

COVER PAGE

“Examining Anti-Semitism on College Campuses”

Sandra Hagee Parker

Chairwoman

CUFI Action Fund

November 7, 2017



November 2, 2017

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte,

Thank you for your invitation to submit a written statement on the important topic of “Examining Anti-Semitism on College Campuses.” Please accept this submission on behalf of CUFI Action Fund, which represents 3.8 million members whose sole purpose is to stand united on behalf of the Jewish state and its people, to ensure their collective past persecution is a portion of history that does not get repeated.

To that end, CUFI has established CUFI on Campus, which aims to educate students about Israel and arm them with the truth in order to battle the lies perpetrated by anti-Semites who would see the Jewish right to self-determination thwarted.

We understand that our college and university campuses are central to the battle against anti-Semitism and to date, we have 200 established CUFI on Campus chapters at various colleges and universities, a presence on over 300 campuses nationwide and in excess of 3,500 students have completed the CUFI on Campus program.

It is true that lessons learned in classrooms today become the policies in the public square tomorrow.

Our schools are meant to be bastions of pluralistic thinking, melting pots where different opinions, cultures and backgrounds converge, with the ultimate goal of graduating students who are wiser than when they enrolled and better people for having been exposed to these varied experiences.

Our nation’s institutions of higher learning consider it sacrosanct to be the center of the free marketplace of ideas, to shape and mold great minds, which will hopefully carry us on to a brighter collective future.

And in these hallowed halls, intellectual discourse, academic freedom and the freedom of speech are essential to achieving tolerance and understanding among divergent groups and opinions.



Despite this, with increasing regularity, Jewish students, Jewish groups, and those who support them, find themselves having these sacred rights abridged.

In a National Demographic Survey of American Jewish College Students published in 2015, over 50% of student's polled indicated they had witnessed or directly experienced anti-Semitism at their colleges or universities.

As early as 2005 the U.S Commission on Civil Rights found that "campus anti-Semitism had become a serious problem at many universities and campuses across the country." Despite that finding, ten years after that publication, its author stated that authorities "need to address campus anti-Semitism much more aggressively, comprehensively, and efficiently than they are now doing."

More recently, the AMCHA Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to investigating and combating anti-Semitism at institutions of higher education in America, documented a 40% increase in anti-Semitic incidents on American college campuses last year.

These anti-Semitic events are not restricted to any particular region or type of institution. Be it East Coast, West Coast, Southeast or Midwest; Ivy League, state school or liberal arts, the AMCHA report highlights these harassing behaviors are becoming increasingly endemic.

And 2016 is not an aberration. To date this year, according to AMCHA, there have been more than 500 anti-Semitic incidents on campuses across the country including more than 50 in the last month alone. These incidents range from explicit acts of anti-Semitism, such as etching a swastika into a campus table at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, to anti-Semitism couched in anti-Zionism, such as an event at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, where Jews and Israel were demonized and accused of all manner of atrocities.

The report underscored that these acts of anti-Jewish hostility, which are directly linked to anti-Zionism, clearly intended to "suppress pro-Israel speech or impede participation in Israel-related activities" and gave numerous examples of events that were stopped, cancelled, or prematurely terminated due to disruptions, threats and intimidation from student groups and protesters with opposing viewpoints.

Allowing "anti-Zionist" behavior to shut down or obstruct free speech is at odds with the freethinking and safe environment our nation's colleges and universities strive to create.

Students and administrators alike should be able to distinguish between a valid critique of a nation or its political system and anti-Semitic behavior cloaked as opposition to Zionism. The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act (the "Act") would provide the tools necessary to consistently make that distinction.



The Act would not threaten free speech, it would protect it.

Providing a standard by which to judge these heinous acts no more chills free speech than the presence of a thermometer prevents the temperature from rising.

Infiltration without confrontation leads to normalization. Not providing a consistent standard with which to confront this behavior that is infiltrating our college campuses is leading to its normalization. As proven by the fact that despite the aforementioned findings by the of the U.S Commission on Civil Rights, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Dear Colleague Letters of 2004 and 2010, and various relevant reports, we are here today, still discussing it.

So pervasive is this harassing behavior that it spills over to non-Jewish individuals who simply appear to support Jews or the Jewish state.

Numerous examples in the AMCHA report set forth instances where, Jews, Jewish groups, or individuals and groups perceived as pro-Israel, were "defamed, denigrated or intimidated in order to thwart the individuals' or groups' freedom of speech or access to full and equal participation in campus activities." Many of our CUFI on Campus ("COC") students have personally experienced that mere standing with Jews or the Jewish state has resulted in the same hostility.

For instance:

- At the University of New Mexico COC students had rocks thrown at them while tabling with an Israeli flag and were spit on.
- Mesa Community College and St. Edwards COC students had peers engage in intimidating behavior by surrounding CUFI students who were tabling. The offending students did not leave when asked.
- At an Israel Fest at UC Irving, the COC table and Jewish students were harassed and one student was shoved by another student from an anti-Zionist group, the COC director was surrounded by students and told, "we know who you are." Ultimately, the police had to be called.
- A George Mason COC student wearing a COC t-shirt was confronted in their school cafeteria, cursed and yelled at in front of several hundred students, and told that she was disgusting and a baby killer. That student is now too frightened to wear the pro-Israel shirt again.

These are just a few examples of the normalization of this intimidating behavior aimed to silence and shut down, not just the opposing viewpoint, but specifically the perspective of Jewish students and those who support them.



This Act asks that the definition within it be considered when schools are faced with the task of drawing a line between legitimate criticism and anti-Semitism. To stand against the Act means you will not consider what has previously been codified by the Department of State and 31 other nations.

As Kenneth L. Marcus, the former Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil rights has stated, “The U.S. Department of State has developed excellent tools for addressing anti-Semitism in every country other than the United States.” So why not hold ourselves to the same standard?

Anti-Semitism was problematic enough at Stanford University that its student body passed a resolution against anti-Semitism and within it included this same definition used by the State Department for guidance.

Anti-Semitism is not a Jewish issue, it is a human issue. Jewish identity and ancestry continues to be a target whether one is male or female, conservative or liberal, religious or agnostic.

Sadly, history has already clearly shown us what happens when good men and women do nothing in the face of such evil. Not to act is to act.

Thank you for your consideration of the foregoing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Hagee Parker".

Sandra Hagee Parker
Chairwoman