WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF KENNETH S. STERN
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Before the

UNITES STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTTEE

Countering Violent Extremism, Terrorism, and Antisemitic Threats in New Jersey

October 3, 2022

Dear Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Katko, Representative Gottheimer, and the other honorable members of the Committee:

My name is Kenneth Stern. I am the director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate[1], which works to increase the serious study of human hatred, and ways to combat it.[2] Before that I directed a small foundation focused on hate[3], and before that I was the director of the American Jewish Committee's division on antisemitism and extremism, where I worked for 25 years. Among other things during that time at AJC I was the lead drafter of what is now known as the IHRA definition of antisemitism, I was part of the defense effort of Dr. Deborah Lipstadt (today Ambassador Lipstadt, the Department of State's Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism) in her 2000 London defense of a libel charge brought by a Holocaust denier, and I authored a report on the growing danger of the militia movement, released 10 days before the Oklahoma City bombing, with a covering memo warning that there might be some sort of attack on government on April 19, the anniversary of the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas, a date of great importance to the militias. I also worked closely with various law enforcement officials, including in New Jersey, particularly Paul Goldenberg who is now a senior fellow for Transnational Security at the Rutgers University Miller Center for Community and Protection and Resilience, but was then working on hate crimes committed by skinheads and others. Mr. Goldenberg and I also worked together on a training program for law enforcement officials in Europe through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which included a focus on hate crime, including antisemitic hate crime, and on conceiving the Secure Community Network[4], of which Mr. Goldenberg was a founder.

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[1] https://bcsh.bard.edu/
[2] Hate Studies is defined as "Inquiries into the human capacity to define, and then dehumanize or demonize, an 'other,' and the processes which inform and give expression to, or can curtail, control, or combat, that capacity."
[3] The Justus and Karin Rosenberg Foundation was founded by the last surviving member of the Varian Fry group – an operation lead by American Varian Fry to rescue artists and intellectuals – among them Marc Chagall and Max Ernst – from Vichy France.
[4] https://securecommunitynetworks.org/

I know others testifying today will focus, appropriately, on questions of antisemitism, looking at the hatred of Jews in focused ways – on surveys and hate incidents and hate groups and questions of antisemitism in particular venues.

I'd like to focus more on how best to understand antisemitism, perhaps from a bit of a different and broader perspective and a wider lens. And I'll do that in three ways:

1) Discuss how antisemitic works as a system of ideas that can pose dangers to people and institutions that aren't Jewish or associated with Jews.
2) Discuss how hate against others, seen as unrelated to antisemitism, actually helps create a climate where antisemitism can grow.
3) Explore how increased understanding of hate is a prerequisite for effectively combating antisemitism.

First, though, I'd like to provide some historical context. Despite horrible incidents – including attacks on Jews by white supremacists, attacks on Jews by people upset with Israel, and attacks that seem almost a random picking out of Jews (much as in recent years some Asian Americans and others have also been attacked) – I still believe, when it comes to antisemitism, we are in a golden age. During my parents and grandparent's generations there were quotas that kept Jews out of colleges and professions. There were restrictive covenants on property, and overt discrimination in country clubs and public accommodations. Antisemitism isn't just a matter of one data point or another, whether it be the number of hate crimes, attitudes, or anything else. It also has to take into consideration the fact that I – a baby boomer – didn't face the level of antisemitism encountered by my ancestors, and my children, millennials, have experienced it even less. Plus, for the last few decades, one of the major concerns in the Jewish community has been intermarriage. That's a data point too – we're being loved to death.

But of course we're at a moment when I too am concerned, not only about the present, but about the future. I believe that our ability to fight antisemitism is directly related to the strength of our democratic institutions, and I am worried – this even before the events of January 6 – about the erosion of democratic norms.

It's been said that antisemitism is like the canary in the coal mine – that hate that starts towards Jews never ends with Jews alone. That's true, but the reverse is true too, and perhaps more important – hate, empowered in society against others, ends up creating a climate where antisemitism is likely to grow. Simply stated, we can't understand antisemitism, and what to do about it, if we limit our thinking to what people say or think about Jews. Antisemitism at heart is an idea, and it works among human beings in systems that encourage ideas to have more or less traction.

For instance, we'd all consider the murderous attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018 as an act of antisemitism. I don't recall anyone classifying the murder of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans at the El Paso Walmart months later as an act of antisemitism, but if you look at the ideology of the two shooters, they were almost identical – they just picked different targets.

And if you look at what helped motivate the Pittsburgh shooter, it was a crescendo of warnings, from political leaders and others, that America was suffering an "invasion" on brown-skinned people from south of our border. He saw Jews as helping make that happen. The El Paso shooter decided to take on the "invaders" directly.

We did a somewhat better job connecting the dots after the horrific mass murder in Buffalo's TOPS market earlier this year. The shooter killed Black people, but he also hated Jews. Yet the two hatreds are not only related – someone who hates one group of people may be more likely to hate another too – but fear of people of color and hatred of Jews actually function as part of systems of ideas – ideologies and theologies.

Kathleen Blee, a sociologist in Pittsburgh who researched women in the Klan and spoke at the founding Hate Studies conference at Gonzaga University in Spokane in 2004, said that the women all had a story about how they came to hate Black people. Whether it was true or not, there was always some anecdote cited, perhaps about how a Black person was playing their radio loudly, and that's when they discovered they hated Black people. But with Jews it was different – an "aha" moment, not related to meeting a Jew, but an understanding of how the world really works.

If you see America as a land where white people have been a majority throughout history, but also know that in the next decades non-white people will be the majority, you might feel that your birthright is being taken away. America, of course, is an idea that binds us all together, and not defined by any particular racial identity, but nonetheless there are those who feel a sense of loss at this impending change.

Now imagine that you're a white supremacist, who is not only worried about white "survival," but also believes whites are actually superior to non-whites. Yet, by the demographics, they see themselves losing to "inferior" people of color. How can this be, that superior people are losing to their inferiors? Someone must be putting their finger on the scales. So while racism may be a motivation for much white supremacy, its ideological core is antisemitism, positing the Jew as the secret puppet master making sure whites lose this battle. This has been a theme – the allegation that Jews conspiring to harm non-Jews – throughout history, and in the white supremacist movements in the US too, positing Jews as behind open immigration, affirmative action, and other efforts viewed as harming white people. The "Great Replacement" theory and the chants of "Jews will not replace us" at Charlottesville are simply the latest incarnation of this very old story line.

Antisemitism as a form of hate

There are various definitions of antisemitism, some better for one purpose or another, some that are actually used in a counterproductive way (a few words more on that later in footnote 15), but they each have one element in common which is the core of antisemitism, although

expressed in slightly different wording. Antisemitism, at heart, is conspiracy theory positing that Jews conspire to harm non-Jews, and antisemitism gives an "explanation" for what goes wrong in the world.

But it isn't like antisemitism is the only form of hate. We can't understand antisemitism fully if we see it as an isolated phenomenon rather than one that is an important subset of the human capacity to hate. Regardless of where, when, major economic system or political system, or any other variable, people have always had the capacity to define, and then sometimes demonize and/or dehumanize, an "other." Antisemitism is a member of the family of hatreds.

The emerging interdisciplinary field of Hate Studies teaches us many things about how human beings think and feel that are essential for understanding antisemitism and what to do about it. Hate, as I said, has been around as long as human beings have. We may need help figuring out whom to hate, but to hate is part of who we are. New studies in neuroscience and neurobiology, supplementing those in social psychology and other fields, confirm that we are hardwired, or at least pre-wired, to see an "us" and a "them." Today brain scientists can even put people in MRIs and see what part of the brain fires in different hate-related circumstances.[5]

Evolutionary psychology also helps us understand why we're frequently influenced more by emotions, even instincts, than pure rational thought. James Waller, writing a landmark essay in Gonzaga University's Journal of Hate Studies[6], noted that if you were thinking rationally, you'd be more afraid of automobiles than snakes and spiders: we're more likely to die in an automobile accident than by an interaction with a snake. But our brains were formed millennia ago, when there were no cars, however snakes and spiders could cause us real harm. So too could the group of "others" on the other side of a hill.

I could take everyone who is attending this hearing today, flip a coin, divide us into group A and group B, with everyone knowing that the assignment to each group was completely arbitrary. But after a group identity is formed, social psychology teaches us that each group will think it is better than the other one, smarter and more attractive[7]. Ethnocentrism and tribal thinking are part of who we are. We're always defining "in-groups," but that also means we have to define what the in-group isn't, and frequently we are xenophobic about the out group. There's also what's called "uncertainty-identity theory," suggesting that people crave certainty, especially about important things related to them, like ethnic, religious and other identities, particularly when they see their group as under some sort of threat. And much of what goes on is, again, not a matter of pure rational thought, but intuition and emotion. Jonathan Haidt, a leading

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[5] Dr. Robert Sapolksy discussed the brain and hate in this BCSH webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5g_LAoUYZQ&t=19s&ab_channel=BardCenterfortheStudyofHate
[6] Waller, J.E., 2004. Our Ancestral Shadow: Hate and Human Nature in Evolutionary Psychology. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 3(1), pp.121–132. DOI: http://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.25
[7] The scholarship described in this section from Hate Studies is summarized in the "Thinking about Thinking" chapter from The Conflict over The Conflict: The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate. http://kennethsstern.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/thinking-about-thinking.pdf

social psychologist, uses the metaphor of an elephant and a rider. The elephant is our instincts and sets of morals. Rational thought is the rider, that can steer an elephant to a degree, but in many ways is just along for the ride.

There's also scholarship showing that we want to reduce things to simple formulas. Complexity makes us uncomfortable. We frequently default to easy, binary answers – good and bad, us or them. And especially when our identity is tethered to an issue of perceived social justice or injustice, we may feel righteous trying to suppress, rather than counter, different points of view, and demonize those who hold those views. And of course as part of this process we backfill our thinking, not engaging different ideas as if they might have merit, but looking for ways to reaffirm the correctness of our opinions.

This simplistic way of looking at the world around us, especially when amplified by media, institutions and leaders, feeds the binary. Our hardwired minds are more likely to see a "them" threatening an "us" when theology or ideology tells us that truth, God, or the combination identifies the "them" as a danger. And it's inevitable that on this us/them plane, antisemitism plays out spectacularly. Whether from the early days of Christianity when Jews were discriminated against and persecuted as an example of what happens when the "them" doesn't recognize "our truth" (in this case that Jesus is God), to the targeting of Jews during the black death for "poisoning wells," to the blood libel—blaming Jews for ritual sacrifice when Christian children disappeared—to its more modern manifestations (including Nazism), antisemitism, whether on the right and on the left, defines Jews as conspiring to harm non-Jews, and provides an explanation for what goes wrong in the world.

Antisemitism works as a system of ideas, and it has implications for society beyond the question of attacks on Jews. The 1990s militias were targeting government officials, and I explained in my book about the Oklahoma City bombing that it wasn't coincidental that the leaders of the movement were ones with solid white supremacist and antisemitic credentials. Their vilification of government officials frequently took antisemitic tropes, and repurposed and transferred them to forest service workers and other federal employees. The director of program for the Montana Human Rights Network at the time described the militias as "a funnel moving through space." He meant that at the wide end of the funnel, people were being sucked into the movement by mainstream issues (in the 1990s militias' case, gun control, federal intrusiveness, land use issues, etc.). Further into the funnel they were exposed to us/them conspiratorial thinking. Further down, the antisemitic conspiracy theories. And, at the small end, warriors who gave their entire identity to militia ideology and committed acts of terror—like Timothy McVeigh—popped out. The beauty of this metaphor is the suggestion that the more pressure there is to move people into the lip of the funnel, the more will be propelled out of the short end. And that's one of my worries today – this type of conspiratorial thinking was fairly relegated to the extremes of society in the 1990s. It's much more mainstream today, and promoted by many more leaders and politicians. One historic measure of the climate of antisemitism – to me a more important data point than how many actors decide to spray paint swastikas in a given year – is whether ideas that may fuel antisemitism are on the extreme, or the mainstream.

Conspiracy theories inevitably gain adherents when leaders define people among us as a "them," then demonize and dehumanize "them," casting the vilification not as hate but as a matter of self-defense and something noble. When I speak to Jewish groups I tell them that even if they are only thinking about the danger to Jews, I'm less concerned about what leaders might be saying about Jews and more about what they are saying in recent years about immigrants and Muslims. When people are primed to divide people in this country into "us" and "them" it's inevitable that antisemitism will grow.

Practical lessons from Hate Studies

Hate Studies is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the human capacity for hate, and what to do about it. It derives from two observations: 1) that hate has always been part of the human condition, yet we don't approach it as we do other human needs and worries, and 2) the efforts to confront hate in society are largely driven by factors other than the application of testable theories of what works, what doesn't, and why.

People get sick, so we have a field of medicine that combines biology, chemistry, physics and other fields, to help cure diseases and make people healthier. People need structures, so we have a field of architecture that combines physics, math, art, and other fields. Hate Studies is an effort to pull together the knowledge from all the diverse fields that tell us something about hate (on the molecular, personal, cultural, communal, societal, political and other levels), and help guide us to better understand it and what to do about it.

The first Hate Studies Center was established at Gonzaga University in 1996, which publishes the Journal of Hate Studies. Today there are Hate Studies centers at Bard College, California State University at San Bernardino, the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Melon University (a joint program), the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (in Canada), the University of Leister (in England), and the University of Limerick (in Ireland). Another at a major California university will be announced soon.

And while there is still much work to be done, in fact we're still only about 20 years into building the field, there are some lessons learned about hate and how to approach it that are directly relevant to the mission of this committee, and also generally relevant to the role of Congress, not only for today but also for the decades to come. I have four recommendations, one very concrete, one more of a framework, one aspirational, and one of messaging.

LESSON 1 – the Cost of Hate Crime

Hate Studies is an interdisciplinary field, and economics is an important part. As a society we calculate the cost of many things – childhood obscenity[8], smoking[9], gun violence[10], air pollution[11], even potholes[12]. But what does hate cost us?

When we think of challenging hate, we think of it generally in moral terms, how it harms people or groups, or as I mentioned earlier, concerns about its effect on our democratic institutions and values. But even if people don't care about the harm hate inflicts on others, they might be concerned if they realized that it actually cost them money. If there's something that could be called a "hate tax," how much would it be?

The groundbreaking work in this field is by Lee Badgett, who wrote a book about the cost of anti-LGBTQ discrimination.[13] In the coming months the Bard Center for the Study of Hate plans to publish an analysis informed by a team of experts, and written by economist Michael Martell, looking at the cost of hate crime, as a first step to encourage economists to look at the cost of hate more broadly. His calculations will include: direct victim costs (of both the people who died, and those who were wounded), 2) indirect costs – pain, suffering, stress, such to family, counselling, etc., 3) costs of any investigation – to rule out accomplices, responding on scene, etc., 4) costs from lost contributions of victims to society (including missed work, less volunteering – basically examples of behavior changes that followed the event), 5) damage to facilities (repair, new security, etc.). His data is drawn from synthesizing publicly available information, including that found in the National Crime Victimization Survey and the National Incident Based Report System of the FBI, in order to approximate a cost. And as valuable as I believe Dr. Martell's report will be, it would be much more useful to underscoring the cost of hate if, as a regular part of the government reporting of hate crime, it also included data, drawn from the particular incidents, not only to document the costs but to illustrate them in real, human, relatable terms.

Further, as far as a I know there is no calculation of the cost of antisemitism, and it would likely be impossible (and, frankly, inappropriate) to have a formula for such an inquiry, given the differences of opinion of what constitutes antisemitism when it comes to issues like Zionism[14],

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[8] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047996/

[9] https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/cost-and-expenditures.html

[10] https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/

[11] https://earth.stanford.edu/news/how-much-does-air-pollution-cost-us#gs.cu1c8b

[12] https://newsroom.aaa.com/2022/03/aaa-potholes-pack-a-punch-as-drivers-pay-26-5-billion-in-related-vehicle-repairs/

[13] M.V. Lee Badgett, The Economic Case for LGBT Equality: Why Fair and Equal Treatment Benefits Us All (Beacon Press, 2020). Dr. Badgett also spoke about her research for a Bard Center for the Study of Hate webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsFxIsCVzj0&t=8s&ab_channel=BardCenterfortheStudyofHate.

[14] Kenneth Stern, Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism, and the Fallacy of Bright Lines, The Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, June 14, 2021. https://www.inss.org.il/publication/anti-zionism-antisemitism-and-the-fallacy-of-bright-lines/

let alone the cost of the impact of antisemitism on non-Jews. But it might be worthwhile for this committee to consider, for purposes of homeland security, investigating or encouraging the calculation of the societal costs of hate crimes in general, including antisemitic ones[15]. The Department of Justice and the FBI already compile data (incomplete, as we all know) on hate crimes. Some sense of the monetary cost associated with these crimes would be helpful, and appropriate to include and publicize among the other hate crime statistics.

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[15] As I mentioned in passing on page 3, there are various definitions of antisemitism being promoted by different Jewish groups and scholars, including the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition (https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/), the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/), and the NEXUS definition (https://israelandantisemitism.com/ -- in full disclosure, while the Bard Center for the Study of Hate doesn't endorse one definition or another, we provide an academic home for the NEXUS Task Force's deliberations). As I detailed before the House Committee on the Judiciary in 2017 (https://docs.house.gov/meetings/JU/JU00/20171107/106610/HHRG-115-JU00-Wstate-SternK-20171107.pdf), I was the lead drafter of what is now known as the IHRA definition. I believe the IHRA definition has the best language to guide thinking on what constitutes an antisemitic hate crime (that being this specific part of the definition, one that doesn't mention Israel: "Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews"). It tracks the holding of the US Supreme Court case Wisconsin v. Mitchell (https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/508/476/) (see also AJC amicus brief – http://kennethsstern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-V.-Mitchell.CV01.pdf) that the intent to single out (in this case someone or something Jewish or seen associated with Jews) is the gravamen of a hate crime, rather than the question of whether the perpetrator really hated Jews. Thus if I think Jews are rich, and I decide to target Jewish homes for burglary or kidnap a Jew for ransom, even though that is the result of a positive stereotype, that's still a hate crime. Likewise, attacking a Jew or Jewish institution because it is Jewish, in reaction to events in the Middle East, thus holding all Jews responsible for perceived wrongdoing by Israel, would also appropriately fall under this part of the definition.

However, I've also been outspoken against the broad adoption of the definition (which included language about Israel but was written primarily to help data collectors, and was intended to take a temperature of antisemitism over time and across borders) as a type of hate speech code. The definition has been used primarily to suppress and chill some pro-Palestinian political speech, and it is particularly inappropriate to use it in this fashion on university campuses, where the point is to examine ideas, including ones that might be contentious or disturbing. It is important to make a distinction between actual harassment, intimidation and bullying, on the one hand, and expression of opinions, on the other. The parallel situation would be adopting and employing a state-endorsed definition of racism with political examples, like opposition to the Movement for Black Lives or affirmative action or the removal of Confederate statues. Further, there are also church/state concerns (the question of whether a particular view of Israel and Zionism is necessary to be inside the Jewish "tent" is an internal question that shouldn't be decided by lawmakers), and concerns that, just as there's a danger of promoting hate when people take complex systems and try to reduce them to simple formulas, anti-hate programs that rely on a simple formula also are to be discouraged. They are like black holes sucking away attention from other things that can actually be much more effective. I see a parallel here to the mantra that the obvious and go-to answer to antisemitism is Holocaust education. Holocaust education is of course important and to be encouraged, but it makes little sense to think it will be a panacea for curing antisemitism (see https://www.jta.org/2007/01/21/opinion/holocaust-education-wont-stop-hate).

LESSON 2 – FURTHER CONNECTING ACADEMICS AND POLICY MAKERS, GLOBALLY

Economics isn't the only field in Hate Studies where policy insights might be useful for this committee.

One of the premises for founding Hate Studies is that ideas from the academy should find better ways of informing policy.

The Bard Center for the Study of Hate is negotiating with a publisher about creating a book (hopefully to appear in 2024) written largely by Hate Studies scholars focused on helping Non-Governmental Organizations apply better, and testable, theories to their work. Essentially, the scholars from a wide variety of hate-related disciplines are being asked, knowing what you know, if you were running an NGO that looked at hate, or some subset of it, what would you do, what wouldn't you do, and why?

One of the chapters will be on hate crimes, written by Jennifer Schweppe of the University of Limerick, Ireland and Mark Walters, of the University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. They, along with scholars such as Barbara Perry of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Oshawa, Canada and Neil Chakraborti of the University of Leicester, UK, have been in the forefront of, as Chakraborti calls it, the need to "mind the gap" between scholars and policy makers.

Connecting conversations about hate crime, and the different models and lessons to be shared and learned, is part of the reasons for the creation of the International Network for Hate Studies (INHS)[16]. While, as Chakraborti wrote in 2016 "we now know much more about hate crime than ever before; more about the nature, extent and impact of victimization; more about the factors behind the selection of victims; and more about the effectiveness, or otherwise, of different interventions,"[17] there still remains too much of a disconnect between "real world" experiences and academic insights and research.

Groups like the ADL and AAPI do essential work in the U.S. collecting and sharing information about antisemitic and anti-Asian hate crimes, and this is a critical contribution especially since hate crime reporting isn't as complete as it ought to be, as was recognized at the recent White House United We Stand Summit. The steps by the Department of Justice announced on September 15[18] are important. Yet the scholarship of Walters and Schweppe and their colleagues, looking at international norms and trends in understanding and countering hate crimes, and in direct consultation with law enforcement officials to inform their scholarship, offer some new ideas for not only improving data collection and reporting, but also for research into why people might be less inclined to report hate crimes (both because of negative experiences in reporting, and also because of fear and anxiety associated with the incident

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[16] https://internationalhatestudies.com/
[17] Chakraborti, Neil, Mind the Gap! Making Stronger Connections between Hate Crime Policy and Scholarship, Criminal Justice Policy Review (2016) Vol. 27(6), 577, 579.
[18] https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-launches-nationwide-initiative-combat-unlawful-acts-hate

itself). While hate crime is an international problem, lessons from other jurisdictions are frequently ignored because different countries have different understandings, not only of which groups should be included under hate crime legislation as potential victims of hate crime, or different norms of protection for speech, but even of the term "hate crime" itself. [19]

Hate crimes, of course, impact entire communities and threaten people's sense of safety and belonging. And there are challenges, not only with reluctance and fear or reporting, or institutional impediments (I've heard of desk sergeants suggesting that incidents that might well be hate crimes not be reported because of fear of increased paperwork), but other political and structural challenges as well. It was important that the White House, under both presidents Clinton and Biden, convened meetings about hate and hate crimes. But we should encourage ways to incorporate better the insights of scholars and practitioners around the world about hate-related violence. They have a lot to learn from us, but we can learn more from them too.

LESSON 3 – Breaking down "us" "them" with community service?

I suspect there's general agreement on this panel and on this committee that reducing the incidents of antisemitism isn't only a matter of better security for Jewish institutions, or better hate crime reporting, or better educational initiatives. Antisemitism historically has been influenced by events and trends, including political and cultural ones, in society at large. One perplexing question is how do we make antisemitism and antisemitic violence less likely, especially in a society that seems more divided in recent years along political and other fault lines, one in which more people seem willing to be animated by hatred of others (including of Jews).

Hate Studies might have some additional concrete suggestions here – although I stress what I'm going to propose is something that has not yet been fully explored.

There's an old study in social psychology study called the Robbers Cave experiment[20], a study that involved sending two groups of boys from very similar backgrounds to a summer camp in Oklahoma. Each group didn't know the other existed, but once each bonded separately as a unit, and then were given evidence of the other group's existence in a competitive environment, they not only had animosity toward each other, but acted on it. At the end, they however, had to cooperate to fix the camp's drinking water supply. That superordinate goal – or perhaps the creation of a larger group identity – helped reduce the hate.

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[19] Schweppe, Jennifer, What is a hate crime? Cogent Social Science (2021), 7
[20] Sherif, M. (1954). *Experimental study of positive and negative intergroup attitudes between experimentally produced groups: robbers cave study*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma.

That suggestion – an additional layer of connected identity – is one I observed from colleagues during my years at AJC involved with intergroup relations. The groups that seemed to have the most staying power – say a project bringing together Blacks and Jews – were the ones that had an additional layer of identity (Black and Jewish lawyers or accountants, for example).

Years ago I was inspired by Colin Powell and others who suggested the potential societal and personal benefits of a program of national service for young people. I've long wondered, what if we had a national program that would offer to take teenagers from different backgrounds, say as they were finishing high school, and sent them on a common public service mission? How about a Latinx person from Texas and a Jewish person from New York and a Black person from Los Angeles, and sent them, together, to work for an organization that builds homes for American Indian people in South Dakota, for example? There are lots of ways to mix and match such groups, but the idea of bringing people together from different groups that they might not have met before, have them interact with each other and form a new group identity, have them together help someone else, and create new and negotiated collective memories drawn from their own communal memories might, and I stress might, make them less likely to be drawn into the "us" vs "them" thinking that threatens our democracy, and thus reduce the potential for antisemitic and other types of hate crimes. A pilot project and, if later evaluation documents a reduction of hate over time results, there might be consideration of building such a national service program. It might even pay for itself, if it reduces the cost of hate.

LESSON 4 – Expanding the "us."

When I was at AJC I worked very closely with the late Robert Hess, president of Brooklyn College. He was instrumental in thinking through a guide I wrote on how to handle "Bigotry on Campus.[21]" One off-hand comment from Bob always stayed with me, and it made sense even before I started learning more about hate and how it works. When an incident at Brooklyn College threatened to tear the campus apart into tribal groups, he would always emphasize what he called "the myth of the institution." He, as a leader, would reiterate, almost to the point of a mantra, "We're all members of the Brooklyn College family." We are all, thus, an "us."

As I noted, one core lesson from social psychology and other related Hate Studies fields is that we divide the world into "us" and "them." In most instances that can be not only innocuous but a source of entertainment – whether we cheer for this sports team or that. But this tendency can also lead to decisions that violence is necessary, justified, and proper against a "them."

Part of the work of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate is to give practical guidance on how to help communities reject appeals of actors who want to target those amongst us as a "them." Too often a hate incident occurs, people of good will want to "do something," and they scramble about trying to figure out what to do on the fly, and then, over time, the impetus

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[21] http://kennethsstern.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BigotryOnCampus.pdf

fades, people more on to other things, and the opportunity to build community and support democratic norms goes by – until the next time, when the cycle repeats.

Earlier this year, in partnership with the Western States Center and the Montana Human Rights Network, we published "A Community Guide for Opposing Hate."[22] It is a nuts and bolts manual, written by people with years of expertise in studying and organizing against hate, with instructions about how to build a group or sustain an already existing one, how to work with academics, journalists, and government officials, what to do (and not do) in various scenarios, including in the aftermath of a hate crime or antisemitic threats.[23]

All the authors had experience helping local communities cope with white supremacist and aligned organizations and actors who were trying to build their movements by promoting hatred of others, whether it be based on religion or race, sexual orientation or expression, or people with different political points of view.

We stressed the importance of working in partnership with political leadership, not only on matters of policy, but also in building relationships that can be mutually beneficial, helping stand up together against efforts of hate groups to vilify human beings in the community.[24] I can't overemphasize, in the divided country we're in, how important it is for leaders, and especially political leaders, to set an example of civil discourse despite deep disagreement, and to underscore by action and word that while there may be policy and philosophical differences at play, we're all human beings breathing the same air. In other words, one way to beat back the acceptance of the division of our community into "us" who have to be protected from a nefarious "them" is to find as many ways possible, in normal speech and practice, to expand the "us."

So, this isn't a policy or legislative suggestion, and it's something that I know many of you do instinctively, and frequently exhibiting political courage when you do. As leaders, regardless of political differences and the political necessities about which I'm not naïve, I'd ask that you find as many ways possible, intentionally, to underscore the equivalent of Bob Hess' refrain. We're

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[22] https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2022/05/OpposingHateGuide-single-pages-8M-5-3.pdf

[23] The manual highlights "Project Lemonade," an approach that uses social media to crowdsource pledges tied to a metric such as how long a proposed neo-Nazi march might last. The white supremacists would actually be raising money for things they detest, like increased hate crime training for police. The people targeted would feel supported, and others around the world could do something useful to help. See also https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/13/opinions/kkk-plans-march-on-mlk-day-stern.

[24] In 2021 we also published a "State of Hate Index" by political scientist Robert Tynes (https://bcsh.bard.edu/files/2021/09/State-of-Hate-Index.pdf). He was inspired by the old "Green Book," used for decades by Black people traveling the South, listing restaurants, hotels, and other services that would serve them (and by a similar book from that period telling Jews which places would serve them, and which would not, in the Catskills). The idea is that not only the number of hate crimes in a state, but also its laws and policies, affect the level of hate a person can experience when crossing a state border. The value of Tyne's approach is that, again, we don't silo antisemitism here, sexism and racism and homophobia there, but rather see them as creating a joint tapestry in a geographic area where hate might, in general, be able to flourish more.

all human beings, all part of this great nation, each of whom has an equal right to be part of the social contract and this great democracy. The more we can expand the "us," the less likely there will be attacks on our neighbors, Jews included, because they are seen as a "them."