

Washington Square Citizens League
Discussion Forum
7:00-8:30 pm, Monday, March 13, 2023
Myra Kurkowski, Moderator

Antisemitism in America

1. What is antisemitism?
2. Why the Jews?
3. Why the rise?
4. What can we do about it?

Fact Sheet on Judaism in America

Source: Pew Research Center

1. US population identifying as Jews: 7.6 million, or 2.4% of US population as of 2020.
2. Jewish community in the US consists of primarily Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, which comprise 92% of the American Jewish population. The remainder are primarily Sephardic Jews (Spanish and Portuguese descent).
3. Jews first arrived mid-17th century. Roughly 200-300 settled mainly in South Carolina, site of America's oldest synagogue.
4. 19th century German Jews settled in Cincinnati, where the Reform Movement started.
5. 1880's large influx of Jews from the Russian Empire.
6. Most Jews are assimilated, except for Hasidic Jews.
7. Per capita income of Jews is higher than average in US.
8. Since 1930's a majority of Jews have voted Democratic.
9. Jews have been active in the American labor, civil rights, and feminist movements.
10. In the 118th Congress (sworn in on January 3, 2023), there are 33 Jews (9 Senators and 24 Representatives).
11. Fewer than 50% of Jews in the US consider themselves as religious: 14% Reform, 11% Conservative, 10% Orthodox, and 3% Hasidic (reported in 2013).
12. The highest Jewish populations are in NY, Los Angeles, South Florida, PA, Ohio, NJ, and Illinois.
13. Excluding Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, the rate of intermarriage in the period 1996-2001 was 47%; in 2021, the rate had risen to 61% .

Topic: Why the Jews?

Jewish Texans see surge in antisemitism as a precursor to fascism

Extremism experts and historians sound alarms as politicians, media personalities and celebrities amplify antisemitic conspiracies that have historically led to the killing of Jews.

BY [ROBERT DOWNEN](#) NOV. 28, 2022 5 AM CENTRAL, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

As other kids in Austin recovered from trick-or-treating on Halloween last year, Sarah Adelman worried about white supremacists, her mom and their synagogue. After a series of antisemitic incidents around Central Texas, someone set fire to Congregation Beth Israel, where Sarah's mother, Lori, is a leader.

The arson was part of an ongoing wave of antisemitic incidents that grew last year to its highest number in four decades. It came three years after a [mass shooting](#) at a Pittsburgh synagogue and was followed months later by a [hostage situation](#) at a North Texas synagogue. In 2021, the Anti-Defamation League tracked 2,717 anti-Jewish incidents nationwide— a 34% increase since 2020 and the highest number since the group began tracking antisemitism in 1979. In Texas, the ADL recorded 112 antisemitic incidents in 2021 — almost triple since 2020 — and both the state and nation are on pace to eclipse those records this year.

For years, extremism experts and historians have sounded alarms about rising antisemitism and what they say are clear warning signs of emerging fascism and extremist violence. Their warnings have only grown more dire as influential American politicians, media personalities and celebrities routinely amplify antisemitic conspiracies that have historically led to the killing of Jews.

Echoes of such extremism, experts say, can be seen at school board meetings and legislative hearings in Texas and across the country, as officials pull anti-hate educational materials from classrooms and limit how racism in the country's history is taught. Meanwhile, easy access to the internet radicalizes a new generation of extremists. And some segments of Americans are growing more accepting of ideologies such as Christian Nationalism, which claims America's founding was God-ordained, and its institutions should thus favor Christianity.

Across the state and country, neo-Nazis and white supremacists pepper neighborhoods and freeway overpasses with antisemitic banners and flyers. They threaten Jewish families, deface Jewish homes and vandalize synagogues. And, in online communities, they celebrate mass shootings, stoke violence and openly plot to kill.

Centuries-old origins

Scratch the surface of virtually any modern-day conspiracy theory, and you're almost certain to encounter some form of antisemitism. QAnon borrows heavily from deadly, historic claims that Jews were stealing and sacrificing Christian children. And while commonly used terms such as "cabal" or "globalist" may not explicitly reference religion, they reinforce dangerous, centuries-old conspiracy theories of international Jewish dominance and meddling.

Antisemitic conspiracies were increasingly popularized in the early 1900s after the publication in Russia of the [“Protocols of the Elders of Zion,”](#) a falsified document that purported to be the notes of a concerted Jewish effort aimed at global domination. Top Nazi leaders pushed the theory heavily, as did Americans such as Henry Ford, a virulent antisemite who published versions of “the Protocols” in his newspapers. That old theory, coupled with biblical misreadings that blame Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, has given unchecked license to those who want to commit violence, experts say.

“This notion of the diabolical Jew, in partnership with the devil for the purposes of evil, has not died out,” said Alvin Rosenfeld, director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University. “It goes back over many centuries: The Jews are guilty — that’s the charge. The question then is, ‘Precisely what are the Jews guilty of?’ And the answer can be everything under the sun, depending on who is making the accusations.”

Fluid boundaries

Current American discourse is rife with the kind of antisemitism that experts say stokes violence.

Last month, Fox News host Tucker Carlson, who has increasingly promoted ideas at the core of “great replacement theory” to millions of nightly viewers, aired parts of an interview with influential hip hop artist Ye, formerly known as Kanye West. Ye’s statements acted as dog whistles to trained extremist ears. Emboldened, neo-Nazi groups began dropping “Kanye was right about the Jews” banners in major American cities. As antisemitism flourished online and in the media, an online security analyst in Manhattan tipped off law enforcement about a [looming plot](#) to shoot up a nearby synagogue.

Meanwhile, former President Donald Trump questioned the patriotism of Jewish Americans last month, pitting them against his evangelical Christian supporters. On his social media platform Truth Social, Trump suggested Jews have dual loyalties to America and Israel and warned them “to get their act together and appreciate what they have in Israel - Before it is too late!” And Brooklyn Nets star Kyrie Irving shared a [conspiracy film](#) that falsely alleged Jews were heavily involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Experts say Jewish Americans find themselves in a Catch-22 when faced with such rhetoric.

“If they shut up and say nothing, it’ll just encourage more antisemitism,” said Rosenfeld, director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism. “But if they voice their displeasure and there are consequences,” they give oxygen to the false notion of coordinated, Jewish dominance that has historically led to violence.

Irving was suspended by his team for his comments, and Ye was suspended from social media and lost a partnership with Adidas. Yet Irving’s first game back from suspension was preceded by [a march of Black Hebrew Israelites](#), an extremist group that, among other things, claims Jews are the spawns of Satan. And, last week, it was [reported](#) that Ye had met with Trump — and brought with him Nick Fuentes, a live-streamer and avowed Christian nationalist who has [denied the Holocaust](#) and been [open](#) about his desire to expel Jews from the United States.

Raising awareness of antisemitism is a lesson that Rozalie Jerome, a 65-year-old Kingwood resident and president of the Holocaust Remembrance Association, has spent most of her life teaching to others. The child of two Holocaust survivors, Jerome has become a student of fascist regimes and the ideologies of hate that often predate their rise. Like countless others, Jerome increasingly sees early shades of looming horror in America today — including across the Houston area, where white supremacists have increasingly dropped propaganda in Jewish neighborhoods.

“I know that genocides start with words,” she said. “And so we have to be vigilant. We have to pay attention to words.”

Topic: Rising Antisemitism

ADL Audit Finds Antisemitic Incidents in United States Reached All-Time High in 2021

Published: 04.25.2022

Major Findings:

In 2021, ADL counted a total of 2,717 antisemitic incidents across the U.S. This represents a 34 percent increase from the 2,026 incidents recorded in 2020 and is the highest number on record since ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents in 1979. The Audit classifies incidents into three categories:

- **Assault:** A total of 88 incidents were categorized as assault, defined as cases where Jewish people (or people perceived to be Jewish) were targeted with physical violence accompanied by evidence of antisemitic animus. Antisemitic assaults increased 167 percent from the 33 reported in 2020. Eleven of the assaults in 2021 were perpetrated with deadly weapons. The 88 incidents of assault included 131 victims. Fortunately, no fatalities linked to antisemitic assaults were reported in 2021.
- **Harassment:** Of the total, 1,776 incidents were categorized as harassment, defined as cases where one or more Jewish people (or people perceived to be Jewish) were harassed with antisemitic slurs, stereotypes or conspiracy theories. Acts of harassment increased 43 percent, up from 1,242 incidents in 2020.
- **Vandalism:** Another 853 incidents were categorized as vandalism, defined as cases where property was damaged along with evidence of antisemitic intent. Acts of antisemitic vandalism increased 14 percent from the 751 incidents reported in 2020. Swastikas, which are generally interpreted as symbols of antisemitic hatred, were present in more than two-thirds (578) of these incidents.

Incidents were reported in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia. The states with the highest number of incidents were New York (416), New Jersey (370), California (367), Florida (190), Michigan (112) and Texas (112). Combined, these states accounted for 58 percent of the total incidents.

In 2021, there were 525 reported incidents at Jewish institutions such as synagogues, Jewish community centers and Jewish schools, an increase of 61 percent from 327 in 2020. Of the total, 413 were incidents of harassment, 101 were incidents of vandalism and 11 were assaults. About one-quarter of the harassment incidents (111) were linked to anti-Zionist or anti-Israel sentiments.

ADL's Audit recorded 484 antisemitic incidents attributed to known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology. This represents 18 percent of the total number of incidents. White supremacist groups or extremists were responsible for 422 antisemitic propaganda distributions, a 52 percent increase year over year.

A total of 345 antisemitic incidents in 2021 involved references to Israel or Zionism, compared to 178 in 2020. Of those, 68 appeared in the form of white supremacist propaganda efforts, which attempt to foment anti-Israel and antisemitic beliefs.

A total of 494 incidents were identified through newly established partnerships between ADL and several Jewish organizations, including the Community Security Initiative (CSI), Community Security Service (CSS), Hillel International, Secure Community Network (SCN), Union of Reform Judaism and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. This shared reporting represented 18 percent of the total incidents. Even without improved reporting through cooperative partnerships, the 2021 Audit numbers still would have been the highest recorded by ADL, with 2,223 incidents.

Israel-Hamas Conflict Stokes Antisemitism in U.S.

On May 10, 2021, fighting broke out between Israel and Hamas with heightened tensions and violence in some Israeli cities with large Arab and Jewish populations. As the crisis unfolded, there was a surge of antisemitic incidents targeting Jewish communities and individuals in the U.S. and around the world.

Between May 10 and the end of the month, ADL tracked a 141 percent increase in incidents over the same time period in 2020. There were 211 cases of harassment, 71 cases of vandalism and 15 assaults reported across the U.S., and nearly 40 percent of the total incidents that month included explicit references to Israel or Zionism.

At least eight of the antisemitic assaults were motivated by anti-Israel or anti-Zionist sentiment. For example, on May 18, patrons at a Los Angeles restaurant were attacked by individuals who arrived in cars carrying Palestinian flags who said, "You should be ashamed of yourselves" after the customers confirmed they were Jewish. The Palestinian supporters pushed one of the victims to the ground and kicked him. Soon after, a brawl erupted, and subsequent [news reports](#) indicated the attackers also hurled anti-Jewish slurs. [On May 20, in Manhattan](#), a Jewish man wearing a yarmulke was attacked by a group of individuals who yelled anti-Jewish and anti-Israel slurs while they punched, kicked, pepper-sprayed and beat him.

Methodology

The ADL Audit includes both criminal and non-criminal acts of harassment and intimidation, including distribution of hate propaganda, threats and slurs, as well as vandalism and assault. Compiled using information provided by victims, law enforcement and community leaders, and

evaluated by ADL's professional staff, the Audit provides a regular snapshot of one specific aspect of a nationwide problem while identifying possible trends or changes in the types of activity reported. This information assists ADL in developing and enhancing its programs to counter and prevent the spread of antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.

The Audit offers a snapshot of one of the ways American Jews encounter antisemitism, but a full understanding of antisemitism in the U.S. requires other forms of analysis as well, including public opinion polling, assessments of online antisemitism and examinations of extremist activity, all of which ADL offers in other reports, such as [ADL Global 100](#), [Online Hate and Harassment: The American Experience](#), [Survey on Jewish Americans' Experiences with Antisemitism, Murder and Extremism](#), and the [ADL Survey of American Attitudes Toward Jews](#).

Antisemitism is on the rise, and it's not just about Ye

Updated December 1, 2021:51 PM ET

Heard on [All Things Considered](#)

An old kind of hate has been very visible lately. High-profile entertainers and [athletes](#) have openly spouted antisemitic tropes. [Former president Donald Trump](#) dined recently with an outspoken Holocaust denier. Beyond these headlines, there's also been a steady rise in the number of hateful incidents directed at Jewish people over the past several years.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, 2021 was the [highest year on record](#) for documented reports of harassment, vandalism and violence directed against Jews. The watchdog group has tracked these incidents since 1979, and it says 2022 will look a lot like last year.

These record-breaking numbers present as part of a consistent, [five-year upswing](#) in the number of antisemitic incidents, unprecedented in the ADL's three plus decades of data collection. The organization says it's more commonly tracked isolated spikes in a given year, as seen in 1994 and 1981.

The current streak includes the 2018 attack on the Pittsburgh Tree of Life synagogue - where a gunman killed 11 Jewish worshippers, as well as the deadly "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Va. two years earlier where extremist demonstrators chanted "Jews will not replace us" during a torchlit march, but also thousands of smaller incidents like vandalizing Jewish schools and community centers, or extremist flyering campaigns.

[Hate crimes more broadly](#) have also been on the rise over the past few years. Experts sometimes refer to antisemitism as a "canary in the coal mine" for hate generally. Whenever a minority group is blamed for some real or perceived harm, such narratives almost always find ways to also attack Jews based on [centuries-old myths](#) about Jewish control and disloyalty.

"Jews are centered in a lot of conspiracy theories, especially around economy or power or greed or whatever. Those are core antisemitic tropes. So when we start to see unrest, we tend to see antisemitic incidents climb," said Snider.

Antisemitism returns to politics

[Trump's dinner](#) with the musician Ye, who's made a number of [antisemitic remarks](#), and a notorious Holocaust-denying internet streamer is just the latest example of antisemitism's increasing visibility in electoral politics.

As Republicans take over the house in January, Marjorie Taylor Greene is [expected to regain](#) committee assignments that Democrats stripped her of based, in part, on her promotion of antisemitic conspiracy theories. Among the most prominent examples was Greene's claim that California wildfires may have been caused by the Rothschilds, a prominent Jewish banking family and mainstay in antisemitic conspiracy theories.

"That's old-school, classic modern antisemitism coming from the 1870s and eighties and nineties into the 20th century," said Joshua Shanes, a Jewish Studies professor at the College of Charleston.

"There's rhetoric that's accepted today that simply never would have possibly been accepted a generation ago, not since the 1930s, really," said Shanes. "People call it [political correctness], but there's a benefit to saying it is unacceptable to be openly racist, to be openly antisemitic. And if you are, you will not win political office. But that has gone away."

Shanes sometimes sees that normalization in his own classes, where students are not always familiar with the often coded language and imagery of antisemitism. It's made him change the way he teaches the history of the Nazi party's use of anti-Jewish propaganda films.

"And I used to show it to my students. I'd say, okay, let's dissect it. What antisemitic myths do you see in here? Let's find them all. I don't do it anymore because I'm actually concerned they'll be persuaded by it," said Shanes.

KANYE'S ANTISEMITIC HATE SPEECH PLATFORMED BY ENABLERS IN TECH, MEDIA, POLITICS

Southern Poverty Law Center, December 7, 2022

Kanye West – now known as Ye – unleashed a hateful rant last Thursday during a bizarre appearance on Alex Jones' Infowars. Encompassing Holocaust denial, praise for Adolf Hitler and a request that people “stop dissing the Nazis,” the diatribe was the culmination of months of explicitly antisemitic rhetoric from the musician.

But Ye's hard turn to public antisemitism has been amplified as a result of the cooperation, mendacity and/or negligence of organizations and individuals who have enabled him to spread it.

Those enablers such platforms as Twitter and YouTube; conservative media outlets including Fox News; and such influential right-wingers as [Jones](#), Tim Pool, Tucker Carlson, Elon Musk and Donald Trump.

“The enemies of his ideas dismissed West, as they have for years, as mentally ill,” Carlson said in his monologue, claiming that such accusations were “often used as ammunition against him in the battle for influence over the minds of America’s young people. And that battle is intense.”

[Media reports](#) in late October indicated that Ye had a long history of expressing admiration for Adolf Hitler to his employees and his inner circle, and that he had wanted to name his 2018 album *Hitler*. (The release was eventually titled *Ye*.)

On Nov. 22, Ye dined at Mar-a-Lago with Donald Trump and brought along [Nick Fuentes](#) and “alt-right” washout Milo Yiannopoulos. The dinner, which came as some Republicans were blaming Trump and the extremist positions of his favored candidates for their lackluster midterms, brought renewed criticism for the former president.

While Trump floundered in his attempts to explain why he had agreed to dine with the men, Ye, Fuentes and Yiannopoulos milked the occasion for attention.

Fuentes, meanwhile, was [reportedly](#) hired to join Yiannopoulos on Ye’s staff for the 2024 election campaign in the days following the dinner. (Although Yiannopoulos was [reportedly fired from the campaign late last week](#), Fuentes is still on Ye’s staff and broadcast a livestream from the musician’s Los Angeles headquarters last Friday night.)

Despite Ye’s very public antisemitic agitation, Fuentes’ record as a white nationalist propagandist and Yiannopoulos’ own history as a far-right provocateur, all three were invited a week after the Trump dinner to appear on the 1.33 million-subscriber YouTube channel of beanie-clad right-wing social media performer Tim Pool.

Ye walked out of the interview within minutes, after Pool appeared hesitant to openly endorse an antisemitic conspiracy theory Ye was detailing live on air. Pool nevertheless spun the truncated interview out into a series of videos that have collectively well over half a million views, according to YouTube’s statistics.

During the broadcast, Pool was able to collect Super Chat payments from viewers of the interview, thus profiting from the spectacle of Ye’s antisemitic meltdown. According to an analysis by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), the stream attracted some \$7,258 from 583 paid Super Chat payments, with Pool netting \$5,081 and YouTube taking a cut of \$2,177 for platforming Ye’s antisemitism.

Hatewatch [previously reported](#) that YouTube has made tens of thousands of dollars over time from its share of Pool’s Super Chat payments.

After the already-infamous Infowars interview, Ye continued to push antisemitic messages on his Twitter account. Some of the tweets from the account appear to have been influenced by Fuentes, with one Dec. 1 tweet including the “Christ is King” slogan that Fuentes uses in his propaganda, and a link to his cozy.tv site.

After allowing Ye and his associates to post hateful propaganda throughout his appearances on Pool’s and Jones’ shows, Elon Musk personally, belatedly and seemingly arbitrarily suspended Ye’s account late Thursday night. Musk said the ban was the result of Ye tweeting out an image

of a swastika inside a Jewish Star of David, but he did not explain how the symbol was worse than using Twitter to promote antisemitic screeds and white nationalist stream channels.

Like YouTube, Fox News and Infowars, Musk allowed Ye and his far-right associates to enjoy access to his platform – and an audience of millions – for his antisemitic hate and conspiracy theories.

Man Is Charged With Firebombing a New Jersey Synagogue

The violence rattled congregants at Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield, N.J. An employee had discovered broken glass and gasoline near the door on Sunday.

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By [Tracey Tully](#)

Feb. 1, 2023, NYT

The police arrested a 26-year-old man on Wednesday and charged him with firebombing a large synagogue in Bloomfield, N.J., days after a Molotov cocktail was hurled at the building’s glass door, federal officials said.

Nicholas Malindretos, of Clifton, N.J., was spotted Sunday night in [surveillance video footage](#) wearing a ski mask and [throwing the incendiary device toward the synagogue](#), Temple Ner Tamid, according to the United States Attorney’s office.

The bottle broke and did not penetrate the front door, which is coated in a shatterproof film.

But the violence, which occurred two days after [seven people were shot dead](#) outside a synagogue in East Jerusalem, underscored the worrisome rise in [harassment and violence](#) targeting Jews and Jewish institutions. New Jersey’s governor and attorney general visited the synagogue on Tuesday night, and a \$15,000 reward was offered for information that resulted in an arrest.

“No one should find that their lives are at risk by exercising their faith,” Philip R. Sellinger, the United States Attorney for New Jersey, said in a statement announcing the arrest.

Mr. Malindretos is charged with attempting to use fire to damage and destroy a building used in interstate commerce, a crime that carries a minimum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. He is expected to appear in federal court in Newark on Thursday; his lawyer was not identified in federal documents.

Josh Katz, the president of the synagogue, said the “meaningful and urgent” effort by local, state and federal law enforcement officials was gratifying.

“We’ve had thousands of people reach out in support,” said Marc Katz, the rabbi of the synagogue, who is not related to its president. “It really makes us realize that we can’t let those small acts of hatred let us forget that people really care and there are allies everywhere.”

A device near the synagogue that reads license plates recorded a vehicle passing by just before and after the Molotov cocktail was thrown.

Law enforcement officers located the vehicle in Clifton and spotted several items in the car “consistent with the video of the incident,” according to a [federal document](#).

Investigators obtained a warrant, and found clothing inside that matched items that the man seen in the 3:19 a.m. Sunday video appeared to be wearing.

In November, the F.B.I. took the unusual step of using social media to warn that it had gotten credible information about a “[broad threat to synagogues](#)” in New Jersey. An [18-year-old New Jersey man](#) was later arrested and charged with making a general threat against Jews and Jewish institutions.

James E. Dennehy, the F.B.I. special agent in charge, said this week’s investigation showed that law enforcement takes “all threats of hate and bias” aimed at any religion or faith seriously.

“The speed and intensity of this investigation demonstrates our determination and dedication to protecting houses of worship and protecting their congregations,” Mr. Dennehy said in a statement.

Topic: What Can Be Done?

ADL

2022 Newsletter

Anti-Semitic attitudes and incidents are a reality around the globe. It’s time to take action.

What You Can Do:

SPEAK UP

- **ADVOCATE** against hate in the United States by signing a petition urging Congress to enact the [Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act](#) and the [Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act](#). Contact your local Jewish community to consider supporting or initiating other legislative action in your country.

SHARE FACTS

- **LEARN** how you can help stop the spread of hate online by reporting it directly to social media platforms using our [Cyber Safety Action Guide](#).
- **REPORT** incidents of anti-Semitism [to ADL](#) , your local Jewish community, and/or local law enforcement.

SHOW STRENGTH

- **TALK** to friends, family, colleagues and young people about the consequences of anti-Semitism, extremism and hate. Here are some [Educational Resources](#) to help answer common questions and here is our [Books Matter](#) collection which shares stories of bias, diversity and standing up to hate.

What Governments Around the World Can Do:

- **PROVIDE** robust political leadership to reassure targeted communities and to discredit, reject and marginalize anti-Semitism by speaking out against manifestations of anti-Semitism and other forms of scapegoating across the political spectrum.
- **UTILIZE** the IHRA (the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) [working definition of anti-Semitism](#) along with other training and education resources for law enforcement, teachers, and community leaders. A broad, inclusive definition should include current manifestation of anti-Semitism, allow for protected political expression on Israel and Zionism, but draw the line before such expression turns into intentional, unlawful or discriminatory intimidation and harassment. Mandate public reporting on anti-Semitic incidents and all other forms of hate violence and discrimination.
- **ENSURE** that your government has specific senior officials tasked with combating anti-Semitism and all forms of hate. Mandate hate crime prevention and response training into law enforcement education.
- **WORK** closely with local Jewish communities to address issues of concern, including security matters and the freedom to practice their religion openly and without legal restrictions.
- **PUSH** for school curricula to include Holocaust education, address modern-day anti-Semitism, and include general anti-bias education.

How Can Rising Online Antisemitism Be Stopped?

American Jewish Committee, December 14, 2020 — New York

In the constantly expanding digital universe, purveyors of hate are exploiting the newest communications technologies to threaten Jews.

The deleterious impact of the “digitization of antisemitism” was revealed in the 2020 State of Antisemitism in America report recently issued by the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

Twenty-two percent of American Jewish adults have experienced antisemitism online or on social media in the last five years. Of this group, 62% said they had been the targets of antisemitic remarks on Facebook, 33% on Twitter, 12% on Instagram and 10% on YouTube.

The impact of hate Jews are experiencing online mirrors the experience with more traditional forms of antisemitism. While 24% say they avoid wearing, carrying or displaying things that might identify them as Jews, and 31% avoid certain places, events or situations out of concern

for their safety, the AJC survey also found that 24% who are active on social media avoid posting content that may identify them as Jewish.

“We all need to send the message that antisemitism in any form is unacceptable on or offline,” Holly Huffnagle, AJC’s US director for combating antisemitism, told the Inter-parliamentary Task Force on Online Antisemitism last month.

One essential tool to combat antisemitism is keeping law enforcement informed. But 76% of American Jews who have experienced an antisemitic incident do not report it at all, and only 4% tell the police.

This reluctance concerns top law enforcement officials across the country. “You are going to lose every case you do not charge,” Ohio Attorney-General Dave Yost said on an AJC Advocacy Anywhere program, in an appeal to “victims of hate crimes who have declined to report because they feel nothing is going to happen.”

But a perceived lack of responsiveness also may inhibit willingness to report. Nearly half (46%) of American Jews who reported online antisemitism to a social media platform said that nothing was done to address the incident.

The amassing of hate, and specifically antisemitism, online demands attention and action by the leaders of the technology giants. The creators of top social media platforms may have begun with good intentions pioneering global communications, but as some veteran social media executives admitted in the Netflix documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, the consequences of people and groups imbued with hate and limitless reach were underestimated or ignored.

“Freedom of speech must never be confused with freedom to incite violence and hatred,” New York Attorney-General Letitia James said on the AJC program where Yost appeared.

Putting the evil social media genie back in the bottle is an enormous challenge. Facebook, for one, has taken steps to ban certain antisemitic stereotypes as well as Holocaust denial and distortion. It’s a methodical process, relying heavily on human moderators, who can follow-up on what the algorithms are missing.

The correlation between awareness and education level is pronounced. Thirty-six percent of those with a high school diploma or less, 14% with some college, and 9% with a college degree were among the 21% who are totally unaware of the term antisemitism.

While 82% of American Jews said antisemitism in the US has increased over the past five years, 47% of the general population who have completed at least some college agreed, compared with 36% of those with less education.

In the US, the adage “what begins with Jews doesn’t end with Jews,” is not resonating throughout American society, even though some elected officials, religious and ethnic leaders have recognized and declared that antisemitism is a problem for all to address.

Ignorance is a significant obstacle to developing and implementing concrete actions aimed at containing and pushing back the proliferation of antisemitism. Those involved in the business of education, including social media firms, should lead in making the battle against antisemitism a national priority.

Department of Justice Highlights Work Combating Anti-Semitic Acts

Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Prosecutions of Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes

Since January 2017, the Department of Justice has charged more than 80 defendants with anti-Semitic hate crimes and related conduct, and has obtained convictions of more than 65 defendants for the same.

The Department, through the diligent work of its Civil Rights Division and U.S. Attorney's Offices around the country, has obtained convictions in a number of high-profile hate crime prosecutions affecting the Jewish community:

- [*U.S. v. James Fields*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Virginia indicted James Fields for his August 12, 2017 deadly car attack at a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, which killed Heather Heyer and injured several other individuals. The defendant pleaded guilty to 29 federal hate crime charges and the Court sentenced him to 29 sentences of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, along with restitution.
- [*U.S. v. Chadwick Grubbs*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin charged the defendant with hate crimes for mailing letters to a Jewish community center threatening to attack the center with firearms and explosives. The defendant pleaded guilty to three federal hate crime charges and the Court sentenced him to 36 months' imprisonment along with supervised release and fines.
- [*U.S. v. Nolan Brewer*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Indiana charged the defendant for conspiring to attack an Indiana synagogue. The defendant pleaded guilty and the Court sentenced him to 36 months' imprisonment.

Active cases the Department is currently prosecuting include the following:

- [*U.S. v. Grafton Thomas*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York indicted Grafton Thomas for hate crimes after his December 28, 2019 machete attack against a rabbi and five others celebrating Hanukkah at the rabbi's home.
- [*U.S. v. Robert Bowers*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania indicted Robert Bowers for his October 27, 2018 armed massacre of 11 worshippers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- [*U.S. v. John Earnest*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California indicted John Earnest for his April 27, 2019 fatal shooting at the Chabad of Poway Synagogue and for his attempted arson of a California mosque.
- [*U.S. v. Tiffany Harris*](#)—The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York indicted Tiffany Harris for assaulting three Orthodox Jewish women during Hanukkah in December 2019 in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

- [*U.S. v. Ethan Melzer*](#)—The Counterterrorism Section of the National Security Division, along with the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, indicted U.S. Army soldier Ethan Melzer for providing sensitive classified information about his unit to members of a Neo-Nazi group (whose core tenets include Holocaust denial), and urging them to disseminate the information to terrorists so that they could attack his fellow service members in Turkey.
- [*Atomwaffen prosecutions*](#)—The United States Attorney’s Offices for the Western District of Washington, Middle District of Florida, Southern District of Texas, and District of Arizona, in coordination with the National Security Division, arrested multiple members of the white supremacist group Atomwaffen for making threats against African-American and Jewish journalists.

Supporting Religious Freedom including through the Place to Worship Initiative

On June 13, 2018, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the [*Place to Worship Initiative*](#), which focuses on protecting the rights of religious individuals and communities to build, expand, buy, or rent houses of worship and other religious facilities as guaranteed by the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). Since launching the initiative in 2018, the Civil Rights Division doubled the number of RLUIPA investigations to 15, up from an average seven a year since 2010. Cases involving the Jewish community include:

- [*U.S. v. Borough of Woodcliff Lake*](#)—The Department filed a [*lawsuit*](#) alleging that the Borough of Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey violated RLUIPA when its zoning board denied zoning approval for the Valley Chabad to build a new place of worship on its land. This case was resolved in a [*settlement*](#) announced September 15, 2020, which will allow the congregation to build its facility.
- [*U.S. v. Township of Jackson*](#)—The Department filed a lawsuit alleging that the Township of Jackson, New Jersey had taken various actions to stop yeshivas from locating in the Township.