



Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present – Student Activity

Description: The purpose of this activity is to deepen participants’ understanding of the historical and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism through viewing and processing the film *Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present*. Participants also receive a resource to consider how they can personally respond if and when they see antisemitism.

Audience: College students, max 30 participants

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: Chart paper, markers, tape, laptop, projector, screen, and internet
One new thing I learned about... worksheet (one for each participant)
How to Stand Up to Antisemitism handout (one for each participant)

Instructions:

1. Prior to the start of the activity, hang 5 pieces of chart paper around the room, each with one of the following titles written on them:
 - The complexity of Jewish identity
 - The history of antisemitism
 - Antisemitic themes and/or stereotypes about Jews
 - Antisemitism in the United States
 - The relationship between antisemitism and anti-Israel bias
2. Tell participants that they will be learning about antisemitism – prejudice or discrimination against Jews – and how it has played out historically and today.
3. Ask participants: “What do you know about antisemitism historically or today?” Write their responses on chart paper.
4. Distribute the *One new thing I learned about...* worksheet. Tell participants to complete the worksheet describing one new thing they learn in each of the categories listed while watching the video *Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present*.

5. Show the 11-minute film [Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present](https://jewishstudies.berkeley.edu/antisemitism-education/antisemitism-antisemitism-training-film/) (available at: <https://jewishstudies.berkeley.edu/antisemitism-education/antisemitism-antisemitism-training-film/>).
6. Divide participants into 5 groups and assign each of them one of the pieces of chart paper hung around the room. Tell participants that they will have 2 minutes at their assigned chart paper to write down the new things they learned in that category (from their worksheets). They will then rotate clockwise, having 2 minutes at each chart paper to write down what they learned in each category. If their ideas are already listed by a previous group, they can make a check mark next to it.
7. After each group has been to each of the chart papers, give participants 2 minutes to do a gallery walk around the room to view those responses they have not yet seen.
8. Conduct a whole group discussion using some or all of the following questions:
 - a. What is one thing you learned in the video that surprised you?
 - b. How has your perception of Jewish identity and/or antisemitism changed as a result of participating in this activity?
 - c. Have you encountered any of the antisemitic themes or stereotypes mentioned in the video in your own life or on campus? If so, which ones have you seen or heard and how did they present themselves?
 - d. What can you do if you hear or see something that is antisemitic?
 - e. Why do you think it is important to address antisemitism?
9. Distribute the handout *How to Stand Up to Antisemitism*. Tell participants that in order to address antisemitism or any form of bias it is important that every individual take action if and when they see it. The handout provides some suggestions for things they can personally do to stand up to antisemitism. If time permits, review the handout with the group.

This student activity was created by the Academic Engagement Network (AEN) to facilitate a constructive dialogue around the film Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present. The film is an educational tool offered by the Antisemitism Education Initiative at the University of California, Berkeley which is funded in part through multiple grants from AEN.

One new thing I learned about...

Write one new thing you learned in each of the following categories from the video *Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present*.

The complexity of Jewish identity:

The history of antisemitism:

Antisemitic themes and/or stereotypes about Jews:

Antisemitism in the United States:

The relationship between antisemitism and anti-Israel bias:

How to Stand Up to Antisemitism

A rise in antisemitism has historically correlated with increased hatred of all minorities. In order to address antisemitism and all forms of prejudice and discrimination, everyone must take action. The following offers some suggestions for what you can do to challenge antisemitism.

1. **Recognize antisemitism** – In order to address antisemitism, it is important to first be able to identify it. While some forms of antisemitism – such as a swastika scrawled on a Jewish house of worship – are easy to recognize, other instances of antisemitism are not as obvious. It is important to educate yourself about the many forms that antisemitism can take in the world today so that you know what it is when you see it. Several resources to learn more about antisemitism are listed below.
2. **Speak up** – Many times when you see or hear something antisemitic, the intention of the person saying or doing it may not be malicious. Sometimes people make assumptions about others based on stereotypes and misinformation or say something that they didn't intend to be harmful. These types of microaggressions can be hurtful to members of the Jewish community and perpetuate negative ideas about Jews. When this happens, speak up. Assume good intent of the person making the comment and explain to them the impact of their words or actions.
3. **Report it** – Some antisemitic incidents are more serious in nature and need to be reported to school authorities or law enforcement. Most schools offer safe and confidential reporting mechanisms when a bias incident occurs, and the campus administration will follow up to each complaint with an investigation and appropriate action as needed. If an incident is criminal in nature (assault, vandalism, etc.), on or off-campus police may also need to be brought in to address the situation. Always consider your safety in determining how to best respond and save or take pictures of any evidence.

4. **Express your support** – When an antisemitic incident takes place in the larger society – such as an act of vandalism or violence – it can be difficult to know how to personally respond to address the situation. These events can be painful for members of the Jewish community. Let your Jewish friends, colleagues, and peers know you see and feel their pain. Offer to support them and express your solidarity in the fight against antisemitism.

5. **Differentiate political views from expressions of hate** – On some college campuses, antisemitism often takes the form of targeting Jews because of their connection to Israel or Zionism. While expressions of political disagreement with Israel, its policies and politicians are legitimate, it is important to make sure that such activism does not lend itself to the marginalization or exclusion of Jewish students from campus life. Criticisms of Israel that play on antisemitic stereotypes or myths are never acceptable and denying Jewish people the right to self-determination is an attack on the fundamental nature of Jewish identity.

Additional Resources

- **Academic Engagement Network** videos, pamphlets, papers and other materials on the topics of antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and Israel – www.academicengagement.org

- **UC Berkeley Antisemitism Education Initiative** resources including lectures, podcasts, and news articles – <https://jewishstudies.berkeley.edu/news-events-media/antisemitism-education/>

- **Anti-Defamation League** *Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era* – <https://antisemitism.adl.org/>