

Statement on Anti-Semitism Policies in the UC System

Rabbi Evan Goodman

Executive Director, Santa Barbara Hillel

781 Embarcadero Del Mar, Isla Vista, CA 93117

egoodman@santabarbarahillel.org 805-968-1280 x22

Thank you for this opportunity. I am Rabbi Evan Goodman. For the better part of three decades I have served as a religious community leader, and for the past seven years I have led Santa Barbara Hillel.

Our organization has a close relationship with the students, faculty and administration of UC Santa Barbara, and we are dedicated to fostering a positive and supportive campus climate for all students.

I am a graduate of UC Berkeley, and am committed to the success of the UC system. I am also the proud parent of a current UC student. I care deeply for the well-being of all our students, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

To solve a problem, you must be able to name that problem.

We have a problem here. That problem is anti-Semitism.

Many of us believed that anti-Semitism was a thing of the past:

- Jews being turned down for positions
- Jews being spat upon when they wear a Jewish symbol
- Jews having pennies tossed at their feet
- Jewish institutions defaced with swastikas

We believed that anti-Semitism was behind us.

We were wrong.

In recent years, anti-Semitism has roared back, most notably on university campuses, and especially on our UC campuses. It adversely affects the education and lives of our students. This hostile environment causes prospective students to think twice about enrolling in the University of California.

Most Jewish students perceive attacks that demonize, delegitimize, or hold Israel to double standards as attacks on their own personal religious and cultural identity.

Jewish students recognize that Israel is not perfect. America is not perfect. The Vatican is not perfect.

At a university, of all places, there must be space for legitimate political discourse and analysis. This includes legitimate critiques of Israeli policy.

However, when the one Jewish state in the world is obsessively singled out for condemnation, Jewish students recognize that their own religious and cultural identity is being called into question.

The resurgence of anti-Semitism is directly paralleled with the increase in virulent anti-Israel activity. Many are in denial about this.

I recently counseled a student who found a swastika on a car window. One police officer dismissed it, saying the drawing was a reverse of a swastika, a Mayan symbol. This was not her first experience with anti-Semitism at UCSB. Last spring, she attended a student senate “debate” on divestment. There she was told that Jews have all the money, Jews have all the power, and Jews are colonialist oppressors. She called for a Campus Security Officer to walk her home after the meeting. On the walk home, she confided to the CSO how upset she was, and how she felt attacked as a Jewish person. Instead of helping her, he told her “BDS isn’t anti-Semitic, and the Israelis deserve it.” The person who was supposed to protect her instead caused further harm.

We should not permit any minority group to be treated the way Jews are being treated on our university campuses.

Jewish students are being told explicitly and implicitly that we are not a minority. That we do not deserve the same basic protections afforded to other students. That we do not have the right to say, “I am Jewish, and when you do this to me I feel attacked as a Jewish person.”

Black students aren’t told what is and isn’t racism. Gay students aren’t told how they should feel about homophobia. Jewish students shouldn’t be told “this isn’t anti-Semitism.” We know our own identity. When someone calls us a “Zionist Nazi,” they are attacking our religious, personal and communal identity at its very core.

I urge the Regents to adopt a clear, system-wide definition of anti-Semitism, including some version of the three D’s, with explicit policies and procedures that protect Jewish students in the UC System from experiencing a hostile environment. Our university, and the well-being of all our students, depends on it. Thank you.