



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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WNY Responds to a Hateful Act with Love and Support

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| ISSUE: **COMMUNITY**



Photo by Eileen Hopkins

It has been over a week since Buffalo, WNY and the nation were left horrified by the evil act of violence at a Tops supermarket on Jefferson Avenue. The murder of ten innocent people by an individual filled with such hatred forces us to cope with multiple emotions, including shock, sadness, grief and anger.

My condolences to the families and friends of the victims; Aaron Salter, Ruth Whitfield, Katherine Massey, Roberta Drury, Heyward Patterson, Pearl Young, Celestine Chaney,

Geraldine Talley, Margus Morrison and Andre Mackniel. My thoughts are also with the three people injured in the attack.

The perpetrator of this racist act, who I will not name, must be held accountable. As we learn more about his twisted views and beliefs, we must work to prevent anything like this from happening again. That includes making sure our law enforcement agencies and criminal justice system have the resources necessary to prevent violent crime including acts of domestic terrorism, such as this.

As a former State Trooper and Sheriff of Erie County, let me also speak of the importance of community support for police. Officers at the federal, state and local level take an oath to serve and protect their communities. That commitment and dedication was on full display following the mass shooting in Buffalo.

Police arrived at the scene in less than two minutes and immediately confronted the shooter. The quick action of Buffalo Police saved lives and prevented a tragic incident from becoming worse. Even before police arrived, a retired Buffalo officer, Aaron Salter, working as a security guard, engaged the suspect and tried to stop his rampage. Mr. Salter gave his life in an effort to save others.

Other first responders also raced to the scene, including members of the Buffalo Fire Department, Erie County Sheriff's Office, New York State Police, EMT and EMS personnel, the FBI and other agencies. I thank all of them for their service to the community.

As we wrestle with the emotions we are all feeling in the wake of this tragedy, I am reminded that Buffalo is called the City of Good Neighbors. Over the past week or so, we have seen plenty examples of neighbors helping each other.

The list starts with the first responders mentioned above, but it also includes the thousands of people and dozens of businesses and organizations throughout the region who have stepped up to help the families of the victims and the residents of the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood. Those who have donated food, supplies and money have helped to ease the pain that so many people are feeling. I thank them for their generosity and acts of kindness.

There is no place for the hatred and racism displayed at that Tops supermarket. While we must never forget what happened there, let us honor the victims by remembering how our community responded and what we can do to make Buffalo, WNY, our state and our nation better.