

Parent Resources

# Antisemitism on Campus



**ΑΕΠ**

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP  
*for the* JEWISH COMMUNITY

[aeppi.org](http://aeppi.org)

# ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

---

## JEWISH IDENTITY

Jewish identity in today's world seems to take many forms. For some, it is practice of rituals, keeping kashrut, and observance. For others, it is pride in culture, support of Israel, or philanthropic involvement. Whatever form you and your family's Jewish identity takes, you can be certain that your student will need to find their own connection and identity when they go off to college. In some ways this is a necessity as they may not always be able to come home for holidays and the Jewish community, they grew up in will not be the same as the one on campus.

Campuses can be a place where personal identity is formed or solidified and are often where identity can be tested, as well. Today's students grapple with the convergence of identity, culture, opinion, thought, intersectionality and allyship each and every day. This is a difficult landscape to navigate and can be made even more difficult due to the prevalence and impact of social media. Many students experiment with where they fit in. They become more or less observant, seek a diversity of political and philosophical thought, and question their own place. This process can be a very healthy one, but many students make the mistake of believing that they will blend in as long as they do not identify themselves as being Jewish. It is crucial to make sure that your student knows that this is not always the case.

It is critically important that our students identify with the Jewish people and that they develop a strong personal connection to Judaism in whatever form that takes. When we have a strong Jewish identity, we are best able to be allies to others and foster allyship for our community. One of the outcomes of AEPi membership is the personal growth that is required to lead, to be an ally to others, and to advocate for the Jewish people.

There are a number of ways that parents can play an important role in the personal growth that happens in college without being too hands-on or "smothering" (which often backfires):

- Remain actively engaged in conversations about values, ethics, and action.
- Ask questions to ensure that your student is engaged in the Jewish community and that they also interact with people from beyond the Jewish community.

- Express interest in political and cultural discourse that your student is engaged in on campus.
- Help students connect to local or campus-based Jewish resources and organizations.
- Send a care package ahead of Jewish holidays (or just because) with traditional Jewish foods or things to help celebrate the holiday.

## ANTISEMITISM

Many of our students come to campus from communities and families where they, thankfully, have not experienced antisemitism firsthand. On college campuses today there is a dramatic focus on free speech and free expression. It yields an abundance of political, cultural, and economic discussion and debate which are, from an educational perspective, positive outcomes. The downside is that this can also be a "safe space" for antisemitism and other forms of hate.

[Irwin Cotler](#), Professor of Law at [McGill University](#) and a human rights scholar, has identified nine aspects of what he considers to constitute the "new antisemitism."

- Genocidal antisemitism: calling for the destruction of Israel and the Jewish people.
- Political antisemitism: denial of the Jewish people's right to [self-determination](#), [delegitimization of Israel](#) as a state, attributions to Israel of all the world's evils.
- Ideological antisemitism: "Nazifying" Israel by comparing [Zionism](#) and [racism](#).
- Theological antisemitism: convergence of [Islamic antisemitism](#) and Christian "[replacement](#)" [theology](#), drawing on the classical hatred of Jews.
- Cultural antisemitism: the emergence of anti-Israel attitudes, sentiments, and discourse in "fashionable" salon intellectuals.[vague]
- Economic antisemitism: [BDS movements](#) and the [extraterritorial](#) application of [restrictive covenants](#) against countries trading with Israel.
- Holocaust denial.
- Anti-Jewish racist terrorism.
- International legal discrimination ("denial to Israel of equality before the law in the international arena").

There is no way to fully prepare your student to analyze every scenario in search for antisemitism. They will know it when they see it and they will need to process the feelings that may arise when they experience antisemitism. This discussion guide will

---

touch on a few topics that we believe will help your student adjust as they enter a community where their identity as a Jew may be challenged or may challenge them in new ways. It will also provide a few pointers for you as a parent or guardian on how to approach these discussions.

Below are some FAQs that should be useful for you and your future college student to read through and discuss:

### HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMETHING IS ANTISEMITIC?

College is a learning environment and as such you may meet others who are attempting to learn -- formally or informally -- about Judaism. Have you ever heard about people asking Jews where their horns are? As crazy as it seems, some people may come from a background where they have never met or had a chance to interact with a Jewish person before. They may have misconceptions and may ask questions that come off as rude, abrupt, or insensitive. This is not inherently antisemitism. If you are discriminated against, targeted, or held to a different standard than your peers due to your Jewish beliefs or background, that is antisemitism.

### HOW DOES ISRAEL RELATE TO ANTISEMITISM?

Israel is a hotly debated topic on college campuses. Students may come face to face with those who believe Israel should not exist at all or those who are protesting the perceived treatment of the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and Gaza. Of course, there are legitimate criticisms of Israel which are debated and discussed regularly, even within the Jewish community. On college campuses there are often instances where politically based criticisms of Israel cross the line into antisemitism or where criticism of Israel is used as a dog whistle for antisemitism. This is most easily recognized when the word "Jews" is interchanged with "Israel." For example, "Israel has bad policies regarding its borders" can quickly become "Jews want all of the land."

Legitimate criticism turns into antisemitism when one or more of the "3 D's" occurs.

**1. Delegitimization.** The term "[delegitimization of Israel](#)" refers to the denial of the Jewish people's right to [self-determination](#), for example, by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a [racist endeavor](#). This claim allegedly discriminates against Jews by singling them out as ineligible for the basic right for self-determination as it was determined by international law. Since any discrimination

against a specific ethnic, religious, racial or national group is considered a type of [racism](#), delegitimization of the Jewish people's right for self-determination is labeled as racism against Jews, i.e., antisemitism.

**2. Demonization.** The second "D" refers to the portrayal of certain groups as evil, demonic, or satanic. The [Working Definition of Antisemitism](#) says that 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 actions, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits." If the criticism uses metaphors, images or rhetoric that imply that the Israelis or Jews are evil, it is once again a projection of antisemitic [blood libels](#) and rhetoric. This is often seen in variations of the myth about the world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government, or other societal institutions.

**3. Double standards.** The last "D" refers to the application of different sets of principles in similar situations. If a person criticizes Israel and only Israel on certain issues, but chooses to ignore similar situations conducted by other countries, they are performing a [double standard](#) policy against Israel. The implementation of a different moral standard for Jews and Israel compared to the rest of the world, just like the delegitimization claim, discriminates against a specific group and is labeled as antisemitism.

### WHAT IS THE BDS MOVEMENT AND HOW IS IT ANTISEMITIC?

BDS, which stands for Boycott, Divest, and Sanction, is a worldwide movement to try and get people and organizations to boycott, divest, and sanction organizations that do business in and with Israel in order to put an economic strain on Israel and force policy changes regarding the Palestinian conflict. While the sentiment itself is not inherently antisemitic, the tactics used to try and pass BDS resolutions through student governments on campuses and within communities are often antisemitic and fan the flames of hatred and exclusion of Jewish students on campus and silencing of Jewish voices.

### WHO DO I GO TO IF I SEE OR EXPERIENCE ANTISEMITISM?

Local campus Jewish professionals (most commonly found at Hillel and Chabad) are a good resource to help a student navigate antisemitism on campus. In addition, most universities have dedicated staff resources that document and investigate antisemitism as failure to do so would violate Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act. Above all else, students should engage other students when they feel targeted. AEPi chapters, along with other student organizations, can offer strong community support and will mobilize to

---

fight injustice or intolerance.

## **IS ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS AS BAD AS IT LOOKS IN THE NEWS?**

Most of your student's time on campus will not involve any interactions with antisemitism. Their days will be filled with all of the amazing experiences that one may have on a college campus. However, it is statistically probable that your child will see or experience some types of antisemitism during their college years. Most incidents are not violent in nature like the ones you see in the news; however, it is worthwhile to have an honest conversation with your student about antisemitism before they experience it firsthand.

The American Psychological Association stresses that for children in groups that are likely to be targets of discrimination, it's vital for parents to have ongoing, honest discussions with their children rather than shying away from the subject. [The APA also recommends:](#)

- Let the discussion be ongoing.
- Keep talking. Yes, even -- and especially -- when it gets hard.
- It's also okay to say, "I don't know."
- Be age appropriate.
- Encourage your children to ask questions.
- Help kids learn how to deal with being the potential target of discrimination.
- Develop healthy comebacks or responses to hurtful discriminatory statements. For example: "What an unkind thing to say." "Excuse me? Could you repeat that?" "I disagree with you, and here's why..."
- If you catch your child using insensitive language, use the moment as a teaching example.
- Model good behavior for your child.

Additional Resources and helpful organizations:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/schooled-in-hate-anti-semitism-on-campus>

<https://amchainitiative.org/new-report-eliminationist-anti-zionism-9-17-19pr/>

Simon Wiesenthal Center, Lawfare Project, Standwithus