

AGPI GUIDED READING ACTIVITY

5 Question: In your opinion, is the BDS campaign, antisemitic? Explain.

6 Question: Ginetta Sagan said that “silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor.” Others say that there is safety in silence. Given mobs of pro-Palestinian protestors, why might some Muslim leaders have chosen silence?

Kamloops discovery and London killings are tearing Canada’s social fabric apart

We are blessed to be living in Canada. We are afforded every opportunity to collaborate, co-exist and build a nation that sets an example for the world. But the devastating events of the last couple of weeks including horrific revelations of [215 children buried](#) at a B.C. [residential school](#); an outbreak of [anti-Semitism](#) from pro-Palestinian protesters across the country and the horrific murder of a [Muslim family](#), have left me wondering if Canadians can ever overcome racism and live-in harmony.

Canada’s history is grounded in racism and discrimination. From the incomprehensible ethnic cleansing and cultural genocide of our Indigenous communities; to the [head-tax](#) of the Chinese population; the [internment](#) of Japanese and Italian communities during the Second World War to an unbelievable human rights catastrophe by refusing Jewish refugees fleeing from the [Holocaust](#), as a “[none is too many](#)” policy. These are just a few of the many disturbing episodes in the dark corners of our national history. [The Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) began an introspection into this nation’s past and possibly a window into a better future. There is so much more.

But through determination, we began rising as a nation. We began paving a path to an identity greater than our individualism. We distanced ourselves from the polarization and historic generational conflicts around the world — and even came to believe we could create a new utopia. [The Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) breathed life into the idea that Canada should be underpinned by freedom, justice, and liberty. While celebrating [multiculturalism](#) we were bemoaning the intolerance of the past. We set up human rights commissions; an office to investigate war crimes and installed a series of laws to counter hate crimes.

Internationally, brand Canada is recognized and respected and we have earned this respect by creating a society that puts respect and acceptance first.

After the violence of the last number of weeks, our social fabric is coming apart. Canadians no longer feel safe and secure in their own homes. In one of my lectures this week, a Jewish child asked me if its still safe to wear a kippah on the street. Our political leaders have begun engaging in partisan politics, exacerbating internal fear and strife playing into the recent conflict between the terrorist group, [Hamas](#), and Israel. Shockingly, some Parliamentarians have been issuing letters critical of Israel to their constituents and to Parliament itself — which have only fanned inter-communal animosity. Some public groups have issued statements supporting the anti-Semitic [boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign](#) against Israel while Jewish staff have reached out to me about feeling discriminated against in their own companies and organizations.

This is not my Canada. It was heart wrenching to see the violent anti-Semitic demonstrations on our city streets. Mobs of pro-Palestinian protestors disregarded our very foundational values of respect, tolerance and peaceful protest and violently attacked Jewish protestors. Fearing for their lives, Jewish residents set up street patrols and called on authorities to break their silence and condemn and act upon the prevailing anti-Semitism that shattered the safety and security of our cities. At the same time, I reached out to Muslim leaders asking them to reduce the tension. This was met with either a cool response — or silence.

The murder of the Muslim family in London afforded a missed opportunity for us to come together as Canadians. Immediately following the tragedy, I issued a statement on behalf of the Jewish community expressing “my heartfelt condolences to my brothers and sisters of the Muslim faith”. I said, “I wish to reassure them that they can count on us to stand with them at this difficult moment and that we unequivocally condemn this outrageous attack”. Following my statement, I began reaching out to my friends in the Muslim community, including the London Mosque with the same message. Not surprisingly, my message was embraced by the Jewish community at large.

We were all shocked however when in front of the Canadian Prime Minister, Ontario’s Premier and major party leaders, the final speaker at the televised vigil for the family said: “[whatever is happening in Jerusalem and Gaza is related to what is happening in London, Ontario](#)”. While he says his words are misconstrued, his comment was met with criticism over what seemed to be an attempt to “relate” the two events in reference to “foreign policy.” It was disappointing to see what appears to be a politicization of an important gathering with respect to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The cheers from the crowd and the “free Palestine” chants following his remarks, did not make things better for Canada. Worse, the silence from our elected officials in attendance cannot be disregarded.

As Canadians, we have made tremendous strides toward cooperation and collaboration over the last number of years. Following the [Pittsburgh synagogue massacre](#), I hosted a high-level meeting of interfaith leaders who came together to condemn hatred for all. Today, I am choosing to have hope over despair; to continue reaching out to Canadians; to strengthen my interfaith friendships and interfaith outreach. And most importantly, to encourage a universal framework against hate and intolerance. After all, I am Canadian and so are you.

10 Key Words (define or explain)

- Partisan Politics
- Islamophobia
- Antisemitism
- Residential School
- Head Tax
- Internment Camp
- S.S. St. Louis

1 Question: What motivated Canada’s residential school policy and when did it end?

2 Question: What is meant by the statement “Canadas’s history is grounded in racism and discrimination”?

3 Question: What does the author mean that “we could create a new utopia”?

4 Question: Why does Canada consider Hamas a terrorist organization?

7 Question: Given the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, why might the Jewish community stand with the Muslim community?

8 Question : The author refers to a speaker at the vigil as attempting to relate the murder of the London family to the events in Jerusalem and Gaza. This is a false equivalency. What does this term mean and how is the speakers statement an example of it?

9 Question: Why today should we choose to have hope over despair given what this article has discussed?