



Antisemitism Today

Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events



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Topic Summary

It was a shocking wake-up call for some. For others, the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue felt sadly indicative of the trend in rising antisemitism incidents.

Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue

In October 2018, the U.S. experienced the deadliest antisemitic attack in history. Robert Bowers, a white supremacist, entered Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue as congregants were engaged in worship. He opened fire, killing

eleven congregants and wounding several others. Afterward, Bowers allegedly told police that he wanted to kill Jews. In his online social media posts, he reportedly condemned Jews for bringing immigrants into the country. Alarmingly, violent behavior and hate speech are both spreading. The number of antisemitic incidents has been steadily climbing in recent years.

A Week of Antisemitic Incidents in New York in Late 2019

In December 2019, there was a string of antisemitic incidents in New York during the last week of 2019. On December 28, 2019 in Monsey, NY, as numerous people celebrated Hanukkah at the home of a Hasidic rabbi, an intruder with a large knife burst into his home and stabbed and wounded five people. The attack came after a week-long surge of at least ten incidents of antisemitic violence in the New York region.

What is Antisemitism?

Antisemitism is the marginalization and/or oppression of people who are Jewish based on the belief in stereotypes and myths about Jewish people, Judaism and Israel.

Antisemitism can manifest in a myriad of ways, including: stereotypes and attitudes about Jews, scapegoating, name-calling and bullying, online expressions of bias and hate, swastikas and other hate symbols scrawled in public spaces, antisemitic rhetoric, vandalism in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, hate crimes like the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue, and more.

Antisemitism is not only about demeaning and attacking the Jewish community. It is also a symptom of a more significant issue. Individuals who hold ideologies of hatred against the Jewish people will often hold hateful beliefs about other groups who are marginalized.

Audit of Antisemitic Incidents

ADL has [tracked antisemitic incidents](#) in the U.S. since 1979. The annual audit of reported incidents compiles data on assaults, vandalism and harassment. In 2019, ADL recorded 2,107 antisemitic incidents in the U.S., the highest number recorded since tracking began in 1979. This is a 12% increase from incidents reported in 2018. In 2019, ADL recorded events in every contiguous U.S. state, including the District of Columbia. The findings include 411 incidents in K-12 schools (up 19% from 344 in 2018), and 186 incidents at colleges and universities (down 10% from 201 in 2018).

How Hate Escalates

The [Pyramid of Hate](#) is a useful tool to understand bias, hate and oppression in society. The Pyramid is organized in escalating levels of attitudes and behaviors that grow in complexity from the bottom to top. Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. Bias at each level negatively impacts individuals, institutions and society. It becomes increasingly difficult to challenge and dismantle as behaviors escalate. When bias goes unchecked, it becomes “normalized” and contributes to a pattern of accepting discrimination, hate and injustice in society.

Age

12 and up

Questions to Start the Conversation

- What do you know about the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue? How did you feel when you heard about what happened?
- Have you seen or heard about antisemitism in your school, community, the news or online?
- Why do you think antisemitic incidents are increasing?
- How do you think the increase in antisemitism impacts Jewish people?

- How do you think it impacts others and society in general?

Questions to Dig Deeper

(See the Additional Resources section for articles and information that address these questions.)

- Have you noticed an increase in other forms of bias, hate and oppression?
Can you tell me more about that?
- What do you think we should do about antisemitism and other forms of bias and injustice?
- Do you talk with your peers about antisemitism or other forms of bias and hate? What are those conversations like? Do you talk about these issues in any of your classes?

Take Action

Ask: What can we do to help? What individual and group actions can help make a difference?

- Help to organize an educational forum in school to talk about antisemitism and other forms of bias, hate and oppression. In the forum, explore and strategize what can be done about it in school, your community or society at large. Start a public awareness campaign in school and online.
- Write a letter to your school or community newspaper about your thoughts and feelings about antisemitism and other manifestations of bias and hate. In the letter, explain what you think should be done about it.
- Connect with local or national organizations that are fighting bias and hate by working with them directly, joining their fundraising efforts, or volunteer.

Additional Resources

- [Deadly Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue](#) (ADL Lesson Plan)

- [Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist \(ADL Lesson Plan\)](#)
- [Antisemitism Around the World: Global 100 \(ADL Lesson Plan\)](#)
- [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents: Year in Review 2018](#)
- [Pyramid of Hate \(Online Mini Lesson\)](#)

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