



Philadelphia Jewish Sports Hall of Fame Response to Desean Jackson statement

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Much has been said and written about Desean Jackson since his ill-fated Instagram posts from this past Monday. I don't need to repeat what was said, because the comments were personally reprehensible to me and hurtful to many. Desean has apologized several times for these comments and has said initially that they were misconstrued and that he "didn't intend any harm or hatred" towards Jews. Against the backdrop of a deadly pandemic and worldwide protests in the streets in part against systemic racial injustice, Desean Jackson made his despicable comments.

Words matter. Jews have had to endure anti-Semitism for centuries. This is nothing new to us. Anti-Semitic comments now appear in the mainstream and violence against Jews is commonplace. Making statements like the ones made by Desean the other day normalize these types of stereotypes, which is dangerous to our already fragile society.

But I don't single out Desean any more than others who are on social media and write hateful, racist, and threatening comments about people they don't know based on the color of their skin, distinguishing features, political leanings, religion or their surnames. It's time for all of us to be much kinder to one another, and to put ourselves in our neighbor's shoes for just a moment. Rebbetzin Dena Weinberg once said "There are no problems, only opportunities for growth."

As president of The Philadelphia Jewish Hall of Fame, I have been moved by the many speeches I have heard over the years by our inductees. Jewish athletes, coaches, sports media members and administrators have spoken about overcoming not just competition on the field or in business, but the prejudice of teammates and business people. I invite Desean to come and visit our museum and learn about these inductees and to attend next year's gala in April, where we will be posthumously honoring former owner of the Philadelphia Eagles, Jerry Wolman.

Maya Angelou said "Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better." Desean, I know you can do better than you have this week.