DISCUSSING ANTISEMITISM
A Guide for College Students and Adults

Introduction

The ADL recorded 2,107 antisemitic incidents in 2019—the highest number of incidents since ADL began collecting this data in 1979. Included in this data were three major violent attacks that took place in Poway, California; Jersey City, New Jersey; and Monsey, New York. A total of 61 antisemitic assaults took place in 2019, more than half of which took place within New York City. Jewish and non-Jewish people alike struggled to understand these violent episodes, many of which could not be traced to a specific ideology or extremist trend. Discussing these disturbing trends can be challenging, but these conversations are necessary.

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The Audit of Antisemitic incidents accounts for assaults, vandalism, and harassment, but we know that there are many unreported incidents of antisemitism, from “jokes” to microaggressions to insensitive comments that normalize antisemitic rhetoric. The 2,107 incidents that ADL logged in 2019 mark a 12% increase from 2018. Antisemitic incidents took place across society, including on college campuses, in K-12 schools, and at Jewish institutions. The complete dataset of antisemitic incidents for 2016-2019 is available on ADL’s H.E.A.T. Map, an interactive online tool that allows users to geographically chart antisemitic incidents and extremist activity nationally and regionally.

The threat of antisemitism is not only about defaming and attacking the Jewish community; it’s a symptom of a larger issue. Those that hold ideologies of hatred against the Jewish people generally also hold ideologies of hatred against other marginalized peoples and communities. According to the FBI, in 2017 (the most recent data available) hate crimes increased 17% nationwide, including a 37% increase in the number of crimes against Jews and Jews institutions, but also overall increases in the number of crimes directed against individuals on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and disability.

Though some may describe antisemitism differently depending on who is spreading myths or perpetrating violence, antisemitism is an ideology and system that permeates all parts of society. While it may look slightly different depending on where it’s coming from, Antisemitism is not monopolized by a single political party or system. Hyper-focusing only on antisemitism from the “left” or on the “right” can distract from the fact that all examples of antisemitism in our society relate to long held and deeply entrenched beliefs that are as inescapable as the air we all breathe. A key lesson to understanding the rise in antisemitism is acknowledging that in today’s society, everyone of us is exposed to antisemitic myths and tropes.

In order to better understand and unpack antisemitism, we hope you use this guide to initiate conversations with your peers, colleagues, family and community about how antisemitism and all forms of hate ideology impacts both the Jewish community and the United States at large - and what we as ordinary people can and should do about it.
Discussion Guide

Setting the Stage:
- Prepare yourself by reading through the ADL’s 2019 Audit and reviewing some general facilitation tips. (Check out Repair the World's Guide to Respectful Conversations for some great suggestions).
- Review relevant definitions (target, ally, aggressor, bystander, Antisemitism, prejudice and discrimination).
- Assemble some additional learning resources for your participants before and/or after your discussion. (see details below for resources and follow up opportunities).

Note: Some who have learned about the Holocaust --either in school or in an informal learning environment, such as a museum--may hyperfocus on Holocaust history when discussing contemporary antisemitism, and some may assume that anti-Semitism ended with the fall of the Third Reich. ADL’s reports and discussion guides invite the public to broaden their understanding of anti-Semitism as a complex and enduring ideology that did not begin or end with the Holocaust.

Discussion Questions:

Warming up:
- What have you seen or heard on the news or online about antisemitism?
- Are you having conversations about antisemitism or other forms of hate with your peers? What is that conversation like?

Looking into the data
- Review some of the data points in the audit and executive summary – then answer the questions below:
- What do these numbers tell you about the trends in antisemitism today?
- What points in the data set did you find most surprising, interesting, or helpful in understanding antisemitic trends?

Digging deeper:
- Who is targeted by antisemitism? Who are the aggressors in antisemitic incidents, and why do they happen?
- What concerns do you have about anti-Semitism or other forms of hate in our country and community?
- Have you seen or heard any anti-Semitic remarks or symbols in your community? What about online? What has this looked like?
- How do you respond and/or how would be best to respond?
- Do you feel confident in identifying antisemitic and other hate symbols, dog whistles, etc?
- Who might need support when anti-Semitic incidents happen? What about other acts of hate?
- How is antisemitism connected to other forms of hate and prejudice and how is it distinct?
- In preventing and responding to antisemitism, what do you expect from... Elected local, state, and federal officials? Teachers and Community Leaders? Technology and Social Media companies? Your friends, peers, and co-workers? Yourself?
- What is important to consider in crafting responses and prevention plans to antisemitism that are inclusive of our full multi-racial, multi-ethnic Jewish community?
Opportunities for Follow-up & Extended Engagement:

Continue to educate yourself about antisemitism and other forms of prejudice

- Explore Antisemitism Uncovered - a new resource that explains the historical context of prevalent antisemitic myths, contemporary examples, and calls-to-action for addressing antisemitism.
- Gain confidence in identifying hate symbols by reviewing the Hate Symbol Database.
- Familiarize yourself with ADL's H.E.A.T. Map – an interactive online tool that allows users to geographically chart antisemitic incidents and extremist activity nationally and regionally.
- Review the FBI’s annual Hate Crime Statistics Act report – one of only three annual national crime reports compiled by the FBI.
- Watch this speech from Sasha Baron Cohen on the importance of social media and technology companies to improve their openness and responsiveness to issues of hate and extremism on their platform.
- Explore ADL’s Pyramid of Hate to understand the importance of addressing bias and hate at all levels. Continue the conversation with your family and community on pressing issues and critical current events using ADL’s Table Talk guides.
- Choose and read a book suggested by Jonathan Sarna or The Jewish Book Council on antisemitism.
  - Looking for suggestions for a younger audience? Check out ADL’s Books Matter for a curated list of children and young adult literature.
- Plan a visit a historical or cultural institution that educates about anti-Semitism and other forms of bias, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant bias. This could be a Holocaust memorial center, Jewish culture site, or history center that focus on slavery, the civil rights movement, women’s suffrage, and more exist throughout the United States.

Take Action

- Speak out against antisemitism and all forms of hate, prejudice, and discrimination.
- If you experience or witness an incident of bias, hatred or bigotry, report it as soon as possible.
- Urge your elected officials to hold hearings on the increase in hate crimes, domestic terrorism, and rise of extremist groups, and to improve their procedures for responding to and reporting hate crimes.
- Call on social media and technology companies to improve their openness and responsiveness to issues of hate and extremism on their platform.
- Advocate for stronger support for victims and targets of online hate and harassment through the Backspace Hate initiative.
- Advocate for legislation to ensure the Holocaust be taught in schools.
- Promote anti-bias, bullying prevention, and civics education programs in K-12 schools.
- If you work with, are raising, or mentoring children, read books together that tackle antisemitism and other forms of hate.
- Host Table Talk conversations with young people in your life to regularly discuss current events.
- Host a Friday night or Shabbat dinner with OneTable and invite your friends to engage in discussion (digital and virtual gathering resources available!).
- Volunteer and serve in your local community.
- Participate in interfaith and other intergroup events in your community.
- Model examining media/news with a critical eye and using strategies for civil discourse, even when discussing challenging issues or points of view with which you disagree.