

# American presidents who fought and ignored anti-Semitism

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A police officer walks past the Tree of Life Synagogue and a memorial in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 28, 2018. Flowers and stars were placed in remembrance of those killed and injured the day before when a shooter opened fire during prayer services at the synagogue. Photo by AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar

In October 1958, someone bombed a synagogue in Atlanta, Georgia.

A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship. Jews practice Judaism. It one of the world's main religions.

Bombings and bomb threats of synagogues had already happened seven times in the year 1958.

But this was the first time the president at the time, Dwight Eisenhower, spoke out against it.

Eisenhower ordered the FBI to help. He said everyone should be upset that someone would try to hurt a religious place.

Many people liked his actions. Others asked why it took him so long.

## **How A President Responds Matters**

A president's response to anti-Semitism can have consequences. Anti-Semitism is a hatred of Jews. On October 27, 2018, a shooter killed 11 people at Tree of Life synagogue. It is in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. President Donald Trump responded to the attack. He said that anti-Semitism "cannot be ignored, cannot be tolerated and cannot be allowed to continue."

Yet, some say Trump has been part of the problem. They say the way he speaks encourages anti-Semitism.

Trump argued the problem is the media. He said that "fake news" was to blame. He said that newspapers and news reports were responsible for division and hate.

Anti-Semitism is not a new problem for U.S. presidents.

## **Washington And Lincoln**

Some presidents helped Jews. George Washington wrote to a Jewish community in Rhode Island in 1790. He promised the government would protect their rights.

Abraham Lincoln was friendly with Jews. General Ulysses S. Grant ordered the removal of all Jews from Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi. People incorrectly thought Jews were breaking laws. Lincoln cancelled the order. He did not think it was fair.

Some presidents had anti-Semitic opinions.

## **Roosevelt And Nixon**

Franklin Roosevelt was publicly against anti-Semitism. Yet, he said hurtful things in private. His government also did not let many Jews move to the United States.

For example, a French general in Morocco met with Roosevelt in 1943. Morocco is a country in northern Africa. The leader complained about Jews. Roosevelt agreed with this general. He said that Jews should have fewer important jobs.

President Richard Nixon also shared bad opinions about Jews in private. He said that he did not trust Jewish people.

## **Trump Denies Responsibility**

Trump denies that his words have caused hate. He is planning a trip to Pittsburgh.

Bend the Arc is a group for Jews. Their leaders wrote a letter. They said Trump is not welcome. They want him to stop saying bad things about people. They want him to speak against hatred. More than 16,000 people signed the letter.

**Quiz**

- 1 Read the paragraph from the section "Washington And Lincoln."

*Some presidents helped Jews. George Washington wrote to a Jewish community in Rhode Island in 1790. He promised the government would protect their rights.*

Which question is answered in this paragraph?

- (A) What did Washington say he would do to help Jews?
- (B) What kinds of work did Jews do in Rhode Island in 1790?
- (C) How many Jews lived in Rhode Island in 1790?
- (D) How did Jews feel about George Washington's letter to them?

- 2 Read the section "Trump Denies Responsibility."

Which sentence from the section shows how the Jewish group Bend the Arc felt about Trump's plan to visit Pittsburgh?

- (A) He is planning a trip to Pittsburgh.
- (B) Bend the Arc is a group for Jews.
- (C) Their leaders wrote a letter.
- (D) They said Trump is not welcome.

- 3 Which sentence from the article states a MAIN idea of the entire article?

- (A) A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship.
- (B) Some presidents had anti-Semitic opinions.
- (C) Franklin Roosevelt was publicly against anti-Semitism.
- (D) He is planning a trip to Pittsburgh.

- 4 Read the paragraph below from the section "Washington And Lincoln."

*Abraham Lincoln was friendly with Jews. General Ulysses S. Grant ordered the removal of all Jews from Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi. People incorrectly thought Jews were breaking laws. Lincoln cancelled the order. He did not think it was fair.*

What is the MAIN idea of this paragraph?

- (A) Grant tried to remove Jews from some states, but Lincoln stopped him.
- (B) Some people thought Jews did not want to live in Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi.
- (C) Ulysses S. Grant ordered Jews to leave three states because Lincoln asked him to.
- (D) Abraham Lincoln had more power than a general, because he was the president of the U.S.

**Answer Key**

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