

## Advice to college students on responding to anti-Semitism

As many college students begin their year, images of what took place at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville a couple of weeks ago have created nervousness and anxiety. For students (and their parents) here are ten thoughts about what is happening on campuses and suggestions for how to respond:

1. Several people have expressed a particular anxiety about what this means for college students attending universities in the South. There are, however, incidents of anti-Jewish agitation on college campuses throughout our country. Don't fool yourself. Hatred and bigotry can happen anywhere.
2. Anti-Semitism is not merely an expression of the far political Right - neo-Nazi and white supremacists. Anti-Jewish sentiment is also seen in the extreme political Left – expressed by those who are anti-Israel and often in the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) movement. Those who engage in violence – or calls for violence – are the most dangerous, but expressions of hatred are not limited to one political “side”.
3. Keep in close contact with your college's Hillel. It is best to work closely with those “on the ground” in each community, and who are likely best informed how to respond. If you are at a university near to a synagogue, contact that congregation and their clergy to see how you can work collaboratively to deal with anti-Jewish sentiment where you live.
4. If the campus is in a larger city there may be a local chapter of the [Anti-Defamation League \(ADL\)](#), which also does a lot of work supporting tolerance and challenging hate. If you want resources to help you support Israel and battle those who denigrate the Jewish State, look at what is offered by [StandWithUS](#).
5. Find like-minded individuals on campus standing up against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, bigotry and racism. Reach out to others who are the targets of hate – African-Americans, members of the LGBT community, Muslims, Hispanics and others. We are stronger together. More than that, when one group is attacked, all are vulnerable.
6. Advocate for the values we affirm as Jews - justice, truth and peace. These are certainly in line with the best of American virtues, as well.
7. Do not be silent. If it is not you who is attacked today ... in time it will be. If you see or hear something you think is wrong, speak out - if not to those engaged in the behavior, to those in authority who can support you.
8. Feel free to be in touch with any of your clergy directly. We (or any other clergy) can support and help you find others who can find allies in your efforts to speak out, yet also feel safe.
9. Be proudly and openly Jewish. Do not be afraid, for fear feeds hate. As Lenny Solomon and Shlock Rock once quipped, but I take seriously, “Be Good. Be Cool. Be Jewish.” It is those who hate who should cower, overwhelmed by those who are courageous in expressing who they are.

10. Remember the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., “Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can.” Be a model of tolerance, moderation and love. As Shammai taught two millennia ago, “Greet every person with a pleasant countenance.” This may be the hardest suggestion of all, but I think it is the most important. When others spew hate, you will bring honor to yourself, to your community and to the Jewish people by being an emissary of love, respect and moderation. In the face of evil in every generation, our people and faith have affirmed hope and optimism of a better world. You are part of that sacred task.

Irwin Zepowitz  
Rabbi