

The Board of Deputies of British Jews
1 Torriano Mews
Kentish Town
London NW5 2RZ

11th August 2018

For the attention of Marie van der Zyl, Deputies President

Dear Marie,

This last week Boris Johnson has come in for a lot of criticism for the Daily Telegraph article in which he expressed his views on Muslim women wearing the burka, which some say were offensive. You cultivated a public association with him during your bid for the Presidency and photos of you together appeared in the media. (JC 3 May 2018) In the images you appear like an awe-struck groupie, overwhelmed by being so close to her rock-star hero.

But what do you think of him now? Will you defend his right to free-speech and resist joining the demand for him to apologise - after all you don't want to miss out on another photo-opportunity which might present itself one day? Will you accept that he has the right to express his personal opinion - unlike Roslyn Pine who had to be punished for her forthright views. We must not overlook the fact that the burka which woman are forced to wear not only hides appearance, but serves to effectively conceal bruises.

According to an article in the Jewish News (9 August), Cable Street in East London has been identified as one of the top 10 landmarks in England's "history of power, protest and progress". It was the location where, in 1936, Jews clashed with about 6,000 police who were protecting a march by the British Union of Fascists, known as the Blackshirts, led by Oswald Mosley. But for some, the scene of blood shed would be an inspiration for other acts of violence.

Your father Barry Kaye cited it to illustrate how his threat of aggression against me would be carried out. (My letter to you dated 12 July provides detail.) He sent me hateful and idiotic messages critical of me as a 'non-Jew' which were disgraceful and totally unacceptable. Up to his death he showed no sign of remorse or a desire to change.

In a 2016 email, which mentioned your father's (then recent) death, you referred to your daughter being close to him. The question remains: where did his deep-seated hatred come from and how can we be sure it did not contaminate the younger generation?

Extreme views are a constant menace in our society and no sector is immune. It befalls to all religious groups to take a robust stance against those who spread hatred, to stop it metastasising. We must be bold and not shrink from admitting the presence of those within our midst who prefer division, wherever it is found. As the late June Jacobs - respected and greatly admired for her work within the Jewish community - said: "Talking in itself can't hurt anyone."

Yours sincerely,

George Rooker,
Historian