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Orinda joins nation in proclaiming May as Jewish-American heritage month

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Following the lead of U.S. President Joseph Biden, the Orinda City Council declared May to be Jewish-American heritage month by adoption of a proclamation, which states, in part, "during Jewish American heritage month, the city of Orinda celebrates the heartfelt progress won through the struggle and sacrifice of Jewish Americans, and we rededicate ourselves to building a world where diversity is cherished and faith is protected."

The proclamation goes on to praise the vibrant culture and life of the Jewish American community, while acknowledging that they have experienced prejudice and discrimination, and that Jewish communities continue to confront hostility and bigotry, including in America. "The city of Orinda shares the obligation to condemn and combat antisemitism and hatred wherever it exists," the proclamation continues. It recognizes that American Jews have "worked tirelessly to strengthen the promise of religious freedom and civil rights in the United States by joining together with all faiths to reject ignorance and intolerance, teach empathy and compassion, and root out hatred wherever it exists."

Reflecting on the greater history of the Jews, the proclamation notes that "through our understanding and study of the holocaust, we know the human devastation that can come from systematic prejudice, and are compelled to `never forget."

The federal proclamation explains that the first Jews to arrive in America were 23 refugees who landed in New York in 1654.

Noting that the inspirational poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty was written by Jewish-American poet Emma Lazarus, Biden recently said,

"Throughout our country's history, Jewish Americans have proudly served our Nation in uniform, in elected office, and on our nation's highest courts. They have made enormous contributions to America's cultural, scientific, artistic, and intellectual life, and they have marched, petitioned, and boarded buses to demand civil and political rights for all - from women's rights to voting rights to workers' rights."

The Orinda proclamation invites people to visit www.jewishheritagemonth.gov to learn more about the heritage and contributions of Jewish Americans.

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