

Let's Talk About antisemitism

ANTISEMITISM 101

Presenter: Rabbi Julia Appel, julia@clal.org

Agenda

1. I feel _____ when talking about antisemitism.
2. Introductions and Goals
3. Context: A rise in antisemitism
4. Confusion: Why is antisemitism so confusing?
 - a. Unlike other -isms, but also similar
 - b. Lack of awareness of range in severity
 - c. Jewishness, Whiteness, and Privilege
 - d. Antisemitism vs. anti-Israel or anti-Zionism
5. Content: What are some of the tropes of antisemitism?
 - a. Jews secretly control the world.
 - b. Jews are greedy.
 - c. Jews are white. Jews aren't white.
 - d. Jews are interlopers who cannot be trusted.
6. How does antisemitism operate?
 - a. Three key ways antisemitism operates.
 - i. Singles out Jews, to the exclusion of others
 - ii. Diverts the effort at hand.
 - iii. Isolates Jews
 - b. Distinguishing antisemitism from anti-Israel
 - i. Delegitimizes
 - ii. Demonizes
 - iii. Double standards
7. Case study and discussion
 - a. "Responses to Antisemitism Online"
 - b. What can we do now?

Additional Reading

- A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism by Phyllis Goldstein
- antisemitism: Here and Now by Deborah Lipstadt
- unlearnantisemitism.ca
- facinghistory.org/resource-library/contemporary-antisemitism-youth

Case Study Discussion Questions

Read “Responses to antisemitism Online” with your small group

1. Read the below case study out loud in your group.
2. Take a minute to yourself to make some notes.
 - a. What are the major antisemitic tropes that show up in this case study?
 - b. How does antisemitism affect Izzy? How does it affect others in her community?
 - c. Based on this case study, develop a working definition of antisemitism, using your own words.
3. In your small group, share:
 - a. Your observations about the tropes and the effects of antisemitism you saw in the case study
 - b. Your definition of antisemitism
 - c. Create a 2-3 sentence definition based on all your first drafts.

Full group discussion

1. What did you see Izzy do to respond to the antisemitism she saw around her? What lessons might we draw out from her actions and their results? What might we want to keep in mind as we are determining a response?
2. How did you see allies supporting Izzy and other Jews in the case study? What else could have been done? Have you experienced support by non-Jews during incidents of antisemitism? What did they do that helped? What didn't help?

From Facing History and Ourselves’ “Responses to Antisemitism Online” (abridged)

facinghistory.org/standing-up-hatred-intolerance/responses-antisemitism-online

When Birmingham University student Izzy Lenga found posters plastered around her campus that read “HITLER WAS RIGHT,” she tweeted a photograph of one of them with this message: “And for those who don't think anti-Semitism is a serious issue, these were plastered over campus on Tues.” She included the hashtag of the National Union of Students conference. Shortly after she sent the message, the antisemitic messages to her began. Lenga decided to speak out and to make the messages visible by reposting them.



@pulke1 @izzyjengalenga Question 3: What colour is a corpse dead from cyanide gassing?

— Thomas F. Malone (@ThomasFMalone3) November 2, 2015

The bitch is the problem with the UK. Making everything about the Jews. #HitlerWasRight #FuckAllNonWhites

— Glengoolie Black (@GlengoolieBlack) October 29, 2015

@TimGStevens @izzyjengalenga Nazi propaganda planted by Zionists

— Smeggy pants (@Smeggy pants) November 1, 2015

@pulke1 @izzyjengalenga @christinazaba Never trust a Jew - Titus 1:14

— White Fort Myers (@WhiteFortM) November 1, 2015

@noahlevy94 @izzyjengalenga I'm dismayed (not surprised) that #Jews always play the victims and never try to end their parasitism on others.

— Fanfan (@Fanfan1911) October 31, 2015

In a message she posted on Facebook, Lenga described the tweets as a “terrifying read.” “I decided [the National Union of Students conference] was an appropriate time and place to demonstrate how antisemitism is still problematic on our campuses, despite many in the student movement not believing the claims of Jewish students who argue it to be so,” she wrote.

“However, the backlash to my tweet has been extremely nasty and deeply upsetting. This sets a worrying precedent. I am worried about the rise of antisemitism across Europe and the world, and at points I am worried for my safety and that of my peers, but I am most concerned for the Jewish student community. Many Jewish students will now, and completely understandably, be apprehensive to speak up publicly about the antisemitism they may be facing, for fear of a similar backlash.”

Despite the onslaught of abuse, Lenga has resolved to stand strong.

I’ll still be continuing to retweet a handful of the tweets I am receiving for everyone to see.

— Izzy Lenga (@izzyjengalenga) October 30, 2015

And the student has received numerous messages of support - including from Labour MP Luciana Berger - with some even deploying the hashtag #IStandWithIzzy.

Some of the things I’ve seen on Twitter this morning are barbaric remorseless. No one should face that kind of abuse. #IStandWithIzzy

— Eleanor Keiller (@ellekeiller) November 1, 2015

If anyone thinks that the problem of social media trolling is overstated look at @izzyjengalenga timeline. Foul stuff. Brave woman. All the best.

— Garry Coutts (@GarryCoutts) November 1, 2015

Lenga has also received support from the National Union of Students, whose president Megan Dunn blogged on The Huffington Post UK about the incident.

“My Twitter stream has been a stark reminder of the very real and horrific reality of anti-Semitism that Jewish students face in Britain,” Dunn wrote. “This harassment is deplorable.” She added: “It is time that we all stepped up and played our part in facing down this disgusting abuse - whether online or on the street, once and for all.”

Deeply grateful and overwhelmed by the outpouring of support by everyone. Anti Semitism has no place on our campuses or in our society.

— Izzy Lenga (@izzyjengalenga) October 30, 2015

A University of Birmingham spokesperson confirmed to HuffPost UK the posters had been reported to West Midlands Police. “We unreservedly condemn racist graffiti on campus. We are working with [police] to identify those responsible.

“Discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated. We are therefore actively working with a range of groups to bring people together and ensure that our University is a place where diversity is celebrated and everyone plays their part in creating a vibrant and welcoming community.”

A spokesperson for the Union of Jewish Students told HuffPost UK: “No one should have to face the torrent of online antisemitic abuse that Izzy Lenga has had to face over the last few days. The tweets have been vile in their nature and show that antisemitism is still alive today.

“Izzy Lenga does an amazing job of not only standing up for Birmingham students but also represents students on a national level on NUS NEC where she will often speak up for issues affecting Jewish students when others won’t. It is important that Jewish students follow Izzy’s example and continue to seek representative positions both in the student movement and wider society.”

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of antisemitism

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.
- Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).
- Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property — such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries — are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.
- Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism