

Antisemitism at Oberlin College

This document has been compiled by Melissa Landa, PhD, to record the experiences of Jewish students on the Oberlin College campus. It aggregates quotes taken from previously published articles with individual statements delivered directly to Professor Landa. Much of this material was made available to the college's President, Marvin Krislov, in January 2016. More recently, it has been shared with the Board of Trustees, as well as with the Dean of Students.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of antisemitism at Oberlin came to prominence following the exposure of virulently antisemitic Facebook posts by Oberlin Professor Joy Karega.

On closer review, Karega's actions are merely highlights of a much more extensive problem.

Antisemitism is part of Oberlin's campus culture.

The students' stories, professors' statements and alumni Facebook posts captured in this document illustrate the reality of antisemitism at Oberlin College. Many individuals connected with the school have embraced the view that Jews, whom many simplistically classify as "white," are incapable of being targets or victims of racism and bigotry.

As a result, antisemitic speech, harassment and bullying of Jewish students are, at Oberlin, normalized and generally accepted. This is the case even in instances in which comparable bigotry or overt racism directed at any other group would unquestionably result in interventions and rapid institutional responses. Antisemitic assumptions and slurs are simply part of Oberlin's campus life. Further, complaints about antisemitism are categorically and disdainfully derided as "smears" by "uncritical defenders of Israel."

Although a handful of (brave!) faculty members are willing to acknowledge the problem in public, neither the faculty as a body nor the school's administration has demonstrated any efficacy in combating it.

Compiled from a wide range of on-campus sources, this document reveals a broad pattern of antisemitic speech and actions. The reader will find that:

- The campus institution that is supposed to be addressing discrimination, the Multicultural Resource Center, **ignores antisemitism**;
- The Holocaust is downplayed as “white-on-white crime;”
- **Jewish students’ concerns were repeatedly dismissed** after a KKK hoax;
- **Jewish students were shouted down in a public gathering** intended as a forum to address bigotry on campus;
- A Jew was told that he can not speak for an oppressed group because he is white;
- **A Hillel meeting was overtaken by anti-Israel activists**;
- A huge display accusing Israel of “murdering” 2,133 Palestinians during Operation Protective Edge was **placed outside of Rosh HaShana services**;
- **A student’s dorm room in which an Israeli flag was hung was vandalized**;
- **Antisemitic chants have taken place at the campus disco**;
- **Antisemitic material is taught in class**;
- The BDS movement flourishes;
- When an African American professor openly and publicly espouses the most egregious and blatant antisemitic canards, **the College is initially paralyzed** and unable to effectively and appropriately address the situation.
- A faculty member’s home is vandalized, and left with a note saying “**GAS JEWS DIE.**”

These are the statements of current students, recent graduates, and older alumni describing the hostile climate on campus in their own words.

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For a variety of reasons, in most cases current and recent students do not wish to be named.

I. The Routine Harassment and Bullying of Jewish Students: 2013-Present

Spring 2013: Antisemitism Explodes at Oberlin

While there had been problems at Oberlin before, the Spring 2013 semester seems to be the time that antisemitism really exploded at Oberlin. Antisemitic flyers were posted around the school, a Jewish student asking a question was shouted down with cries of “Free Palestine,” a Hillel Meeting was overtaken by anti-Israel activists, a campaign to divest from Israel was launched, and the Jewish students’ dining cooperative was expelled from the student cooperative association. Below the students describe these events in their own words:

A graduate from the class of 2015, “A.” recalls:

(The image to the right is another copy of the same poster A. mentions below. The photo was taken by David Brandt.)

In February or early March 2013, my roommate and I spotted a flyer on the stairs in our dorm. This flyer had a map or flag of Israel with a swastika in middle, equating Israel to the Nazi regime. We think it had been hanging on the wall of the stairwell and had fallen down, and we believe that this was part of the slew of hate speech that semester building up to the alleged KKK sighting and the cancellation of classes on March 4th, 2013.



On March 4th there was a rally in Finney Chapel to address these events. When a Jewish, Israeli student, was speaking into one of the mics in the audience to ask a question to the panel, someone shouted "Free Palestine."

Another upsetting aspect of the whole March 4th process was being left out of conversations afterwards -- in all of the discussions that addressed the hate speech that had led up to March 4th (ending with the alleged KKK sighting), antisemitism was sidelined amid conversations centered around racism and homophobia.

In April 2013, the Oberlin Divest campaign began, leading up to Students for Free Palestine's (SFP) proposal of their divestment resolution to Student Senate on May 5th. Senate ultimately passed the resolution but made many changes based on the concerns expressed by Jewish students who attended the plenary (myself included). Among these changes was a removal of all language linking the resolution that Oberlin Student Senate passed to the larger BDS movement. Nonetheless, when SFP submitted a press release to Electronic Intifada later that night, they did not hesitate to call their efforts a part of the BDS movement.

Towards the end of the semester, there was a Hillel meeting about antisemitism over the course of the semester, including the pre-March 4th build-up, the Kosher Halal Coop (KHC) getting kicked out of Oberlin Student Cooperative Association (OSCA) shenanigans, and the divestment campaign. About 10 members of SFP (all of the highly involved membership at that time) attended this Hillel meeting, despite the fact that only one of them was a member of Hillel. Most of the SFP members had never been to a Hillel meeting before, and many- if not most- of them were not Jewish. As co-chair of Hillel at that time, facilitating duties fell to me; facilitating this meeting was incredibly intimidating and distressing to me because of the comments that the members of SFP made, delegitimizing Hillel members' concerns about BDS in our own space. It is deeply problematic to me that on a campus that so values safe spaces (which are often only open to members of that community- not even to allies), there is no notion of giving Jews a safe space.

The meeting was so stressful for me that I found myself unable to complete any of my academic work that night. I had a problem set for PSYC 300 due the next day- I ended up asking my professor for a 24-hour extension, though I was nervous to do so (my voice quivered and my hands were shaking when I asked him) given that I knew that he was liberally-minded and had participated in activism/social justice work before, including being a member of the peace corps. He was actually so helpful- not only did he willingly give me the extension, he asked if one day

would be enough, and he acknowledged how difficult this must be, especially in April when Israel Apartheid efforts are rampant on many campuses. I was so appreciative of this professor's response, but I cannot imagine what I would have done or how my academic record would have suffered if I had been in a similar situation but with an anti-Zionist professor who might not have seen my mental state as a result of this meeting as legitimate grounds for an extension.

A class of 2016 student, who wishes to remain anonymous, recalls:

The first real incident of anti-Zionism I experienced at Oberlin was during the March 4th, 2013 rally in Finney Chapel. Everyone was feeling very vulnerable after there was a supposed sighting of a clansman on campus (and rightfully so) but it was not only the Black community that was afraid, there had been swastikas slipped under the doors of Jews, and Jews as a community felt just as vulnerable. An Israeli girl got up and brought up concerns that she felt unsafe on campus as an Israeli Jew, her fear was met by reality when someone from the crowd yelled “free Palestine” and the rest of the crowd started cheering at the lone comment. The irony was almost too great for me to grasp at that moment, here classes had been cancelled and we were all gathered together because the community at large felt unsafe, and then someone gets up there sharing their experiences of feeling unsafe and the reaction of the community is to make her feel more unsafe because it doesn't line up with the ideals of the most vocal opinion of the college.

Several students recall another gathering on March 4th, which was held on the Wilder Student Center Porch. Different representatives of each community that had been targeted in the “hoax” - Black, Jewish, and LGBT - were asked to speak. When a Jew stood up to speak stood up, students were heard commenting that as a white heterosexual man, he was not qualified to speak as the member of an oppressed group.

Ari Feinberg ('14) recalls the Hillel meeting described above by A.:

The goal of the meeting was to talk about anti-Jewish sentiment at Oberlin, and the meeting started with going around in a circle for everyone to share an experience of something that happened at Oberlin that they found anti-Jewish or hostile or whatever. But Jewish SFP members got wind and came (perhaps with some non-Jewish members for "support") and said, basically "as

a Jew at Oberlin, I find it very distressing to be accused of being an antisemite for yada yada yada Israel.” It was totally derailed and frustrating.

Becky Berenbom also recalls the Hillel meeting:

It was shortly after the March 4th events and Hillel hadn't really discussed the antisemitic incidents yet in a meeting. [Names redacted] were co-chairs at the time and decided to have a discussion mostly regarding the swastikas, etc. but also decided to touch on BDS. [An SFP student/name redacted] got the description in the weekly email and sent it to SFP. They sent a ton of members and the meeting was maybe 50-60% SFP members who had never attended a Hillel meeting before. The entire discussion was about how they felt unwelcome at Hillel as SFP members. It was the same sort of rhetoric that we see over and over again with Jews who are anti-zionist claiming that their activism can't be antisemitic because they are Jewish. It was a very uncomfortable meeting.

A graduate of the class of 2013 who wishes to remain anonymous, “C.” reported on the same incident:

When SFP announced their divestment campaign in Spring 2013 and released their zine, Hillel decided to have a meeting to discuss it. When the usual crowd arrived to the the meeting, we were startled to find about 12 members of SFP already sitting in the Hillel office. In addition to [an SFP student/name redacted], I recall two other member of SFP who identified themselves as Jewish, but the majority were not. None of the members of SFP had attended a Hillel meeting before, with the exception of [one person/name redacted]. As we started to go around in a circle to share our experiences, the students from SFP began interrupting and interrogating us, and the environment turned increasingly hostile. There was so much drama that the meeting lasted about 3-4 hours, although of course not everybody stayed for the entire duration. (Meetings are usually one hour tops.) During the meeting, the leaders tried to "moderate" in vain.

We had to listen to the members of SFP tell us the usual...that Israel is horrible and if we didn't support the divestment campaign we were basically racists. They were specifically very offended by our belief that BDS is antisemitic and that therefore their divestment campaign was antisemitic. That meeting was so emotionally taxing. After the members of SFP left a few people stayed around to try to comprehend what had just happened. I remember being in tears. There

were a lot of tears. Basically, we felt VIOLATED. Like SFP had invaded the Hillel office and interrogated us. The whole reason we love Hillel meetings is to get together during lunch and talk about Jewish things in a relaxed environment.

So after the members of SFP left, we decided that we had to reinstate Oberlin Zionists (which was disbanded in 2010) because we felt we needed a safe space to express pro-Israel feelings. Things were not the same after that meeting. After that meeting pro-Israel affiliating students felt the need to become increasingly secretive and the environment in Hillel was super tense. I just remember so many tears as a result of that meeting.

C. ('13) recalls:

In May 2013, I created a petition against SFP's BDS-inspired divestment campaign. The day my petition came out, I was sitting in Azariah's Café in Mudd (Library), when a popular classmate and prominent member of student government received the petition via email. The student then started shouting, "[name redacted] is a horrible person." Others quickly chimed in in the public taunting. What the instigator may not have realized was that I was sitting a mere few tables away, witnessing the whole thing in utter humiliation.

In the Spring of 2013, The Kosher Halal Co-op, which predominantly serves Jewish students, was kicked out of the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association ("OSCA") in a closed door, secretive meeting. This is described in the Oberlin Review by Hannah Seidel. See <http://oberlinreview.org/2219/opinions/oscas-decision-to-kick-out-kosher-halal-co-op-upsetting-disappointing/>

2013-14 School Year: Jewish Students Are Forced to Choose Between Judaism and Activism

The trend of ignoring antisemitism continued, with one student who was concerned about antisemitism being told, "don't derail the real issue here."

A. ('15) remembers:

Hillel regularly plans themed Shabbat dinners so that we can advertise each Shabbat with different appealing food. In September, 2013, the Hillel staff decided to plan a meal titled Latina Shabbat after being approached by a Latina Jewish student who was interested in having a Shabbat dinner where Latin American food would be served. They also saw this as a great opportunity to collaborate with the MRC (Multicultural Resource Center) and made an outreach to the Latina coordinator and the student leaders of La Alianza (the student organization for Latina students). The night before the event, a Latina member of student senate posted on the Facebook event for Shabbat dinner calling it appropriation and demanding that the event be cancelled. She used her title as a student senator in voicing this demand. The MRC asked her to take down her comments, so I do not have them in writing. After the event, it became clear that this was not the only Shabbat dinner that had been called appropriation: it turns out that one of the posters for the previous week's Asian Fusion Shabbat had been defaced with graffiti about appropriation and orientalism. Comfort food Shabbat was also ill-received with comments about appropriating Black cooking. There is a common belief at Oberlin that all Jews are white and rich. This misconception, which fails to recognize the diversity of the Jewish community (including at Oberlin) leads to the assumption expressed here that Jews are stealing someone else's culture, when in fact there are Jews who share that culture.

On October 10th, there was a forum with the Board of Trustees in which a group of students aired a list of grievances they called the "Student Demands." These demands initially were limited to transparency from the board, divestment from Israel, and recruitment of/setting up a scholarship fund for undocumented students but ultimately included more social justice initiatives such as anti-frack and the development of an Asian-American studies major. The divestment demand was in itself troubling, but even more upsetting was the fact that when a pro-Israel student asked the group that raised these issues to separate them into multiple agenda items so that students who supported some but not all could participate, they refused, stating that these issues were all intertwined (you were either with them in full or not with them at all). This is just one of MANY examples (including the recent ABUSUA letter) of how BDS/anti-Zionism gets dragged into all other social justice issues at Oberlin, making it difficult for any pro-Israel student to participate in activism for any other issue that they might be interested in fighting for (be it prison justice, anti-frack, recruitment of undocumented students, etc.).

Ari Feinberg ('14) recalls that in February, 2014, Oberlin hosted a weekend of seminars to discuss the use of boycotts as a political tactic. He remembers attending a panel discussion which did not include an anti-BDS speaker, due to his travel difficulties:

They didn't really do much to fix the balance of the panel. But the real issue was afterwards at a dinner when a student senator who was also in attendance explained to me and a couple others that President Krislov was a white money Jew and that Oberlin and the media were all run by white money Jews, so we didn't need a BDS-type movement to get the word out for our side, while they did.

A. shares a memory from the same weekend of seminars:

On February 9th, the college held a panel on divestment that was supposed to have a diversity of views on the issue. Unfortunately, the pro-Israel representative had a flight delay and ended up being unable to attend, leaving the panel more biased than it was intended to be (I was frankly upset that the college went forward with the event in light of this). The scariest part of the event for me was when one of the speakers whom the college had brought admitted in response to a question from a pro-Israel student/co-chair of Oberlin Zionists that he did not believe that the Jews deserved a state, and there was nobody on the panel to respond with an explanation of Jewish nationhood and the antisemitic implications in the panelist's statement.

A. ('15) remembers:

Just as the Jewish community was largely excluded from the discussions following the March 4th events in 2013, on the one-year commemoration of the events, the Jews were again left out. While other affected communities planned a week-long reflection with many events, the Jewish community was not informed about these events and was ultimately left to plan very last-minute and in a way that did not allow for any collaboration with other communities in planning discussions that should have included multiple groups.

As was previously reported in the Washington Post, **Isabel Sherrell ('14)** remembers the numerous ways in which the Holocaust was mocked and diminished, as well as Holocaust inversion at Oberlin (at point 14), and more. A 2008 op-ed in the Wall Street Journal explained that Holocaust inversion is “the charge ... that Israel supposedly behaves toward the Palestinians as Germany did to the Jews in World War II.” <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120147388696520647> In addition to being false, this is problematic because, as a British student recently explained, Holocaust inversion “use[s] the memory of the Holocaust as a stick to beat its victims and their descendants.”

<http://forward.com/opinion/339552/will-malia-bouattia-force-british-students-to-be-court-jews-like-i-was/#ixzz4Abqifn6s> Below are excerpts from Sherrell’s comments.

1. The multiple times the Holocaust was referred to as “white on white crime” by my POC peers and hip white Jewish peers
2. That time a Jewish person made a comment on fb saying “the only reason people care about the Holocaust is because it happened to white people” and got tons of likes from white and POC friends alike This is just one example of Jewish obies stepping all over their ancestors memory in order to climb the white-ally-social-ladder-of-justice-and-excellence i cannot understand it as anything other than self hatred masked by love of “the other”....
4. That time SFP brought in a Jewish lady to talk about her work with electronicintifada and tell all the Obies that Zionism/Zionists “should burn at the stake”
5. That time I was told I should be ashamed for what my people are doing to the Palestinians, by someone I didn’t even know, upon learning I was Jewish....
6. That time my African Studies professor had an antizionist jewish south african man come in to talk to the class about jazz and resistance. During Q&A she praised a Jewish student for their anti Israel comments relating Israel to South African apartheid. The prof then made funny faces and funny eyes when I spoke up and tried to make the point that we should try to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within its OWN historical context and that its unfair to both Israelis and Palestinians to rely only on shaky comparisons. It was clear, in that classroom, who was the good Jew and who was the bad Jew, in that professors’ eyes. I was bad. My concern for anti black racism came into question because I didn’t write anti zionist across my forehead. After that class she literally had me come into her office and asked me ,”why are you here” and i was so shaken with so many emotions i just cried and wasnt able to talk to her and therefore my final paper suffered as a result. This professor also cut ties with the Hillel Rabbi because he, too, did not brand himself an antiZionist.

7. Those times antiblack and antisemitic incidents occurred simultaneously, and then the uproar followed but the antisemitism was essentially ignored by the campus at large. And if I brought that up I was told “dont derail the real issue here.”
8. That time a Jewish girl walked into her dorm room to find glass shattered all over her bed and floor because someone decided to throw a rock through her window, where she had hung an Israeli flag.
9. The fact my Mizrahi Jewish friend has had her identity policed on multiple occasions and was told she is white.
10. The fact that so many Jewish students are bullied into silence, whether its about their own ethnic identity, (PSA: you can identify as ethnically Jewish while still acknowledging your white privilege) their relationship to Israel, or their concern about antisemitism in general/ on campus.
11. The intense and unrelenting vilification of Israel out of proportion to any other nation on the planet where terrible shit happens // People literally refusing to talk to me because I identify as a Zionist....
14. How inevitably during discussions about the establishment of Israel, people would say “the Jews decided to make Palestinians suffer for the crimes the Germans committed against them” while failing to understand that Zionism is way older than the Holocaust as is the need and the yearning for a Jewish homeland. How Israel is called “colonial and Imperialist, Britain gave it to the Jews” even though we had to FIGHT the imperial army to gain independence. (Revoking agency of Jews that fought for Israel’s independence// Rewriting history so that you would raise your eyebrows in disbelief when I told you my relatives were forced to stay in a DP camp in Cyprus for years after the war ended and that British navy vessels opened fire at ships full of Jewish refugees from Europe and North Africa attempting to make it to Palestine. We did not waltz right in. And we did not come there with an expansionist agenda.
15. Generally antisemitic ideas floating around such as Jews are milking the Holocaust for their own gain// everything is as bad as the Holocaust except for the actual Holocaust which wasnt as bad as people say it was// Jews only care about themselves (another AAST professor told me, “your people really take care of each other” at first i thought it was a compliment but when i told my mother about it she explained that it was not)
17. Hip white activists boosting their radical resume by denouncing Israel’s right to exist and a handful of Ashkenazis on that bandwagon saying shit like “I hate my right to Israeli citizenship. Israel isn’t my country. It shouldnt even be a country”

18. Having my own ethnic identity policed. Being told I was simply European and Judaism is a religion not an ethnicity/ or that I am a descendent of Khazarian converts to Judaism and therefore have no right to claim any sort of indigenoussness in the Levant. (There is DNA evidence that the VAST MAJORITY of Jews have Middle Eastern genetic markers (yep even us whities) they can even tell what time period we originated there and started mixing with other populations and it lines up with our own historical narrative yet somehow anti-Jewish polemics still get the mic)

See

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/02/05/the-holocaust-as-white-on-white-crime-and-other-signs-of-intellectual-decay/>

Writing in the Jewish Exponent in 2014 about her experiences at Oberlin the previous year that caused her to leave the school, **Anya Hutter** said:

My fellow Obies and I were expected by our peers to join them in denouncing a plethora of social evils, including capitalism, racism, fracking, transphobia — and Israel.

Student activists used strong words and bright visuals to paint the Israeli government and people as oppressive, Eurocentric and illegitimate. When some Jewish students brought up Jewish self-determination, Jews involved in Students for a Free Palestine declared that because they, too, were Jewish, it was wrong to disagree with them in the name of Judaism. One speaker drew laughs when she said that “Zionists should be burned at the stake.”

Source: <http://jewishexponent.com/opinion/2014/08/reframing-the-israel-conversation-on-campus>

2014-15 School Year: Rosh Hashana Marred by Anti-Israel Belligerence

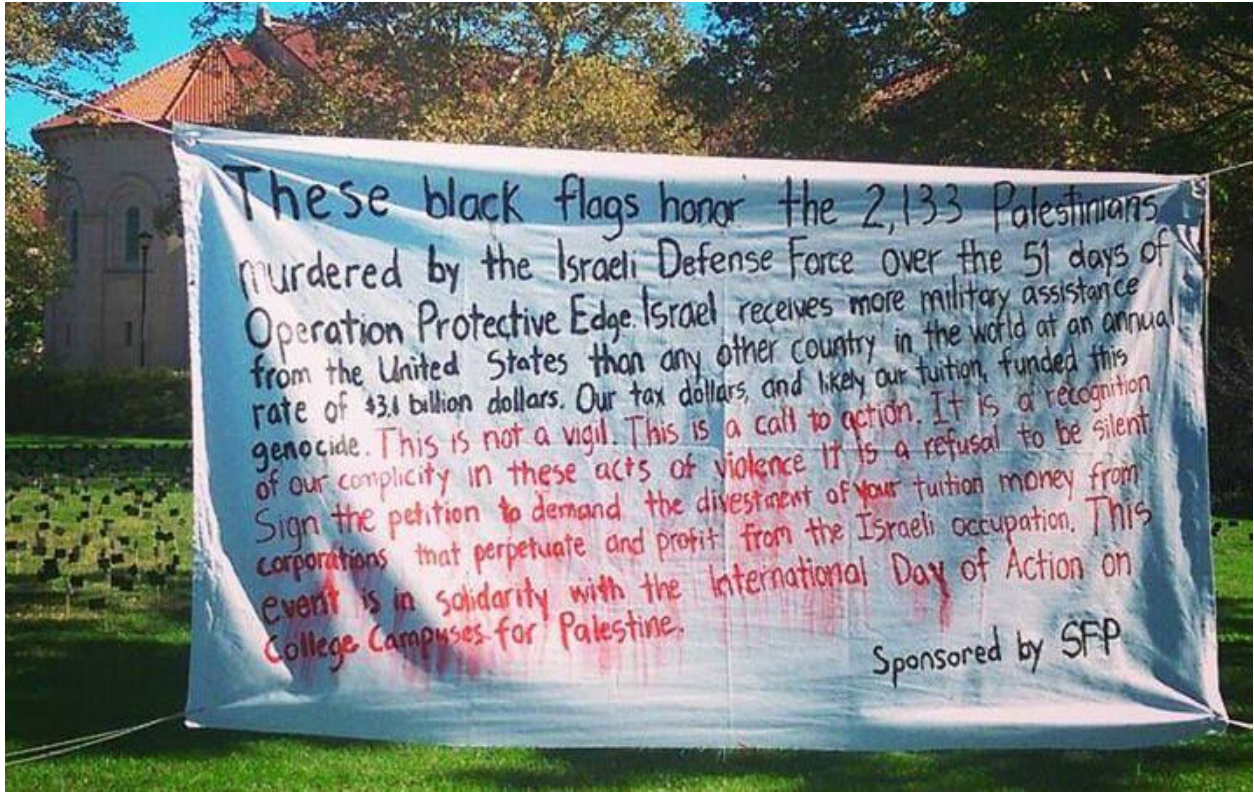
In the fall of 2014, Students for a Free Palestine took advantage of the hostile antisemitic climate that had predominated since 2013. SFP activists placed 2133 black flags outside of the location at which Jewish students would be attending Rosh Hashana services. This implies that Oberlin’s Jewish students are responsible for events in Israel and politicizes a religious observance. The banner that accompanied the flags referred to Israel’s actions in Operation Protective Edge as “murder.”

A. ('15) recalls an incident on Rosh Hashanah in the fall of 2014.

On Rosh Hashanah, SFP put up a display of 2133 black flags on Wilder Bowl to commemorate the 2133 Palestinians who lost their lives over the summer during Operation Protective Edge. I don't remember what the sign that was posted along with these flags said. However, I remember some of the unacceptable comments made at the event they held on Wilder Bowl that afternoon as a part of the display. While the leaders of SFP spoke first, they invited anyone to share. One man (probably in his late 50's or early 60's) came in from Cleveland to attend the event. During the course of his long-winded comments, he said that we need to support BDS as it is the best way to "inflict pain on the Zionist terrorist regime." Once he said this, I immediately wrote down the quote and began taking an audio recording of the event.

A few minutes later, a student stood up and spoke. He said (among other anti-Israel comments, including calling Israel "colonial" and essentially saying that Israel is genocidal) that pro-Palestinian activists should support Hamas. He willingly noted that Hamas is a terrorist organization but nonetheless continued to encourage his peers to support Hamas as the voice of Palestinian resistance. Most alarming to me was how many snaps (of support) that comment got from other Oberlin students who were willing to voice agreement (the crowd ultimately applauded for the student who spoke).

This banner was placed in Wilder Bowl on Rosh Hashanah, 2014 so as to be visible to Jewish students as they walked into Rosh Hashanah services:



Later that day, a speaker from Cleveland was brought in. He referred to Israel as the “Israeli Zionist terrorist state.” Following the speaker, a student went to the mic and someone in the crowd cheered for Hamas.

A recording of that event can be provided on request.

A 2015 graduate who has not given permission to use her name, “E.” recalls a visit from her brother, who was on break from the Israeli Defense Force:

He was on campus visiting me, and agreed to come to an Oberlin Zionists meeting to talk a bit about his experiences in the Gaza conflict. We couldn't advertise his presence/speech on campus mostly because of restrictions from the IDF (he's not supposed to advertise his soldier status when he's traveling outside of Israel), but we also definitely felt physically afraid of what might happen if the campus community found out that someone who participated in Protective Edge was on campus, so we didn't advertise at all and generally kept it pretty hushed up. As a result the

talk was very well-received by the maybe 6 or 7 students in attendance. I think it's incredibly problematic that the campus culture paints Israel so unequivocally as the epitome of moral corruptness that I actually feared for my brother's safety.

The following was tweeted on October 25, 2014 by Oberlin's Students for a Free Palestine:



In the Spring of 2015 Oberlin Students for Free Palestine tweeted the following:



A. ('15) summarizes:

I heard Abe Foxman (of the ADL) speak at an event in Cleveland in February 2015, and he made a comment that I really liked and that I feel is very fitting in describing Oberlin. He said that anti-Zionism is not inherently antisemitism, but that extreme anti-Zionism makes way for antisemitism: a culture (i.e., campus culture) that frequently singles out the Jewish state may slip into singling out the Jewish people. And THAT is unacceptable. I believe that Oberlin is a hostile space for more traditional Jews for this reason: it is not any one antisemitic event that's the problem. But the accumulation of so many microaggressions indicates implicit attitudes of the campus community at large- it is these underlying antisemitic biases that are the problem.

There is also a widespread and frequently explicitly stated belief at Oberlin that a statement/movement/idea cannot be antisemitic if there are Jews who support it (i.e., if SFP members are Jewish, then support for the BDS movement can't be antisemitic). I want to elucidate the problem with this statement through a parallel example: when Christina Hoff-Sommers spoke at Oberlin in the spring of 2015 about rape culture being a myth, many angry comment threads erupted between Obies and conservative pundits on online discussion boards. When the Obies accused Christina Hoff-Sommers of being misogynistic, the conservatives responded that this was impossible since she was a woman. Of course, the Obies did not think that rebuttal held water. Yet when the same statement is made about Jews when it comes to antisemitism, Obies see no problem with it. This is just one example of how, in the current campus culture, antisemitism does not draw the same level of concern, nor is it addressed with as much nuanced understanding as other forms of bigotry.

Oberlin ACF is also aware of an anonymous blog post in which a 2016 graduate claims that during his junior year, another student threw bacon at him while shouting anti-Jewish ethnic slurs. We have no additional information to substantiate that claim and we do not know who the student is. The report can be found here: <http://www.israellycool.com/2016/09/11/reader-post-surviving-oberlin/>

2015-2016 School Year: Jewish Students Continue to Suffer

While Abusua (Oberlin's Black Student Union) adopts BDS demands, Hillel silences the conversation about Israel. Most of the statements in this section were given to Melissa Landa prior to Professor Joy

Karega's facebook posts being reported in the press. At the end of the section, some responses to the Karega issue are included; other responses are discussed in Section III.

The following statement was written by a **current student** at Oberlin, who wishes to remain anonymous:

Students go to BDS conferences and come back even more radicalized. They need to wake up and look around what's going on in the rest of the world. In Europe, in the Middle East. Antisemitism is on the rise in a really dramatic way, and they need to decide if they are going to contribute to it or fight against it. While they may or may not be smart enough to differentiate between criticism of Israel and criticism of Jews in the diaspora, many people who they associate themselves with are not capable of doing so. Students are at a cross-roads in their dynamics with each other and they have to make a choice.

A current student from the class of 2019, "B."

In the fall of this year, there was a Free Palestine event held and I felt compelled to go because it said "open mic" in the description of the event. I wanted to voice my opinion in support of Israel, but my friends (Jewish and not Jewish) convinced me not to go because they were concerned that it would make people hate me or start a fight. When they expressed their worries, I became worried as well and felt unsafe going, so I stayed in my dorm.

Later this year, the list of black student demands came out and I really wanted to sign that petition because of how much I support their cause, but I couldn't bring myself to sign a petition for something I so strongly believe in because of the anti-Israel statement that seemed so out of place in their list of demands. It had nothing to do with the situation of black students at Oberlin and was completely against my personal beliefs about Israel. Additionally, I felt that if I voiced my opinion against the anti-Israel statements, I would be faced with students calling me a racist. Overall, I feel incredibly silenced on this issue because of all the hate I fear would come at me the second I open my mouth.

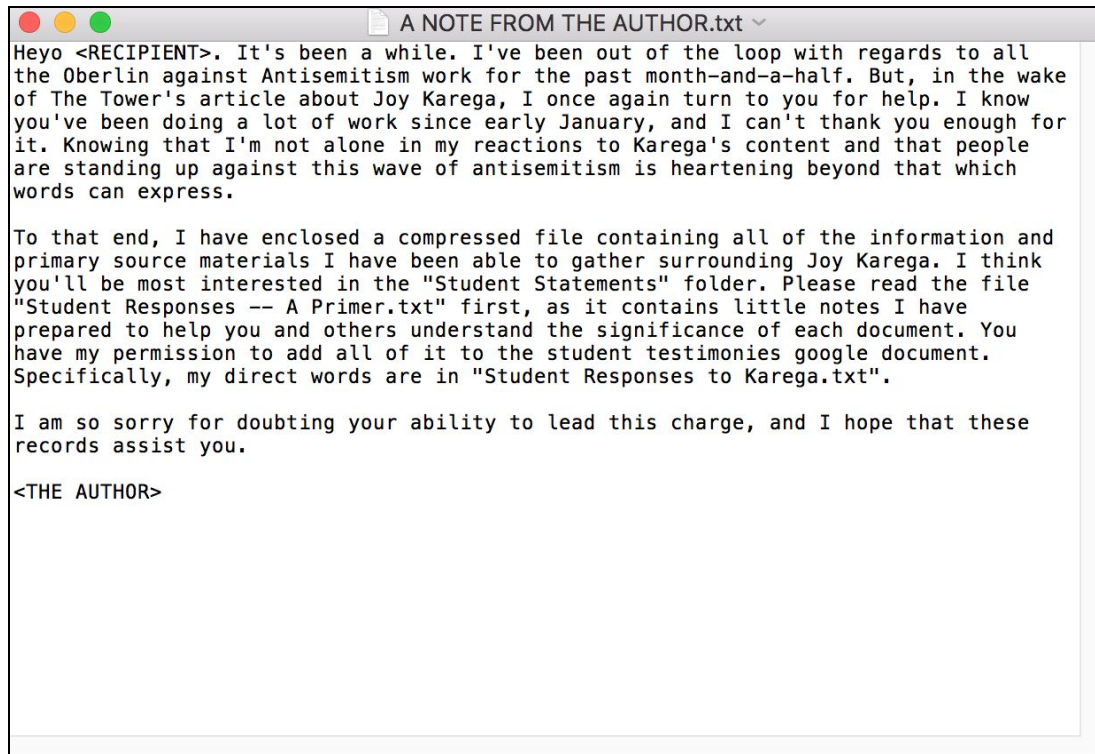
On campus I feel uncomfortable wearing my IDF (Israeli Defense Force) shirt, even though it is something that means quite a lot to me. Instead, I have to wear my necklace that is less noticeable. Additionally, I feel uncomfortable even mentioning the IDF at Oberlin because the

one time I did in a club/experimental college setting, I was given weird and discouraging looks. But for me, one of the worst instances was when someone tried to bring up Israel at a Hillel meeting and the subject was shot down and we were told that the place for discussing Israel is a J Street meeting (which is a place I know to be pro-Palestine and anti-Zionist, so I did not go).

The following statement was written by **a current senior** at Oberlin, who wishes to remain anonymous:

Just as white people cannot define what anti-POC racism is, or heterosexual people cannot define what constitutes homophobia, so too it is the same thing with antisemitism. By acting like they are the sole sources of what antisemitism is, they (SFP) are insulting a slew of Jewish students, their experiences with actual antisemitism, and their right to define it as Jews. It's only logical that Jews define what antisemitism, defined as the hatred of Jews, is. I support some of SFP's opinions, but will never support those who claim to know what antisemitism is, who are not Jews.

A current student, F., provided us with some of the student responses to the publicity regarding Professor Joy Karega's facebook posts, along with F.'s own reaction:



Student Feelings About Joy Karega's Anti-Semitic Conduct – A Reflection

By: <NAME REDACTED>

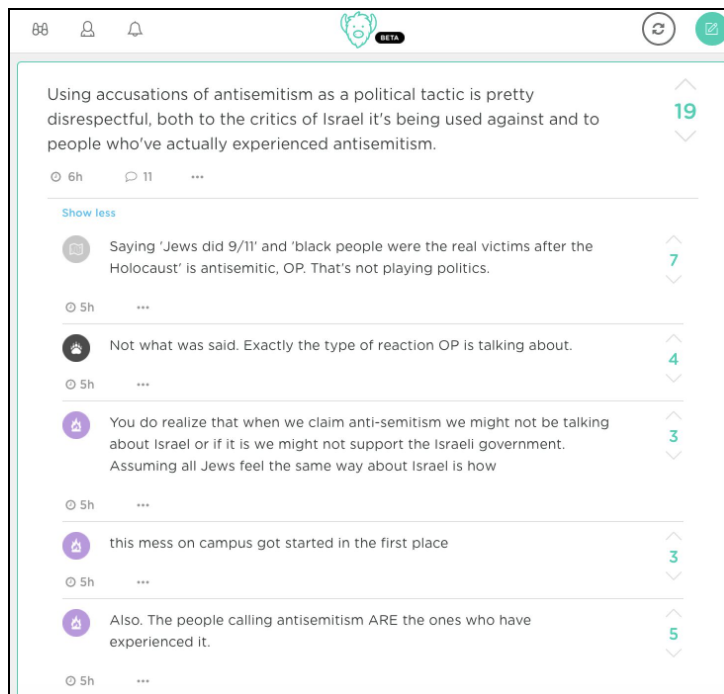
4:02 PM, Friday February 26, 2016

Nobody I've told about this seems shocked, upset, or really wanting to do much of anything about it. One person told me, and I'm paraphrasing here, "I'm not surprised, this is the world we live in." Other students also shared this sentiment.

When I posted a question about it on Yik Yak, an anonymous social media app for college students, the first response dealing with the situation was "Being against Israel doesn't equal antisemitism..." Based on this and other yik yak conversations contained in this folder, I have come to the following conclusion: I believe that, in the minds of many students, the default response to allegations of anti-semitism is to assume that they have to do with anti-Israel rhetoric. This is, itself, anti-semitic.

I wouldn't be so angry about all this if it was just about "being against Israel." I'm used to heated rhetoric on campus about Israel and the Israel/Palestine conflict. I'm angry because this woman clearly believes that the ills of the world stem from a Jewish identity. She believes a man who thinks that Jews did 9/11. She espouses Rothschild conspiracy theories that play off of Jewish stereotypes. Stereotypes which, dear reader, have historical roots in Nazi propaganda and the Blood Libel myth.

F. took these screenshots from Oberlin's Yik Yak the day after The Tower reported the story about Professor Karega's facebook posts. In some cases we have included only excerpts due to the long length.



88

Also. The people calling antisemitism ARE the ones who have experienced it. 5

5h ...

I'm Jewish. I'm not assuming anything. 1

4h ...

Op is obv talking about ppl claiming antisemitism to shut down criticism of Israel 3

4h ...

But that is exactly my issue purple boot, the way those are interchangeable is a problem 1

4h ...

That is what was said by the professor, just with prettier language. This isn't the first time she's behaved unprofessionally. 0

4h ...

And OP, I'm Jewish and I have just as much right to talk about antisemitism as you do. We've all dealt with antisemitism and we all have the right to call things like we see it. Just because you don't 5

4h ...

Agree doesn't mean those accusations are made for political gain, and how dare you act like it does? 2

4h ...

88

So I'm a Jew who does not support the Israeli government but y'all are still so antisemitic. You are not antisemitic bc you don't like Israel, you are bc you don't get American Jewish identity. 3

5h 14 ...

[Show less](#)

The act of lumping all Jewish opinion together is antisemitic. 3

5h ...

I'm a Jew who also does not etc and I haven't really seen this. Who does this? 0

4h ...

I won't say nobody b/c that's disrespectful to the feelings involved/probably not true, but if it does happen it seems to be a very slight minority 0

4h ...

Any time someone here criticizes Israel it becomes a criticism of Judaism as a whole. People can't separate the two 2

4h ...

Oberlin has a huge antisemitism problem, and it's the only problem I've never heard people besides the victimized group acknowledge. 3

4h ...

88

Oberlin has a huge antisemitism problem, and it's the only problem I've never heard people besides the victimized group acknowledge. 3

4h ...

I hope Krislov starts cracking down, because this environment is toxic. 1

4h ...

Categorizing everyone else as antisemitic is pretty broad. -2

4h ...

The issue comes from both parties. A lot of Zionists here claim antisemitism to anyone who opposes Zionism, and hence aren't separating their Jewish identity from Israel, but also a lot of 4

2h ...

Anti Zionists handle debating with pro Zionists in an antisemitic way. This is not everybody, but there are members of both sides that need to chill. 4

2h ...

I agree sailboat 1

2h ...

The issue is that criticism of Zionism - the belief that there should be a Jewish state - can veer into antisemitism a lot faster than critique of policy in Israel, the existing Jewish state. 2

2h ...

88

Jewish stereotypes are especially fucked up because they deter a conversation about structural anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic microaggressions 5

17h 8 ...

[Show less](#)

Which Jewish stereotypes are you referring? 0

17h ...

That all Jews support the Israeli state's actions. 3

17h ...

The stereotype that all Jews are of European/Caucasian descent. 4

17h ...

That Jews are all rich and cheap is a stereotype that comes to mind. 5

16h ...

You fucking Semite 0

15h ...

Oy schvitz my schuckel, don't geschmutz your grandmother's kugelish meidala 0

15h ...

88

17h ...

That Jews are all rich and cheap is a stereotype that comes to mind. 5

16h ...

You fucking Semite 0

15h ...

Oy schvitz my schuckel, don't geschmutz your grandmother's kugelish meidala 0

15h ...

The "rich" stereotype is especially damaging, since many of us (and in some places, most of us) are anything but and people refuse to believe it. 5

14h ...

Yeah I was referring to the rich and powerful stereotypes 1

4h ...

Yak bak...

Jews are a marginalized group. .Jews. Are. A. Marginalized. Group. 0

13h 19 ...

[Show less](#)

No we're not 4

13h ...

Yeah, we really are. 1

13h ...

Acorn, do you know anything about history of Jews in this world 0

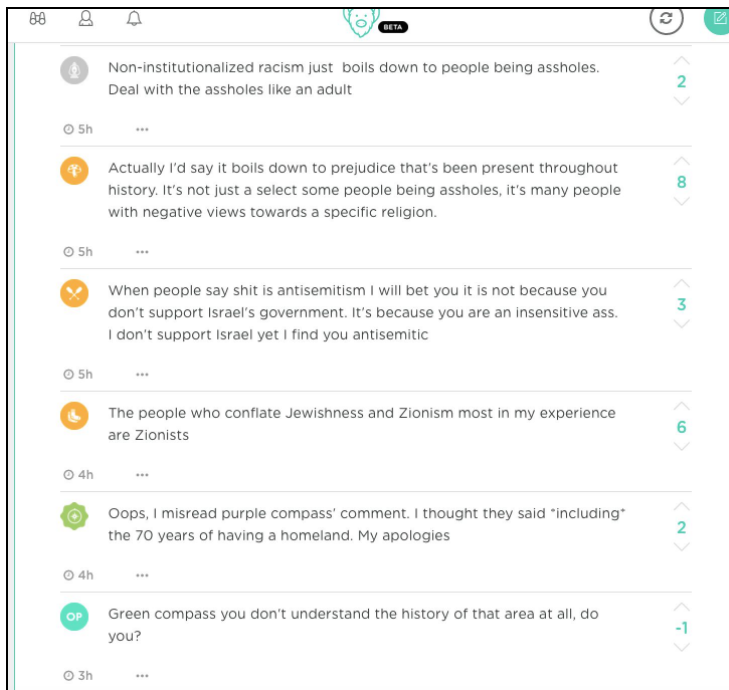
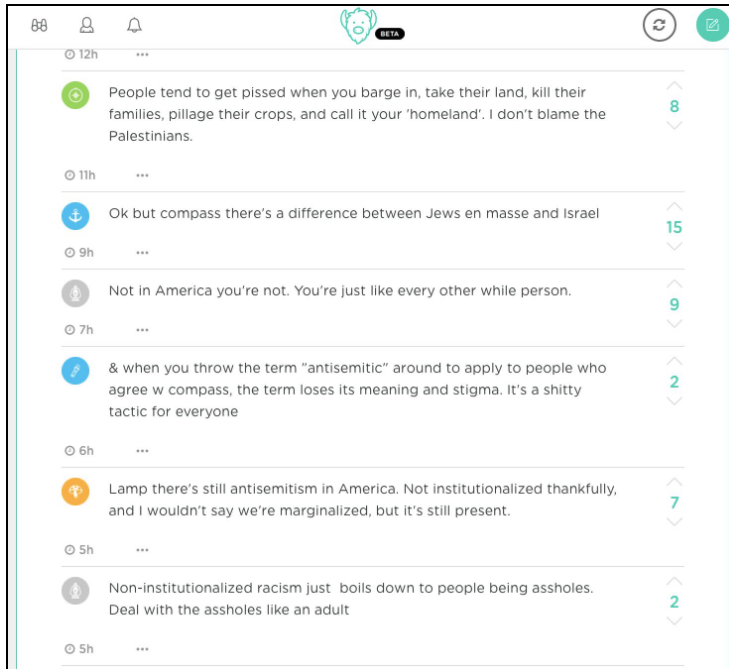
13h ...

We're one of the most marginalized groups in history. Literally everywhere Jews have lived, we've been oppressed, not including the last 70 years when we've had a homeland. 0

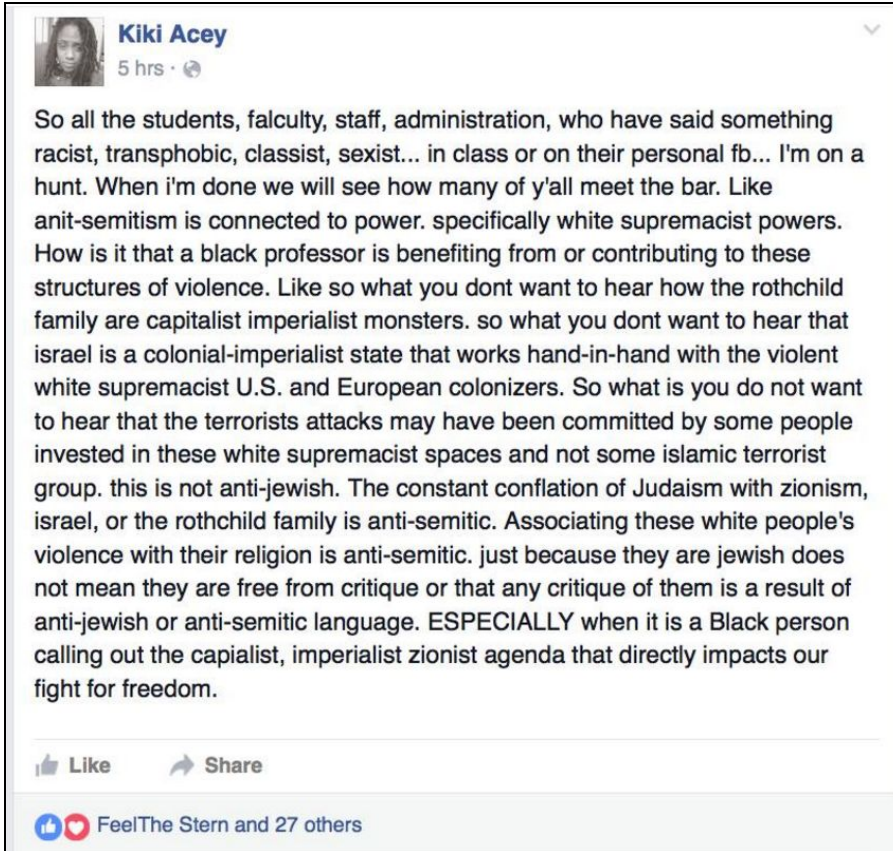
12h ...

People tend to get pissed when you barge in, take their land, kill their families, pillage their crops, and call it your 'homeland'. I don't blame the Palestinians. 8

11h ...



After the initial press about Professor Karega, a recent former student posted publicly on their personal page:



Andrew Patinkin was quoted in The Jewish Press:

Andrew Patinkin, class of 2019, weighed in on the attitude of many Jewish Oberlin students. Patinkin explained that “many Oberlin students say that Israel is an oppressive state, and they “repeat a lot of misinformation and falsehoods in the name of ‘combating oppression.’ Unfortunately, this attitude towards Israel is so pervasive that even some Jewish students have taken to decrying Israel because it makes you a ‘better ally’ to a marginalized group, i.e. the Palestinians.”

Patinkin continued: “In the eyes of these students, if you do not actively denounce Israel and it’s actions, you are a lesser ally and ‘fail’ to understand the ways that oppression works, thereby making you a horrible person.”

Source:

<http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/at-liberal-oberlin-no-speech-rights-for-non-haters-of-israel/2016/01/22/>

The following statement was received from a parent of **B.**, quoted above, in an email on January 20, 2016:

My daughter is currently a freshman at Oberlin. She came home for winter break and asked me to help her come up with a list of talking points to deal with the anti-Israel sentiments on campus before she returns for second semester. She does not feel she can discuss pro-Israel feelings on campus. I had no idea how rampant the antisemitism, thinly veiled as anti-Israel, is on campus. I'm not sure she even understands its depth. I am so saddened by this climate.

The following statement was received from another parent of a current Oberlin student, in an email on January 26, 2016:

I read with appreciation the open letter to the Oberlin community regarding the current climate of antisemitism on Oberlin's campus. As a parent of a current Oberlin student, and faculty member in the department of psychology at the University of Washington, I have been deeply disturbed about the antisemitic rhetoric and degree of intimidation on Oberlin's campus.

After the "installation" of black flags on Rosh Hashanah last year, I contacted [A Jewish Professional/name redacted] and had a conversation with him and then with him and [a Dean/name redacted]. I was unsatisfied with their response but felt like I was a lone voice... My daughter was clearly intimidated, voiced that she understood the persecution her grandparents felt in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, etc. She has since gone off-campus for her Jewish observance. It was unbelievable to me that my daughter was voicing fear about being a Jew on a liberal campus in America in 2014! This is all to say that I am really happy that there is an organized response to the current situation, and I would like to help in any way I can. Thanks for all your efforts.

The following statement was received in an email during the 2015-16 school year from an alumnus who is also the **parent of a 2016 senior**. She wishes to remain anonymous:

My daughter is a current student and would add her name [to the open letter from Alumni] but is hesitant to do so, both because of the social stigma and because of her feelings about Chabad activities on campus given the weakness of Hillel or any other mainstream Jewish group. She has been increasing exceedingly uncomfortable on campus and can't wait to graduate. I teach at a high school. Because of the toxic environment, I no longer feel I can recommend Oberlin to my students- and that makes me very sad.

The letter referenced may be found here: <https://sites.google.com/site/oberlinagainstantisemitism/>

The following was written by **a 2016 graduate** at Oberlin, who wishes to remain anonymous. This is an excerpt of longer piece that was published by the Brandeis Center:

I am writing this piece anonymously, not because I am afraid of personal social backlash or being ostracized, (which undoubtedly would happen were I to release my name) but because I am deeply involved in trying to make Oberlin a more open place for discussion and dialogue about Zionism. According to the policies of Students for a Free Palestine (SFP), my views paint me as an extremist and someone who is not fit to participate in the conversation about Israel. By not giving my name, I can maintain some hope of opening up the dialogue.

The SFP group at Oberlin is doing an excellent job at employing strategically implemented tactics to maintain the group's power on campus. With their oversimplified, hateful and demonizing words about Israel, they have successfully cultivated a large portion of the student body to join their cause, while leaving many people in the Jewish community feeling increasingly unsafe on a campus that boasts more "safe spaces" per capita than any other college. Having effectively silenced the now closet Zionists on campus, they are able to boast that they have achieved a monopoly in the campus wide Israeli "discussion," albeit at the expense of many people feeling unsafe on campus. The irony of the "liberal, progressive school" is almost too perfect for words.....

In addition to claiming that they have the only righteous solution to the crisis in the Middle East, SFP deliberately closes channels for dialogue. Many of their demonstrations don't involve people,

but instead involve signs that are placed in public places and then left, void of any member standing by to engage in conversation. One infamous example is when the Jewish community, on Rosh Hashanah, was confronted with black flags and a hostile banner as they walked into religious services. This display, which used smeared red ink to imitate blood, announced to the community that Israel was committing genocide against the Palestinian people, a message that wildly distorted the complexities of the war in Gaza. As we passed the banner and the flags, we were met with silence, feeling that SFP had become an insurmountable fortress of anonymity.

Source: <http://brandeiscenter.com/blog/an-oberlin-students-message-to-student-zionists/>

Hadas Binyamini, class of 2014, wrote in The Forward:

SFP has faced accusations of anti-Semitism on multiple occasions. And yet it has refused to acknowledge that anti-Semitism does exist in the Palestinian solidarity movement, or to examine how anti-Jewish oppression might be present in its efforts. In none of its statements does it validate or concede that some Jewish students' concerns might not be rooted in a plot to repress Palestinian solidarity, but in SFP's activism itself. This refusal to engage in self-reflection when it comes to anti-Semitism is emblematic of a broader campus attitude toward anti-Jewish oppression: boredom and impatience at best, and contempt and resentment at worst, when confronted with a Jew airing her or his discomfort. Throughout campus discussions of divestment and racism, many chose to disregard anti-Jewish oppression. In spite of their role as a "hub for ... historically disenfranchised communities," the Multicultural Resource Center, a supporter of divestment, remains silent on anti-Semitism. Similarly, the department of Comparative American Studies, which trains students to "investigate power, inequality, and agency through the analysis of... race... class... and citizenship," are either disinterested or unable to engage students with these same issues when it comes to American Jews."

<http://forward.com/opinion/335207/how-both-sides-of-bds-debate-get-oberlin-anti-semitism-wrong/#ixzz44p479y8t>

Student **Rachel Swack** wrote in the Oberlin Review:

"[I]t troubles me that while I do not support Israel, I must denounce it for my statements on anti-Semitism to be taken seriously. Support of Israel is too often a litmus test that Jewish people must pass in order to be considered "good Jews." This is part of the myth that all Jewish people are affiliated with the Israeli state and should be held responsible for Israel's actions."

<http://oberlinreview.org/10119/opinions/we-must-distinguish-between-anti-zionism-anti-semitism/#sthash.3Jy6IXkf.dpuf>

Melissa Landa received the following statements from former **Oberlin Professor Shulamit Magnus** via email on January 23, 2016:

Freedom of speech, academic freedom, freedom of assembly, protection against harassment in such assembly, are basic civil rights not just generally but on campuses too. One tactic SFP used at Oberlin was to crash Hillel meetings, on the pretext that the students doing so were after all, Jewish, and take over the meeting/ prevent the students who had organized it from holding the meeting they wished to hold, with the agenda they had set. That is not free speech, it is totalitarian suppression of it, using totalitarian mind games. Students whose events are taken over with tactics like this should have the support of the Administration in 1. rejecting, utterly, publicly, such tactics and sleight of hand justification of them; 2. asserting unequivocally the right of freedom of assembly and of speech on campus; 3. protection of groups, and of Hillel, or Oberlin Zionists, specifically (I believe they were harassed out of calling themselves Zionist, which is a pity), so that those whose events have been taken over, who have been targeted for disruption, are targeted for protection by the Administration. The Administration needs to state loudly and clearly that all speech, save for incitement to hatred and violence, is protected on campus and that no tactics aimed at shutting down any such speech are legitimate. Further, that actions that impede such freedoms will be considered breach of acceptable behavior/ intimidation, and will constitute grounds for probation and dismissal.

Students are targeted if they identify Jewishly in any way, e.g., go to Hillel events, eat in Kosher Halal Coop, live or go to events in Hebrew House, take JWST courses, speak Hebrew, go to Hebrew/Jewish cultural events, like Israeli dancing. These students are very stressed and are being bullied. It definitely has a chilling effect on such students and their willingness to be involved in things Jewish -- very, very problematic. Several put it to me as wanting to have a life.

They may be Jewish and they might have an interest in various things up to a point but are not willing to pay a huge price for this or be singled out for persecution over it.

What can the institution do aside from offering support? The Office of the Ombudsperson made sincere efforts to try to get dialogue between the targeting and targeted groups. That went nowhere. SFP (Students for a Free Palestine) was not willing to see itself as persecuting, they believed they were truth telling, crusaders for justice. We adults want everyone to be nice and civil. The other side will not be nice or civil, they are on holy crusade. The other side is much more practiced in its tactics than our side. Many are Jews, so will say, this can't be antisemitic. They also get professional help, much, in all this. I have never seen an expose of their funding but that would be very relevant. They were bringing in speakers, flying them in, putting them up; who was paying for this? Not the amounts from student activities, surely. Revealing the funding sources would likely make most interesting reading. So much of the funding behind Middle Eastern Studies programs comes from the Middle East, from regimes that are profoundly retrograde in every aspect of life and fanatically anti-Israel.

Anyone who does not tow the line of SFP, someone who says what they already “know,” is not someone they are going to listen to. If this is not the opposite, the defeat, of the basic purpose of a college education, on a liberal arts campus, yet (think, learn to think), I don't know what is.

Bernard Lewis makes an extremely cogent assessment of when something stops being criticism of Israel or Jews and becomes Jew-hatred. Three criteria: its nature is obsessive; it demonizes; it sets up double standard. Clearly what goes on on campuses fits this bill.

Students told me they were shunned at tables in coops if they were Jewishly- identified (were part of Hillel, never mind Oberlin Zionists; took JWST courses, never mind, majored in it; went to Israel to study; took Hebrew, lived in Hebrew House); that students would demonstratively get up and walk away when such a student sat down at a table. One student told me she was shunned and told she was a fascist colonialist for speaking Hebrew with another student.

With a campaign of sustained vilification of Israel and anyone with connections to it ongoing on campus, such behavior was clearly not political, in the sense of arguing a position, but was part of personalizing persecution of those identified with a position or affiliation.

In my last year of teaching at Oberlin, I made a point of asking students about their experiences as Jews on campus, about what was working and what wasn't, of their experiences with the JWST Program since the changes in its structure, of what role Israel-Palestine conflict was playing in their lives. That is when I heard students say that there was a limit to how much they were willing to undergo to identify Jewishly on campus, that is, attend activities, take JWST courses (I also heard other feedback, not having to do with Middle East issues). But "I want a life, I don't want to be fighting this all the time" is called intimidation and chilling effect.

2016-17 School Year

As the 2016-17 school year gets underway, the administration and student organizations continue to ignore the problems at the Oberlin.

The Student Senate condemned AFC's actions attempting to address antisemitism on campus.

<http://oberlinreview.org/10948/opinions/student-senate-opinions/student-senate-condemns-ocacf-actions/>

Despite the numerous *public* displays of antisemitism on campus described elsewhere in this document, Tim Elgren, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Andrea Kalyn Dean of the Conservatory of Music, and Meredith Raimondo, Interim Dean of Students wrote an op-ed in the Oberlin Review stating that they are unable to take action about the current climate unless students step forward to make formal complaints. Source: <http://oberlinreview.org/11215/opinions/student-feedback-crucial-for-change/>

Oberlin is committed to addressing any discrimination and bigotry on campus, using processes designed to protect the rights of affected individuals and the intellectual integrity of the academic program. We encourage individuals who may have questions or be concerned with participating in these processes to seek confidential advice about how to share their concerns so that meaningful action may occur.

Without such information, addressing these profound barriers to learning becomes a challenge. For example, we are aware of recent assertions that Oberlin is currently

facing significant issues related to anti-Semitism on campus. These allegations thus far have come from anonymous or secondhand sources that we have not been able to substantiate.

SFP refuses to co-host events with J Street U due to their “anti-normalization” policy, despite the fact that J Street is a pro-Palestinian group. The following discussion took place on the page for an event that J Street hosted, “Intro to the Occupation and the Israel Palestine Conflict.”



Kai Joy
September 18 at 10:45pm · Oberlin, OH · 🌐

Who is teaching this?

Like · Comment · Share

7

J Street U Oberlin Taught by J street u board members
Like · Reply · September 18 at 10:47pm

Hide 12 Replies

Kai Joy Have y'all ever thought to work with SFP?
Like · Reply · 6 · September 19 at 12:19am

Tavi Gerstle lol
Like · Reply · September 19 at 7:55am

Tavi Gerstle I assure you they have "ever thought" of it, the non-normalization policy means SJP wouldn't work with them
Like · Reply · September 19 at 7:57am

Kai Joy I don't understand the need for condescension.
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:29pm

Kai Joy I don't understand the need for condescension.
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:29pm

Tavi Gerstle me neither
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:29pm

Kai Joy then why behave condescendingly?
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:30pm

Tavi Gerstle I assumed if you've worked with SFP you were aware of the policy
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:30pm

Tavi Gerstle could ask you the same//don't feel like I was
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:31pm

Kai Joy I am not directly affiliated with SFP and was genuinely curious. I wonder why it is that you immediately became hostile and defensive.
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:32pm

Tavi Gerstle I didn't, I answered your question
Like · Reply · September 19 at 4:33pm



On November 17, 2016, two days after it was announced that Karega was fired, the school reported to students that a faculty member's home had been vandalized with antisemitic messages. According to the police report, a note with the words "GAS JEWS DIE" had been placed behind the mezuzah of that faculty member's home.

There has been no substantive response to this incident from the administration.

In early 2017, a rock in Tappan Square was spray-painted in honor of dismissed antisemitic professor Joy Karega.



In February of 2017, current Oberlin profs continue to support Professor Karega.

Joy Karega
February 21 at 6:40am · 🌐

It's 5am and I'm up late working. I just took a break and logged into Facebook to scroll my newsfeed for the first time in a long time. And I see this photo posted by one of my former students.

Lots of emotions I'm feeling seeing this. I miss Oberlin students -- those who are still there and those who have graduated that I had the pleasure of instructing and learning from. I'm still in contact with Oberlin students and watching some students' matriculation and development fr... [See More](#)





II. Looking Back

Other Alums have offered their own stories from the past 26 years.

Early 1990's

Karen Bekker, a graduate from the class of 1994, said:

During the time that I was on campus, there were, thankfully, none of the types of stories that I have heard from more recent graduates. Even then, however, Israel was slandered with comparisons to apartheid South Africa, and Zionism was called racism. Although the word "intersectionality" had not yet come into vogue, the simplistic idea that those with white skin were always oppressors and those with dark skin always oppressed was accepted as dogma. This dogma was applied to the Israeli-Arab conflict to erase the history of centuries oppression of Jews in the Middle East, making tiny Israel appear as the oppressor of the expansive Arab world. Any dissent from this facile world-view would get you branded as racist.

A tradition among the small group of identifying Jewish students at that time was that each year on Yom HaShoah, we would place candles in paper bags around the main square, Wilder Bowl, and sit in the center and tell stories of the Holocaust. Despite the hundreds of supposedly Jewish students on the campus, never more than a few dozen attended the Yom HaShoah memorial. The students who came would tell stories of things they had read in books, or heard from friends of friends of friends. But the stories that I knew about what had happened to my own family during the Holocaust were too horrible for me to face. Each year I sat through the ceremony paralyzed, unable to speak. Each year I returned the next day to a campus on which I was regarded as an oppressor because of the color of my skin. My great-grandparents and eight of my great aunts and great uncles were murdered because of who they were; an entire generation of their children, my cousins, never born. Yet at Oberlin I was called an oppressor because of the color of my skin, and racist when I objected to that categorization.

The false and racist characterization of Jews that was prevalent twenty years ago, I now see has morphed into an atmosphere in which Jews can be verbally harassed for their beliefs, shouted down in public gatherings, and their dorm rooms vandalized with no repercussions. How much longer until it becomes an atmosphere in which people feel that Jews can be physically attacked on campus? Oberlin is on a dangerous trajectory. If its course is not reversed, I fear what the future brings. Oberlin is a bellwether of the country in so many ways. It must stop treating one form of racism, racism against Jews, as acceptable.

1993

After being misquoted by the Oberlin Review about her views on the Arafat- Clinton - Begin press conference, misrepresenting her words as an attack on Arafat, a graduate of the class of 1996 who has not given permission to use her name, "D." experienced several weeks of harassment. She said that she received death threats slipped under her door, including a crayon drawing of a pig with a Jewish star on it with "x"s for eyes and the caption, "A dead Zionist pig is a good Zionist pig." She also received harassing phone calls.

1996

Kwame Ture came to speak at Oberlin for a second time, in spite of a previous visit to Oberlin when he engaged in hate speech. It was reported in the campus newspaper that Ture said that "The only good

Zionist is a dead Zionist.” Source:

<http://www.oberlin.edu/stupub/ocreview/archives/1996.03.15/news/zionist.html>

D., '96, was in attendance and recalls: “Members of Ture's entourage were armed and intimidated me.”

When Jewish students protested the talk, Black faculty and staff wrote a commentary in the Oberlin Review in which they repudiated Jewish students for their peaceful protest against the speaker and accused them of displaying indifference to the suffering of the Palestinians. They defended Kwame Ture by claiming that anti-Zionism is not the same as antisemitism and promoting anti-Zionism as an acceptable and encouraged position to hold.

<http://www.oberlin.edu/stupub/ocreview/archives/1996.04.26/commentary/zionists.html>

1993-1997

As part of his work with OPIRG, **Joshua Safran ('97)** initiated Oberlin's transition to using recycled paper. When he circulated a student petition that was required to convince the administration to make this change, he was accused by fellow students of white privilege. Joshua explains,

“I was told that the only reason I was promoting the recycled paper was because ‘My people’ (i.e. Jews) owned ‘the paper company’.”

After someone spray painted “Good Chink = Dead Chink” on Oberlin's arch [Note: The arch was an ongoing source of tension on the campus as it is a memorial to Oberlin graduates who were missionaries and who died in the Boxer rebellion in China], days of rage followed including a school wide speak out in South Dorm, which was sponsored by the administration. Many student speakers commented on the connection between Israel and racism and implicitly blamed "the Occupation of Palestine" for the graffiti.

Students of Color (SOC-only) meetings were organized by both students and the administration and Jews were systematically and repeatedly excluded from these meetings. Sephardic Jewish students who attempted to "qualify" as SOC were also excluded because as Jews they were considered to be White.

As a Politics and Judaic/Near Eastern Studies triple major, **Joshua Safran ('97)** was required to take classes with Professor Ben Schiff. Joshua explains:

“[Schiff] failed me on one of my papers because I suggested that some Palestinians recognized that Jews had a historic connection to the Land of Israel. He docked me both because he said that was inaccurate AND because Jews did NOT have such a connection. He was the only Professor who taught those subjects.”

Joshua was routinely and loudly called “White boy!” by the leaders of the Students for a Free Palestine precursor student group. Joshua recalls:

“On multiple occasions, they threatened to ‘kick my ass’ or told me ‘get the fuck’ out of the OCR mailroom.”

He reported some of these incidents to Oberlin Security but he eventually stopped because they did not take any action.

When **Joshua Safran** served on the Student Senate, there was a vote for Edward Said to be the graduation speaker. When he and another student voted against Said, they were publicly shamed as being "so selfish." Other remarks included, "That's just like the Jews. If it doesn't benefit them they don't give a shit."

As he describes Israel’s Independence Day celebrations, **Joshua Safran** recalls, “An endangered remnant of us mustered our courage to force ourselves to dance on Wilder Bowl while being viciously drowned out and heckled by the haters. No Administration assistance was ever offered that I’m aware of. The threats and language and physical intimidation made such an impression on me that my subsequent experiences with an anti-Semitic mob in Morocco and in the streets of Hebron and on the UC Berkeley campus after the (entirely fictional) Jenin Massacre seemed almost commonplace and familiar.” He remembers shouts of "Jews go home; Zionists out of Oberlin; Free, Free Palestine; hey hey ho ho Zionists have got to go” and “a few with various Intifada rhymes.”

Safran recalls “systematic tearing down of the Oberlin Zionist posters, whenever they were posted, and their replacement with anti-Semitic parody posters by a so-called "Jews Against Zionism" group.” He describes the posters as depicting a parody of the movie, “Raid on Entebbe,” by advertising a fictitious movie about a group of Jews who hijacked an entire nation and kept them hostage in the world’s largest open air prison, torturing men, women, and children.” **Daniel Kennemer ('94-'95)** remembers:

We just went around and tried to put up more of the originals and take down the mocking ones. I also think that the people who put up the mocking poster were proud and angry / indignant that we took it down.

When **Safran** was the SR for Hebrew House he was expected to schedule team building exercises and multiple trainings with all the other program houses. He recalls, “The Lord-Saunders, Spanish House, and Third World House student staff refused to do any trainings with any "white people" which included me, Russia House and German House.” He recalls, “I was told that they needed to be in a safe space and that Jews were white like the Germans. When I was assigned to do specific team or 1 on 1 trainings with the SRs and CROs from these houses, they simply refused to do it. Third World House had a mural which celebrated Gamel Abdel Nasser among other world leaders. I attempted to have rationale civil discussions with my fellow student program house leaders to no avail.”

2007-2008

A graduate of the class of 2009 who wishes to remain anonymous recalls:

During my time at Oberlin, Hillel wished to stay neutral about Israel to a fault. All discussions that dealt with any issues pertaining to Israel were silenced, and in a focus on Judaism or Jewish history, Oberlin Hillel refused to acknowledge any ties to Israel in fear of creating a political discourse where members or attendees would likely butt heads all around. Talking about Jewish life without Israel is like asking blood to exist without a body. All Jewish life is tied to the seasons, the time, the land of Israel, regardless of where Jews live.

The same alum describes a night in the Campus Disco, called the “Sco,” when everyone there was chanting a BDS mantra, “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free.” He recalls, “That night, I did not feel physically safe.” He recalls being called a “Zio-nazi” when he left campus in 2009. When he returned from Israel for a soccer alumni weekend, he was asked how many children he had killed already. He also described sitting in on an SFP 'lecture' to hear them say that the First Intifada was peaceful because any Jew in the West Bank is illegally there so any action against them can't be seen as violent.

2009

David Brandt ('14) recalls a class during his freshman year:

People turned off when they heard I was pro-Israel. I was called "the Zionist" when I took a course on the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

2010

Ari Feinberg ('14) recalls:

Early my freshman year Students for a Free Palestine hosted a speaker. During the Q&A, SFP projected their own slideshow (as the speaker answered questions). They were not explicit in the fact that this slideshow expressed their own views and not those of the speaker. Slides included photographs of billboards saluting various martyrs.

2012

Kaley Diamond ('12) recalls going to the “Sco” (campus dance club) during Passover and finding a Pro-Palestine rapper onstage and anti-Israel flyers being passed around. She recalls,

The struggle of the Jewish people was considered a "white person problem" and to bring it up (in class) would have shot me down the "white-ally-social-ladder" so to speak.

A graduate of the class of 2012 who wishes to remain anonymous recalls her experiences in OSCA (the Oberlin Student Cooperative Association):

During passover, OSCA members were required to do work hours at two coops if they wanted to eat at Kosher co-op. This was the only option for most Jewish students as other coops were unwilling to accommodate them if they wanted to stay.

OSCA voted not to guarantee Jewish students the right to have unleavened alternatives provided during Passover, even though they honored other non-medical dietary restrictions. They were ultimately over-ruled by the coop's nutrition coordinator.

III. Faculty Espouse Antisemitism

The following three images as well as several others were available to the public on the Facebook page of Professor Joy Karega, an Oberlin faculty member whose students have noted hostile remarks about Israel in a class whose syllabus does not include topics related to Israel. More of Professor Karega's public facebook posts can be viewed here:

<http://www.thetower.org/3012-oberlin-professor-claims-israel-was-behind-911-isis-charlie-hebdo-attack/>



Joy Karega

January 13, 2015 · 🌐

Yep. Pretty much. If folks think this Paris "attack" was about "free speech and expression" then I don't know what to say. First thing, there is no such thing as "free speech and expression" in the Power-driven and market-based economies much of this world operates under. Some speech and expression, even if it's racist, sexist, homophobic, just plain out offensive, is supported and allowed "free" reign under the ideological construct of "free speech and expression." But other kinds are suppressed. Power and the market is the determinant. That's what determines things. Folks who turn off the indoctrinated media and do their homework know where Charlie Hebdo receives its support and backing. And for a prime example of these workings? Try generating a similiar kind of satire attacking Zionism. I dare you. And I didn't say attacking Jews. I said attacking Zionism. But let some tell it, an attack on Zionism is an attack on Jews. It's anti-semetic, so they say. Total nonsense. And I stopped letting folks bully me with that "You're being anti-semitic" nonsense a long time ago. Just a strategy to shut folks up who criticize Zionism and the wicked things that are done (have been done) under the banner of Zionism. But go ahead and do some kind of off-the-top satire with anti-Zionist sentiments. Try to get it published. I dare you. And see how far you get and how much that "free speech and expression" worked for you. This is a no-brainer in terms of these Paris "attacks." This ain't even hard. They unleashed Mossad on France and it's clear why. Look at the timing and the course of events that led up to it. But to get there, you gotta turn off the indoctrinated media and stop believing the lies they peddling. Israel, NATO, and the U.S. are only fooling those in this world who want to be fooled and lied to...





Joy Karega

December 23, 2014 · 🌐

Yep. This family and several others. Which is why I'm not concerned with or interested in any discussions or plans of action that don't get at things from the top-down. All these narratives at work right now in this country have just been constructed to keep folks thinking and talking about things that will never get us closer to confronting, challenging, revolting against, and dismantling real Power.

HELLO THERE,

MY NAME IS JACOB ROTHSCHILD.

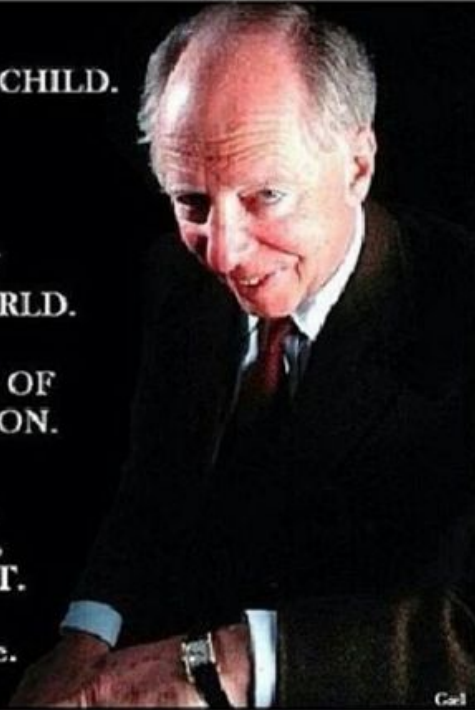
**MY FAMILY IS WORTH
500 TRILLION DOLLARS.**

**WE OWN NEARLY EVERY
CENTRAL BANK IN THE WORLD.**

**WE FINANCED BOTH SIDES OF
EVERY WAR SINCE NAPOLEON.**

**WE OWN YOUR NEWS,
THE MEDIA, YOUR OIL,
AND YOUR GOVERNMENT.**

You have probably never heard of me.



Carl



While this last item may be political as opposed to antisemitic, at least one of the people Karega tags above was a student at the time, demonstrating that Karega included students in her social media life.

Faculty Afraid to Stand up to Karega and Antisemitism

While media reports in April stated that 174 faculty members had signed a letter condemning Professor Karega's posts, the climate at Oberlin is so hostile to complaints about antisemitism, especially when the subject of the complaint is African American, that those who did sign the letter were unwilling to make their names public.

Source:

<http://www.jta.org/2016/04/12/news-opinion/united-states/174-oberlin-profs-sign-letter-condemning-colleagues-anti-semitic-posts>

In response to Oberlin ACF planning a symposium on antisemitism in September of 2016, several faculty members wrote to us privately, asking us not to go ahead with the program. Two of those specifically said that they thought it would further provoke antisemitic bullies that already feel empowered on campus.

Faculty Defending Karega

In contrast, those faculty who defended Professor Karega had no qualms about doing so publicly.

Professor Justin Emeka posted his thoughts regarding Joy Karega's posts. He shared them both publicly on his own page and in the Oberlin alumni facebook group.

Are Facebook Posts Grounds for Dismissal from Oberlin?

JUSTIN EMEKA · THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2016

As an Oberlin alum, and now an Oberlin professor who was recently granted tenure, much of my identity has been forged in the heated exchange of ideas that exist at Oberlin College. In my first year as a student I remember meeting Brother Jed, a white conservative Christian from a nearby community who would come to campus occasionally and stand outside Peters Hall and shout some of the most racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, homophobic, Christian doctrine I had ever heard. I was even more surprised to find some of my classmates agree with some of his points. Many of us spent hours going toe to toe--challenging him and each other intellectually--sharpening our ability to articulate our own perspectives. Brother Jed drove some of us crazy with his rhetoric, but as far as I know, he was never asked to leave, nor those students that agreed with him. In this regard Oberlin taught me to focus on strengthening my argument as opposed to trying to silence the opposition. And so, I was troubled when I received an email recently from the Board of Trustees that seems to imply the silencing and perhaps dismissal of one of my colleagues, Assistant Professor Joy Karega.

Much of the current controversy around Prof. Karega began as a result of her involvement in inviting renowned African-American professor of history Dr. Robin Kelley to campus to speak about Israel. Dr. Kelly is one of most accomplished and dynamic scholars of his generation. He was tenured at University of Michigan, before being invited to NYU where he became the youngest full professor on staff at the age of 32. He later taught at Columbia University, USC, Dartmouth, and was the first African-American to hold the Harmsworth Chair of American History at Oxford University. He has spent most of his career exploring American and African-American history, with a particular emphasis on radical social movements and the

political dynamics at work within African-American culture, including jazz, hip-hop and visual arts. His books include *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, and *Thelonius Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*, which received numerous awards.

Dr. Kelley is a long time critic of Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people and in recent years he has begun to explore similarities in the policy and practice of Israel with the policy and practice of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. This has made him a target of many Zionist and pro-Israeli extremists who regularly attempt to thwart his ability to share his work. He was invited by (Oberlin) Students for Free Palestine and ABUSUA (Black Student Union) to share and discuss his ideas in Oberlin. As a former student of Dr. Kelly, Prof. Karega agreed to help facilitate and host his visit to Oberlin.

When it was learned that Dr. Kelley would be coming to Oberlin, many students and faculty involved with the event began to receive threatening emails and harassing phone calls that demanded Dr. Kelley be uninvited. As their demands were refused, these outsiders began trolling online to find something they might use against the college or individuals associated with the event. After trolling the last two years of Facebook posts of Prof. Karega they found the leverage they were looking for.

Prof. Karega is the first black woman hired in a tenure-track position in the rhetoric and composition department at Oberlin College. She has made an immediate impact among students of all backgrounds to develop a passion for writing. I have consistently heard from my Jewish students, black students, brown students, white students—that she is the most dynamic writing teacher they've ever had. She is a self-proclaimed radical thinker who regularly uses her personal Facebook page to make "radical" posts that encourage her friends to challenge popular policies that she feels have not been scrutinized carefully enough. She often makes unpopular challenges of anything from the media to hip-hop to Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. She often highlights how critiques of Zionism and Israeli policy are met with blanket accusations of anti-Semitism that seek to delegitimize the critique that then often devolve into anti-black dogma.

After scrolling through hundreds perhaps even thousands of her personal posts, approximately three posts were discovered that could be used against her to label her an anti-Semite and demand she be dismissed from her job. Baited by the media, many Jewish alums, parents, and contributors

have begun threatening to withdraw their financial support of the institution unless the institution acts swiftly against Prof. Karega. Which now, based on a recent email, it appears the Oberlin Board of Trustees is considering—even encouraging her removal. The logic follows that based on these Facebook posts she is an Anti-Semite and is indoctrinating the Oberlin students with anti-Semitism and/or threatening the safety of Jewish students on campus and therefore has no place or purpose at Oberlin College. This was not based on her teaching, nor on feedback from her students, nor based on materials she presents in class, nor based on her course evaluations; nor based on her scholarship; but rather based on several posts on her Facebook page.

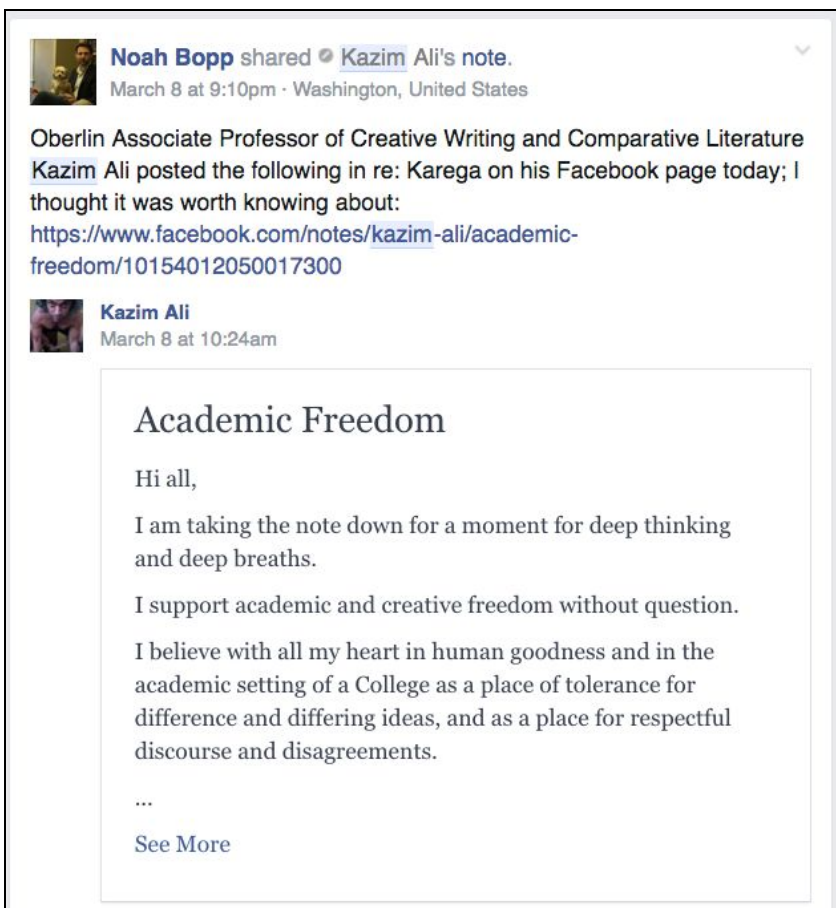
Recently, a Jewish Professor at Oberlin provided an insightful critique of these Facebook posts that identified the imagery and rhetoric she posted as being reflective of a long history of Anti-Semitism. This was a profound analysis that clearly articulated a deep pain caused by imagery and rhetoric used in her posts. Yet I have significant concerns about the possibility of these posts being potential grounds for her dismissal. Such a process could have grave implications for our extraordinary campus community. Can personal Facebook posts be used as grounds for dismissing a faculty member? As an Africana Studies professor, I might easily use my expertise to identify racist ideology in occasional postings made by colleagues. Would they then be subject to similar persecution? Does this also extend to students' Facebook posts that may be deemed some form of bigotry—be it homophobic, sexist, or otherwise? Should they not be allowed to attend or be removed from Oberlin? Additionally, if a significant number of black students demand the firing of certain faculty and/or staff based on their own experience, yet the administration chooses not to respond because the demands attack “valued” members of our community, who is and is not perceived to be “valued” members of our community?

As a teacher, I always caution my students from too quickly dismissing any perspective as “unthinkable” or “unspeakable”—no matter how harmful, because we do not have the ability to determine the convictions of others that we will encounter in this life. I encourage my students to use every opportunity to engage in vigorous discourse that may or may not lead to enlightenment. That is what being at Oberlin taught me. Some ideas are big, some are small. Some ideas are progressive, others are regressive. Some ideas are healing, others prove harmful. Some ideas I thought were revolutionary, I later found ridiculous. And some I thought ridiculous, later proved revolutionary. None of us will ever agree on which idea is which, though all of us are made and unmade by the convergence of our radically differing thoughts. Most Obies will agree, this in fact is what makes the Oberlin community so robust—our ability to assert or challenge contentious notions—not our ability to remove the people and ideas that do not align with our own.

Should Oberlin College make statements and institutional policy that condemn acts of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia? Absolutely. But we need to be careful and consistent in the process that is used to determine our condemnation, otherwise we end up promoting one system of inequality in the name of undoing another.

Justin Emeka '95

Oberlin Professor Kazim Ali also wrote a public facebook post supporting Professor Karega. He has since deleted it.



Noah Bopp shared **Kazim Ali's note.**
March 8 at 9:10pm · Washington, United States

Oberlin Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Comparative Literature **Kazim Ali** posted the following in re: Karega on his Facebook page today; I thought it was worth knowing about:
<https://www.facebook.com/notes/kazim-ali/academic-freedom/10154012050017300>

Kazim Ali
March 8 at 10:24am

Academic Freedom

Hi all,

I am taking the note down for a moment for deep thinking and deep breaths.

I support academic and creative freedom without question.

I believe with all my heart in human goodness and in the academic setting of a College as a place of tolerance for difference and differing ideas, and as a place for respectful discourse and disagreements.

...

[See More](#)

Inside Higher Ed reported two additional faculty members openly supporting Professor Karega, Professor Gillian Johns and Professor Johnny Coleman:

“In this climate and context, I will not sign any letter in solidarity with the 170 (last I saw) Oberlin faculty who signed,” wrote Gillian Johns, associate professor of English and Africana studies. “I am outraged at the irresponsible hostility drummed up against [Karega] as a scapegoated target for what we have been led to believe is a more general concern about anti-Semitism at Oberlin, especially when students called for cooler heads and we Africana faculty are repeatedly called upon to understand and model for our students appropriate responses to different scales of anti-Black racism.”

Johnny Coleman, professor of art and Africana studies, wrote that it is “difficult to overlook the dynamics unfolding here in which black students' demands for systemic institutional change are effectively dismissed -- while a call to denounce anti-Semitism and bigotry in all forms has been composed and circulated in a manner that specifically targets an early-career black female colleague. I won't restate earlier responses by colleagues in history, Africana studies, English, and theater ... However, the insights and critiques articulated resonate deeply with me. Moving forward, we need to engage a more nuanced and constructive process.”

Source:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/04/12/oberlin-professors-condemn-colleagues-controversial-remarks-others-defend-them>

Another faculty member, Meredith Gadsby, Associate Professor of Africana Studies, complained about a request to her to join the letter denouncing antisemitism:

I read Professor Blecher's not-so-private note to me as an attempt to shame and bully Black faculty into signing a document to prove our loyalty to Jewish colleagues and students. Refusal to sign implies that we support bigotry. The original letter itself targets a junior faculty member without the benefit of formal review of activities unconnected with professional misconduct. I do not support this and will not sign a document that seems primarily concerned with lynching via social media than constructive dialogue.

Last, the fact that few Black faculty signed this letter should make clear that Professor Blecher's approach was not read as an olive branch, but something else entirely. I am clear that if colleagues can be so deeply moved by issues rather than conversations, soon there will be a

Facebook post deeply critiquing 15 years of my syllabi as well. On a campus whose faculty prides itself on the majesty of faculty governance, I am appalled that outside forces have been able to so deeply manipulate our approach to this and other issues. I am reminded here of James Baldwin's eloquence in his Open Letter to My Sister Angela Davis: "For if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night." Clearly, Professor Blecher came for some of us early Sunday morning. Fortunately, we were wide awake.

Source:

<http://oberlinreview.org/10401/opinions/black-professors-pressured-into-solidarity/#sthash.he5bWLPO.dpuf>

After Karega was terminated, some faculty members continued to sympathize with her in private facebook posts that members of Oberlin ACF have seen.

A few faculty members have also criticized the administration's response to the Karega issue. Professor Emeritus Sidney Rosenfeld wrote,

The root of the ever-spreading Oberlin disgrace lies precisely in the College's failure, from the top down, to squarely name its source: out-and-out antisemitism (Robert Wistrich's "lethal obsession") and to educate the campus on how Jew-hatred finds expression in the anti-Zionism that Liebovitz's "Gang of Five" wears as a badge of honor. Thus, while Professor Blecher's timid petition — the whereabouts of which seem unknown, as are its 174 signees — cites antisemitism in its first sentence, the abomination is subsumed thereafter under the category of bigotry.

Source:

<http://oberlinreview.org/10397/opinions/college-fails-to-address-antisemitism-on-campus/#sthash.Hir5KyTy.dpuf>

Assistant Professor of Politics Jade Schiff wrote,

Professor Emeka finds the question of whether the posts are anti-Semitic or not to be almost beside the point, and indeed to get in the way of addressing other "infinitely complex" issues. But the question is not beside the point. In this case it is the point, and the answer is that the images

are anti-Semitic. They are hateful, they are painful, and not only do they not reflect what Oberlin stands for, but they reflect something that we stand resolutely against. If the College cannot publicly acknowledge what should be both an obvious truth and a moral imperative, we have indeed tumbled into an abyss.

Source:

<http://oberlinreview.org/10294/opinions/college-must-openly-condemn-bigotry-anti-semitism/#sthash.j7VTZXvt.dpuf>

Well after Professor Karega's antisemitic posts became public, she was in the audience at an Oberlin event on March 2, 2015 sponsored by Students for a Free Palestine and featuring Robin Kelley, a former professor of Professor Karega. Melissa Landa attended the event, where Kelley thanked Karega for inviting him to speak and then praised her scholarship, referring to Karega as a "genius." An audio clip of these remarks is available upon request.

Faculty Teaching Antisemitic Material in Class

Meredith Raimondo, now the Dean of Students, teaches Jasbir Puar's *Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking about the Sexual Politics of Israel*, the seminal work espousing the theory that Israel "pinkwashes" its treatment of Palestinians through LGBTQ rights, that is, that Israel promotes LGBTQ rights and its positive treatment of LGBTQ people in order to distract attention from its alleged mistreatment of Palestinians. This theory is rooted in an antisemitic belief that Jews can only act for sinister and manipulative purposes, and are incapable of acting altruistically. Puar now offers lectures that include the baseless claim that Israel steals Palestinian organs.

Raimondo's syllabus can be found here: <https://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/5074543.pdf>

Professor Michael Parker teaches a course called Queer Positions. The Spring 2015 syllabus for this course includes Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. <https://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/e8016ae1-8d5e-446d-a4f1-df6c18b57450.pdf> In the introduction of this book, which is the section that is assigned class reading, on pages 17-18 of the introduction, Puar critiques the group OutRage! for holding signs saying "Israel, stop persecuting Palestine! Palestine, stop persecuting queers!" Puar's objection to the slogan is that it...

reaffirms the modernity of Israel and Judaism and the monstrosity of Palestine and Islam. Delineating Palestine as the site of queer oppression -- oppression that is equated with the occupation of Palestine by Israel -- effaces Israeli state persecution of queer Palestinians. . . . Ironically, the very logic that feeds the Israeli state's rationalization and justification of its occupation of Palestine and its horrific treatment of Palestinians -- the purported barbarity and unhumanness of the backward, fundamentalist Muslim-Palestinian suicide-bomber terrorist is reinscribed by OutRage!'s messaging at a Free Palestine rally.

https://books.google.com/books?id=_v8tbxwv7y0C&pg=PA17&dq=homonationalism+biopolitics+israel&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiqz-fptcPMAhXFNT4KHW9GA8gQ6AEIzAB#v=onepage&q=homonationalism%20biopolitics%20israel&f=false

IV. Alumni Comments

In the official Oberlin College Alumni Facebook group, which includes approximately 6,000 members as of November 2016, many alumni comments reflect the campus culture. Responses to the Karega story from alumni ranged from denial of the problem, to professed boredom with discussing the problem, to directly attacking those who presented the problem.

- One alum argued that Professor Karega's posts were true.
- Alumni leaders blatantly ignored reports of antisemitism on campus that had already appeared in the media and in the Oberlin Review.
- Comments thanked Professor Justin Emeka for his March 17 defense of Professor Karega (See previous section. Professor Emeka is an Oberlin alum and a current faculty member. He posted his defense of Karega in the alumni group as well as on his personal page).
- Alumni frequently denounced news reports from Jewish publications as "right-wing propaganda" or otherwise inherently suspect.
- Complaints from some alumni about antisemitism on campus were often dismissed by other alumni. A common theme was that alumni were "tired of hearing about Karega," with frequent requests to stop discussing her, and attempts to flood the page with other materials in order to drown out the discussion.
- Alumni who raised the Karega issue were often attacked, and faced open hostility.
- After Karega was fired, some alumni still stood up for her.
- Antisemitism is tolerated by the College employees that administer the alumni forum, just as it is tolerated on campus.

We've included only a few of the most egregious examples, however, there were many, many more. Horizontal lines group together screen captures from the same discussion thread.



Rohit Ramanath I am indian, and 40% of the rothschild family (albert, david, sigfried, etc)'s wealth came from an incident that was 20 times the holocaust. minimum. those were the profiteers in the opium wars and 36 mil died in india, 51 million in china, and 40-45 million in southeast asia. 5 all jewish families were behind this, and to write about it today is considered a crime among some groups. but all it is is history. interestingly, the drug money that came from the war went (was laundered) into the founding fathers of the British East india Co. and then layed the financial foundation of the Ivy league! Look at that monument in Tappan Square again! twisted. not antisemetic, twisted.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 hrs



Rica Mendes So you're saying that you believe the Jewish Conspiracy theory is correct, and that the Jews are responsible for the Opium Wars?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 hrs



Rohit Ramanath I said what I said. 5 all Jewish families had an integral part. That's it. many others were involved at other times. Parsis, Hindus, BEIC members, Jesuits... But where's the literature about it today? This is my history, and I can't keep calling a vacuum (giant missing piece of puzzle) and historical gap which absolutely goes to the modern day a theory.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 hrs



Rohit Ramanath and because they write the history books (revisionist history?) Yale can easily censor/omit its history. What is 'revisionist' changes from group to group, nation to nation. But i wouldn't have the courage to question and doubt another's understanding of history, BEFORE knowing what they are talking about. Read about david sassoon (don't care to capitalize:) to start with, and understand that south and east asians cannot even write their history without being labelled as revisionist. I can't write a book here, just understand if i feel this way, many more do. sorry to disagree with you, ENTIRELY. ✕

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 hrs



Rohit Ramanath look at the numbers presented. i'm saying rothschild was far worse. yes i am, sorry. Get angry all you want, I've sat down and thought about it for all my life. I don't want anything to do with people that look at this info and react negatively. I am also not saying that Jews are the only ones with this type of history, everyone has dark stuff in their history. But these are all HIDDEN.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 6 hrs



Rohit Ramanath i'm out of here. i don't mean to argue with you, but we come from different places, read different things, and yes, I do believe what the JADL's version of history is is a conspiracy theory requiring economic and academic (forceful) conversion to believe.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [👍 1](#) · 5 hrs



Andrew M. Manshel

1 hr · New York, NY, United States

We write as long-time leaders of the Oberlin Alumni Association. We have the greatest respect for Board Chairman Clyde McGregor's dedication and generosity to Oberlin. However, we would like to suggest that President Marvin Krislov, in his recent comment on the importance of academic freedom at Oberlin, articulated what needed to be said and the board of trustees should stand resolutely behind that position.

We recall hearing when we were at the College about actual anti-Semitism at Oberlin in the 60's, just before we arrived. Reportedly, after an anti-war demonstration the Dean of Students at the end of a dinner at Talcott reminded "Jewish radicals from New York," that "they were guests at Oberlin College." Those days are long past. Neither of us experienced anything like that only a few years later.

As alumni we are proud of Oberlin's history as a leader in progressive causes, and we commend to the community "Oberlin, Hotbed of Abolitionism" by Brent Morris (University of North Carolina Press, 2014) to be reminded of the physical and political bravery of our predecessors at Oberlin, both black and white, who dealt with the violence and intolerance directed at abolitionists, and most directly at fugitive slaves seeking refuge. Because of our engagement as alumni, we have been on campus frequently and we strongly believe, based on what we see on our visits to campus and conversations with students, Oberlin is today a safe and tolerant place for people of color, LGBT people, Jews, Muslims and other historically disadvantaged groups.

Along with the Alumni Leadership Council, we urge the community to come together to celebrate its strengths and to continue to engage in and encourage vibrant, thoughtful, civil discussion of a wide range of issues, including those of race, gender and arising out of the conflicts in the Middle East. President Krislov appreciates these values and understands the important distinction between speech and action. Speech, even speech we find to be repellent needs to be protected by the institution. As has been said many times, the best antidote to abhorrent speech is to speak in opposition (and Professor Karenga's puerile personal Facebook postings are beneath contempt; being factually inaccurate, logically unsound and steeped in just the kind of personal prejudice she claims to be opposed to). We are unaware of hateful actions on campus. However, should they occur, we would expect them to be dealt with in a swift and unequivocal fashion, once all of the relevant facts have been marshaled.

Steve Watter '74
Andy Manshel '78



Like



Comment



Rica Mendes

Yesterday at 2:15pm

Recent article written about Oberlin. I also recently read allegations that Karega shared similarly troubling theories (Jews running banks in order to keep Africans down?) in her dissertation, prior to hiring. Can anyone confirm that?



The Real Scandal at Oberlin is Much Bigger Than One Professor's Anti-Semitism

By now, the story of Joy Karega is familiar to many. An assistant professor at Oberlin College and strident proponent of boycotting Israel on campus, Karega...

WWW.TABLETMAG.COM



J Adam Merriwoodweatherson Uh, I think there's a bit of a problem with the language... that stuff isn't exactly "anti-semitic" per-se... Whether they are unfounded or not aside, she is talking about specific people and specific behavior. If she says something like 'all jews are bad' that would be anti-semitic... I think if we overuse the word it will become as banal as 'Racism' where people use it so often that it renders the word useless...

Like · Reply · 3 · Yesterday at 3:55pm · Edited



Ted Rees Take this propaganda hit piece to the proper discussion page, please. I'm sick of this racist and violent BS flooding my feed.

Like · Reply · 2 · Yesterday at 4:05pm



Ted Rees How is the equivalent of posting something on a comments section of a website now considered fair game for dismissal? You all realize that radical Zionist started this whole thing because they didn't like Robin Kelley's very fair-minded scholarship and wanted to find a way to pin something on the sponsoring professor, Karega. These radical Zionists then went through years of Facebook posts to find two that are troubling, but not as troubling as so many have been making them out to be. It is people like Rica Mendes and those at Tablet magazine who are radical and unhinged, IMHO, and anyone calling for Karega's dismissal should be ashamed of themselves.

Like · Reply · 1 · 23 hrs



Victoria Taub I want to point out that the author of this article lies about Marvin krislov's response. Yes, he did say she has the right to express herself, but he clearly said he found her beliefs reprehensible. It wasn't that long a response so doubtful the author missed it. Either he didn't read it at all and is relying on other peoples description, which is piss poor journalism. Or he is out right contorting the fact to meet the needs of his article. Reprehensible journalism. I think this professors beliefs are horrible, so don't think I'm defending her, but this article isn't worthy of being part of the conversation.

Like · Reply · 5 · Yesterday at 3:50pm



David Eq Bishop The article is total bullshit

Like · Reply · 2 · Yesterday at 3:56pm



Victoria Taub Correct. And as Oberlin students who are taught to relish our critical thinking skills, I wonder why we would allow it in the conversation.

Like · Reply · 3 · Yesterday at 3:57pm



David Eq Bishop Victoria Taub Thank you!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Like · Reply · 1 · Yesterday at 3:58pm



Elizabeth D. Bernstein I find some of the pieces in Tablet to be interesting / informative but they can hardly be considered objective as a source, or thorough in terms of investigating all sides of an emotive issue like this. I don't like what I've read/heard but I assume I don't have all the facts I would need to form an educated opinion with confidence...and this article is not the place to find those facts. You can do better.

Like · Reply · 3 · Yesterday at 4:01pm



Sherri Bergman Oh, good! Let's have an old fashioned witch hunt and take all untenured Oberlin faculty to the Little Res to see if they float.

Like · Reply · 11 · Yesterday at 4:20pm · Edited



Marta Braiterman Tanenbaum

1 hr

Hear our students, in their own voices.



Why Are Oberlin's Students So Silent About Anti-Semitism?

Students on campus are quick to protest incidences of supposed cultural insensitivity—even over sushi—but not when it comes to a professor's...

THEDAILYBEAST.COM

The article that was linked in the above post may be found at:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/05/why-are-oberlin-s-students-so-silent-about-anti-semitism.html>

The responses:



Duff Johnson Thanks for posting this, Marta. It's important that alumni with strong views on this subject take a moment to reflect on what the students are telling them here.

Like · Reply · 2 · 1 hr



Ashley Roberts



Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr



Jeff Goldwasser It's interesting that the response to anti-Semitism on this alumni page seems to echo the findings of the Daily Beast reporter on campus:

"The silence from students when it comes to Karega's remarks was deafening to some, and especially disconcerting... [See More](#)

Like · Reply · 5 · 57 mins



Ashley Roberts



Like · Reply · 54 mins



Lilia Umansky Brog Ashley must be at a loss of words...

Like · Reply · 1 · 53 mins



Ashley Roberts



Like · Reply · 52 mins



Lilia Umansky Brog I must admit I find Ashley's behavior quite infantile...

Like · Reply · 3 · 50 mins



Jeff Goldwasser Thank you, **Ashley**, for your most articulate response to discrimination and minority intimidation on campus. A picture speaks a thousand words about your character.

Like · Reply · 4 · 49 mins



Ashley Roberts





In response to the news that Karega's employment was terminated:



Nadia Junaid Joy should sue! Netyanhu is a war criminal, terrorist, etc.

Like · Reply · November 15 at 8:02pm · Edited

^ Hide 16 Replies



Cedric Severino Are you kidding? Should sue for what? I'm an employment attorney. There's definitely nothing she could sue Oberlin for. She wasn't tenured.

Like · Reply · 7 · November 15 at 7:50pm



Nadia Junaid Ok...then she can't but hopefully she will find away.

Like · Reply · November 15 at 7:50pm



Karen Pauline

November 21 at 7:51pm

Far more disturbing than Joy Karega herself, were the Oberlin students and faculty who defended her (at least to me, and I doubt I'm alone in this). This article gives a very good analysis of, and rebuttal to, the ideology that gave rise those defenses.

"We therefore try to understand anti-Semitism through the lens of the African-American experience, but that leads us to focus narrowly on bias that "punches down" at weak minorities. In fact, the event from American history t... [See More](#)



Why Did Oberlin Professors Go to Bat for an Anti-Semitic Colleague?

Global Affairs Tweet Pin It Print This Post Send to Kindle Why Did Oberlin Professors Go to Bat for an Anti-Semitic Colleague? by John-Paul Pagano | 11.21.16 11:42...

THETOWER.ORG

In response to the above:



V. Donations and Admissions Are Affected

The following statement was written by **Ari Feinberg ('14)**:

As I said at a Trustee Forum in Spring 2014, the climate on campus is such that I no longer feel that I can, in good conscience, recommend Oberlin to people serious about their Jewish identity. Since graduating, I have avoided alumni events, fundraisers, and interview days - I simply cannot see myself to donate to an environment that was toxic and alienating to me, and won't until things improve on campus.

The following statement was written by **Joshua Safran ('97)**:

I told the alumni people some 8 years ago that I wouldn't donate a dime until the "Arch Incident" of 1993 was investigated. No word back yet, other than a message from the dean essentially telling me I'm Jewish don't worry about it. I tell every Jewish student I know that it's a really really tough school to go to if you don't feel like fighting.

The following statement was written by a **2012 graduate** who wishes to remain anonymous, in an email to Melissa Landa:

I specifically chose not to donate to Oberlin this year because I am so troubled by the harsh culture Jewish students and students with varying degrees of alliance toward Israel are facing on Oberlin's campus. I felt extremely confused and intimidated at different points of my time at

Oberlin simply due to the fact that I was proud to be Jewish and was proud of my family's involvement in the founding of the Israeli state. I knew that my classmates would not be able to believe those two sentiments could coexist with my feelings of deep sadness and anger at the suffering of the Palestinian people, and I knew that unless I was ready to denounce Israel I did not have a place to voice my opinion on campus.

The following statement was written by **Anne Quintal Herzberg ('93)**:

I quit as class agent and stopped my donations (which weren't insignificant) about 3 years ago. I had been thinking about it for awhile, but the last straw was when I wrote to the administration about the school's hosting of several speakers known for antisemitic views and my letters were ignored.

The following statement was written by a **1986 graduate** who wishes to remain anonymous, in an email to Melissa Landa:

Thank you for doing this. I've been so depressed about the news from Oberlin, I stopped donating. I also took both of my college age girls there hoping they would love the school – and both were turned off for this specific reason. One is at F&M and the other is headed to Brandeis.

The following statement was written by a **2012 graduate** who wishes to remain anonymous, in an email to Melissa Landa:

I did not donate this year due to my concerns and would not advise Pro-Israel Jewish students to attend.

The following statement was written by **Karen Bekker ('94)**:

Since I graduated, I have not been involved in a single Oberlin-related activity nor have I attended any reunions. Several times, I have been approached by acquaintances whose children are

considering Oberlin; I always tell them that I can't recommend the school. Although I donate annually to both my high school and my law school, I have never donated to Oberlin. My lack of involvement in the school is due to one single factor: the antisemitic attitude towards Israel so prevalent on the campus.

The following statement was sent to Melissa Landa by **Marta Braiterman Tanenbaum '72** and **Rabbi Irwin Tanenbaum '69**:

After careful consideration and sad feelings, we (a married couple, both graduates) stopped donating at the time the Student Senate passed the Divestment vote. We communicated clearly, via a letter of concern to a Board member, several times by phone to students seeking donation, and to someone from Development who most excellently reached out to discuss. He explained that this upsetting proposal would go to subcommittee review before a Board vote. That was reassuring, but we still decided to wait for that vote. When the Board wisely rejected that proposal, we considered resuming donations. But with the start of this initiative in autumn, we realized there were still challenges around addressing antisemitism on campus. For now, we are still refraining, but until there is evidence of clear action to quell antisemitism against students now attending, we're still unwilling to donate. Our sums are modest.

This alum told the admissions staff that he can no longer recommend Oberlin:

From: Stan Burech

Date: Friday, March 25, 2016

Subject: Admitted Students Receptions

To: Joshua Levy

Dear Josh,

Thank you for your recent note. In response to your inquiry, I have always felt very comfortable in speaking positively about my Oberlin experience. Indeed, I have many fond memories.

What I feel discomfort is speaking about the present situation at Oberlin. Since corresponding with you, I have been following developments at Oberlin intently and have been in touch with alumnae activists seeking to remedy an atypical turn for a college with such a proud history. I was especially encouraged by

a recent note I received from Professor Marc Blecher of the Politics Department agreeing that Professor JoyKarega's false, anti-Semitic posts do not shield her under the doctrine of academic freedom, which does not protect falsehoods in one's alleged area of "research." While Karega may say what she wishes in public forums, her right to remain within the community of Oberlin scholars rests with the General Faculty of the College. (Euben "Academic Freedom of Professors and Institutions," American Association of University Professors, May, 2002). I am hopeful that the right decision shall be reached, although the weak response to Karega by Oberlin President Marvin Krislov, who is actively seeking employment elsewhere, was deeply disappointing.

Until such time as Karega departs the Oberlin community, I am reluctant to respond to any prospective matriculating student, especially a Jewish student, regarding the existing situation on the campus.

Sincerely,

Stan Burech '66