as a police department have invested millions of taxpayer dollars in active shooter training. We are probably the most proactive among all the police departments in New Jersey. In the last year, we have had two of these situations, one in the Newport Mall and now here. It speaks to where we are as a society. Ten years ago, police departments didn’t have to invest in active shooter training.

“Clearly we have to change direction. The country is very polarized, so whether it is in rhetoric, in violence, in mental illness, in guns, you have to realize that something has to change. If this can happen in a place like Jersey City, which has prided itself on its diversity for as long as it has existed, it can happen anywhere. Different groups becoming part of Jersey City is not new to us. It’s not like this is the Deep South and a new community moves in. This is a community that always has been diverse.”

At a meeting that the Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey held in Jersey City on Monday, a group of politicians, including Mr. Fulop, State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-Dist. 5; Jersey City is District 8) joined Elan Carr, whom Secretary of State Mike Pompeo named special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism earlier this year, spoke briefly before they headed into a private session. A delegation of professional and lay leaders from the federation, headed by CEO Jason Shames, and a group of local rabbis joined them.

In his public comments, Mr. Grewal talked about how hate, as monitored by watchdog groups, is growing fast in the country, most noticeably among young people. “We can’t let that hatred be normalized,” he said. He also quoted the late South African leader Nelson Mandela’s hard-won wisdom. “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion,” Mr. Grewal said, channeling Mr. Mandela.

“People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught
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Greenville is the Jersey City neighborhood where the murders happened.

to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Later, on the phone, Mr. Fulop expanded on Mr. Grewal’s point. “Hate crimes and bias crimes and anti-Semitic crimes are increasing, and they’re increasingly done by young people. Data that the attorney general shared show that more than 25 percent of bias crimes in New Jersey last year were by young people. How do we deal with that?”

“Anti-bullying legislation doesn’t go far enough, because it’s basic assumption is that you shouldn’t pick on somebody because they are different, as opposed to promoting a stronger community by promoting our differences. “In other words, now we say ‘Steven is fat. Don’t pick on him for being fat.’” Once you do that, in other words, you’ve set up fat as a bad category to be in, and Steven as in that category. Then you go ahead and offer special kindness to the person you’ve just decided needs special kindness.

Mr. Fulop also brought up the question of “when things rise to the surface, do you amplify it or not?” There are some ugly misunderstandings, resentments, even hatreds, that had lain fallow until last week. How should the slime that slithered out from under the rocks overturned by the slaughter should be treated. How do you treat hate? Do you talk about it? Daylight cleanses, but does it also somehow normalize?

If there are resentments based on misinformation, do you talk about it? That allows you to defuse it, but it also spreads it.

And what if it’s just plain ugly?

Joan Terrell-Paige, a member of the city’s board of education, who is African-American, did not like the unity and sympathy that she saw after a huge interfaith meeting on Wednesday, the day after the massacre.

This is what she posted on Facebook – the post’s since been take down, but before screenshots were circulated: “Where was all this faith and hope when Black homeowners were being threatened, intimidated and harassed by I WANT TO BUY YOUR HOUSE brutes of the Jewish community? They brazenly came on the property of Ward F Black homeowners and waved bags of money.”

There was more.

“6 rabbis were accused of selling body parts,” Ms. Terrell-Paige wrote.

Also, “Mr. Anderson and Ms. Graham went directly to the kosher supermarket. I believe they knew they would come out in body bags. What is the message they were sending? Are we brave enough to explore the answer to their message? Are we brave enough to stop the assault on the Black communities of America?”

Ms. Terrell-Paige did not respond to reporters’ requests to talk to her, but she did write that she was “speaking as a private citizen not as an elected member of the Jersey City Board of Education.”

Mr. Fulop responded strongly. “My opinion is that she should resign,” he tweeted. “That type of language has no place in our schools and no place amongst elected officials. Her comments don’t represent Jersey City or the sentiment in the community at all.”

Governor Murphy also tweeted a demand for Ms. Terrell-Paige’s resignation.

Mr. Fulop explained the back story for Ms. Terrell-Paige comments. They are rooted, he said, from the aggressive ways in which it seemed that members of the chasidic community approached homeowners whose houses they hoped to buy. But those tensions had died

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Mr. Fulop explained the back story for Ms. Terrell-Paige comments. They are rooted, he said, from the aggressive ways in which it seemed that members of the chasidic community approached homeowners whose houses they hoped to buy. But those tensions had died
down almost a year ago, he added.

Most of the anger that has surfaced is far less toxic than Ms. Terrell-Paige’s hate speech.

For example, Mr. Fulop said, there is some resentment in the chasidic community that the two non-Jewish victims’ GoFundMe campaigns got more traction, drew in more money, than pages set up for the Jewish victims. There are cultural differences that account for that gap, Mr. Fulop said.

“The Jewish community buried two people the next day, and then they sat shiva. They didn’t have time for GoFundMe. The other communities did.” Christians wait to bury their dead; their schedules are reversed, with the shiva-sort-of-equivalent wake coming before the funeral. That gave their community time to set up GoFundMe pages. Later, the chasidic victims’ families’ funding pages caught up to the others. “Those are cultural differences,” Mr. Fulop said. “And that narrative, based on misunderstanding, can be very damaging.”

But still Mr. Fulop feels hope. Jersey City is so diverse, he said, that “this feels like an isolated situation. These two people,” the murderers, “do not represent at all the sentiments of the community.”

Rabbi Leana Moritt heads Temple Beth-El, Jersey’s City’s Reform synagogue. She was at the Monday meeting, and she agrees with Mr. Fulop’s assessment.

“My experiences with Jersey City can be boiled down to what I saw at our healing service last Wednesday,” she said. “We had about 500 people, mostly non-Jews, who came to show their love and support and solidarity with the Jewish community.”

There were so many non-Jewish clergy who volunteered to offer prayers “that I very consciously had to limit the number. “We had clergy from the Bahai community, the Muslim community, and two or three different Christian denomination,” she said. “And my community is racially and ethnically diverse. We are a microcosm of Jersey City — and we like it that way.

“That feeling from that night – that’s the overwhelming feeling that I get in every corner of Jersey City. So
when I hear about the other stuff that’s going on, I know that it’s fringe. I don’t want to elevate the fringe and make it more central.”

She is frustrated with the media coverage of the murders, she said; reports tend to stress the tensions in the community, and by focusing on them exacerbate them.

She was disturbed by Ms. Terrell-Paige’s comments, she said, but she thinks that a face-to-face meeting could be powerful. “I am looking forward to meeting her, she said, but she thinks that a face-to-face meeting could be powerful. “I am looking forward to meeting her, neshama to neshama,” soul to soul, and “I hope that I will hear about her and her life and she will hear about me and my life,” she said, because it’s easier to hate someone you don’t know.

Rabbi Moritt’s own iconic experience was when “I was on the phone with the Washington Post” — which, she said, was the only major daily newspaper to get the story properly balanced — “and there was a tap on my shoulder. And it was the head of the Muslim community, bringing me lunch.” It was pizza; what’s more, “the pizza was kosher!”

Rabbi Moritt said.

The most important thing is to come to know each other as people; she said. That’s how you get beyond stereotypes. That’s why she wants to have lunch with her colleagues. “I was sitting next to a black preacher on Friday, and he was talking about doing a pulpit swap, getting to know each other in that way.”

And social media, too, is a problem; its anonymity can cloak malice and lead people down increasingly dark rabbit holes. “I will quote my son Nathan, who said that as human beings and as social creatures we take cues from one another. When we are face to face, those cues are powerful motivators. When we are on the internet, when we have none of those cues, we are free to express our darkest selves, and everything just testifies. We all need to pay attention to the need to do things face to face.”

She went to the shiva for Ms. Ferencz, in Jersey City; that is as face to face as possible. She found the men in the front room, the women in the back room, and the female in-laws in the kitchen, cooking. “I went and sat down with the women, and it was lovely,” she said. “They were very gracious. They agreed that what happened is not who Jersey City is. This is their neighborhood, and they know that. And I wished them HaMakom yenachem et’chem” — what visitors traditionally say to mourners as they leave shiva. (The full text means “May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”) And then she left, feeling a deeper understanding of and connection to the mourners, the victims, and their community.

Rabbi Moritt thinks that Jersey City is at a crossroads. The future has a great deal of potential — if people approach it properly. Otherwise, not so much.

Jersey City is experiencing an economic growth, with building and a tremendous influx of young families, which is wonderful,” she said. “They are investing in a future here. If we want Jersey City to be a place where families will stay and raise their children, our schools need to be open, welcoming and safe. There is no room for bigotry and hatred in our schools. Our city’s growth and health depends on it.”

New Jersey’s Governor Phil Murray and its senior senator, Robert Menendez, both have spoken with passion and horror about the murders, and so did New Jersey’s junior senator, Cory Booker.

“Last week’s targeted attack in Jersey City was a horrendous display of anti-Semitism that resulted in the deaths of four innocent people,” Mr. Booker emailed the Jewish Standard. “As Jersey City deals with the aftermath of hatred and cruelty, my heart is with the Jewish community. They know far too well a perpetual state of fear, and it is in our power to change this reality.

“By calling it out whenever we see it, we can stamp out anti-Semitic hate and uphold the American legacy of inclusion, religious freedom, liberty, and justice for all. To the families of Moshe Deutsch, Mindy Ferencz, Douglas Miguel Rodriguez, and Detective Joseph Seals, may the Almighty comfort you amongst the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

“I really want to thank law enforcement and elected officials for their unwavering support,” the federation’s Jason Shames said. “It is reassuring for us in the Jewish community to know that even though we know that there are some people out there who would not only wish us harm but try to do harm, they are not by any stretch representative of the people who live in this country. Our elected officials and law enforcement are unwavering in their support of the Jewish community and in fighting hate.

“We have to remember that we lost four people here. Detective Seals had five children. Leah Mindel Ferencz left behind three. Miguel Jason Rodriguez had one.

“At the end of the day it is a human tragedy. I don’t relish spending every waking minute of this week trying to build relationships. I would rather that all these people were still alive and well, and that my work struggles would be how do we build unity in Jersey City, not how do we heal from this catastrophe.

“And I think that it is a stain on humanity that these things continue to happen.”