Antisemitism: At the Epicenter of Campus Intolerance

Antisemitic Activity in 2016 at U.S. Colleges and Universities With the Largest Jewish Undergraduate Populations

April 2017

Section IV of Report[1]: Discussion and Recommendations

Intolerance – the unwillingness to accept, or merely recognize and respect, beliefs and identities that differ from one's own – is a serious and growing problem in our nation. Borne of a deep antipathy toward or hatred of another individual or group, intolerance expresses itself in behavior that seeks to suppress the hated individual's or group's expression of belief or identity. The most extreme forms of intolerant suppression are designated as hate crimes, acts of violence motivated by racial, religious, sexual, or other extreme prejudice. In 2016, such hate crimes rose nationally by about 13%, and in some localities they hit a multi-year high, with antisemitic attacks in several major American cities accounting for some of the sharpest increases.[2] Indeed, Jews have been one of the most frequently targeted groups in the country for acts of extreme intolerance. Since the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation began publishing its annual audit of hate crimes in 1997, crimes targeting Jews have constituted the majority of all religiously motivated crimes every single year.[3]

On college campuses, Jewish students have often been subjected to severely intolerant behavior: actions that target them for harm and deprive them of their freedom of expression, as well as hateful speech and imagery that threaten violence against them or portray them as worthy of harm. As documented in our studies, these intolerant behaviors have two major ideological

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[1] http://www.amchainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Antisemitism_At-the-Epicenter-of-Campus-Intolerance_Report-2016.pdf

[2] https://csbs.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/Special%20Status%20Report%20Metro%20Areas%202017%20Final%20Draft%2032517.pdf

[3] https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/

sources. The first is classical antisemitism, a hatred of and desire to harm Jews individually or collectively, which is most often exhibited in anti-Jewish genocidal expression such as graffiti and social media postings calling for the death of Jews and the production of swastikas and swastika-like symbols that evoke the heinous crimes committed by the Nazis in the era of the Holocaust, especially the genocidal murder of six million Jews. Expressions of genocidal antisemitism directly threaten Jewish students and cause them to feel less safe on their campus.

Anti-Zionism is the second ideological source of acts of intolerant behavior directed at Jewish students, particularly behavior that limits their freedom of expression when it comes to Israel. This is not surprising, given that anti-Zionism is, by definition, opposed to Zionism and any expression of Jewish national self-determination, whether it manifests itself in the existence or functioning of a Jewish state, or expressions of identification with or support for that state. For this reason, many campus groups that identify as anti-Zionist have adopted as part of their mission the strategic goal of "anti-normalization" – actively opposing every expression of pro-Israel sentiment or even acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist, lest it legitimize or "normalize" the Jewish state. Thus, members of anti-Zionist groups have carried out an array of intolerant activities to silence Jewish and pro-Israel voices, most frequently through the attempted cancellation, shutting down or disruption of pro-Israel events, but also through the vilification and intimidation of Jewish and pro-Israel groups and individuals, with the clear intention of delegitimizing their perspective or causing them to be too afraid or uncomfortable to express it. Given that the program to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel is itself an anti-normalization tactic to ensure the isolation, delegitimization and elimination of the Jewish state, it is no wonder that the intensive BDS activities leading up to anti-Israel divestment votes at several schools in our study correlated strongly with spikes in antisemitic expression and the targeting of Jewish students and staff for harm at those schools.

Although these diverse ideological sources of anti-Jewish hostility have made Jewish students particularly vulnerable to intolerance, they are far from the only students who have been targeted for harm on many campuses. As we noted, the sharp increase in genocidal expression from 2015 to 2016, coupled with the use of classic symbols of genocidal antisemitism to express hatred not only of Jews but of other campus groups as well, suggests that there are deep divisions within the campus community that are resulting in profoundly intolerant behavior threatening the safety and well-being of many students. And this disturbing trend does not seem to be abating. In the first two and a half months in 2017 alone, there were more than **30** incidents involving anti-Jewish genocidal expression on the schools in our study, with several of these incidents affecting not only Jewish students but other members of the campus community who have been targeted for their opinion or identity.

In addition, while Jewish and pro-Israel students are the most frequently and consistently targeted victims of anti-normalization campaigns, other groups have been targeted in a similar fashion, as the recent violent protests of speakers brought to campus by Republican student groups at UC Berkeley[4] and Middlebury College[5] demonstrate. Such intolerance not only deprives students of their freedom of expression and beliefs, it also tremendously undermines the academic mission of the university and its commitment to being a free marketplace of ideas.

[4] http://ktla.com/2017/02/02/uc-berkeley-protests-of-breitbarts-milo-yiannopoulos-caused-100000-in-damage/
[5] http://www.newsweek.com/charles-murray-my-free-speech-ordeal-middlebury-564419

In the current climate of increasing polarization and acts of extreme intolerance, we believe that Jewish students, and all students, will be best served when university administrators treat antisemitism and other acts of bigotry as forms of intolerant behavior that must be addressed with a single behavioral standard applied equitably to all forms of intolerance. We urge administrators to take the following steps to reduce intolerance and promote free expression on their campus:

- Review, update and diligently enforce campus policies and procedures to guarantee that all members of the campus community, irrespective of their opinions, beliefs or identity, are equitably and adequately protected from intolerant behavior that infringes on their freedom of expression and denies them equal rights.

- Ensure that prompt and appropriate disciplinary measures are taken when any individual or group engages in behavior that suppresses the freedom of expression or civil rights of others.

- Develop protocols for ensuring that university-approved student groups do not engage in behaviors that violate the freedom of speech or civil rights of others. We recommend that before granting university approval to a new or renewing student organization, leaders of each group should be required to adequately explain how their activities will avoid impinging on the freedom of expression of other members of the campus community.

- Develop protocols for equitably and adequately condemning intolerant expression, even when it is protected under the First Amendment. At a minimum, university administrators should publicly condemn speech or actions that suppress the freedom of other members of the campus community to express their opinions, beliefs or identity.

- Make public and easily accessible all policies, procedures and protocols for responding to intolerant behavior, along with a written statement of the university's commitment to their equitable enforcement for <u>all</u> students, regardless of identity, belief or opinion.

- Develop educational and training programs that can:
    - Help members of the campus community to recognize and avoid intolerant behavior and be aware of all campus policies and procedures regarding such behavior;
    - Teach and encourage the expression of diverse views in a productive and respectful manner;
    - Foster a tolerance and appreciation of diverse opinions and identities; and
    - Inculcate an understanding of and appreciation for the First Amendment and its critical role in supporting the academic mission of the university.