

Hate Speech v. Free Speech on Campus

A Program for High School Students Preparing for College

I. Goals

- A. To prepare high school students for important issues they will face when they go away to college.
- B. To educate the participants on one of the more difficult issues in America and to provide them with a spectrum of views.
- C. To give the participants the resources necessary to research and understand the Reform Movement's perspective on controversial issues.

II. Objectives

- A. Participants will have a flavor of the difference in the types of issues they will deal with in college from what they have been doing in high school.
- B. Participants will be able to explain what type of speech is protected by the First Amendment and what the limits are of editorial discretion in publishing hate speech.
- C. Participants will feel confident in their knowledge and be able to engage in thoughtful debate on this issue.
- D. Participants will be able to utilize Jewish text and values in presenting their arguments.

III. Procedure

- A. Divide the students into groups of 10 -15 people
- B. Distribute copies of the "U.S. and Canadian Guarantees of Freedom of Press and Speech" and "What Does Judaism Say about Free Speech" hand-outs.
- C. Have the students, in their small groups, discuss the following questions:
 1. According to these documents, are freedom of speech and freedom of press absolute rights? Who accords these rights? What restrictions may exist?
 2. Does the fact that the government cannot abridge these rights mean that a publisher must print anything that someone wants published? Is denial of printing someone's article a denial of their constitutional rights?
 3. How do the Jewish values laid out in "What Does Judaism Say..." influence our understanding of these issues?
- D. Distribute copies of the "Letter to the Editor: Jews Manipulate America" and the *Daily Illini* Letter Policy.
- E. Inform the groups that they are now the editorial board and they are charged with making a decision about whether or not to print the letter. Ask them to make a decision and to list the guiding principles by which they made the decision.
- F. Have groups report back and discuss their decisions.
- G. Now pass out the "Responses to Jews Manipulate America," and give the students a few minutes to read the responses.
- H. Discuss the following questions:
 1. Has reading over the arguments in the responses influenced your previous decision? Which of the arguments did you find most compelling?
 2. How would seeing that letter affect your level of comfort as a student on campus or your choice about where to go to school?

3. What is the responsibility of a campus newspaper in fostering debate on campus? What is their responsibility to take into consideration how a viewpoint will affect a certain population on campus?
4. Does it matter whether or not something is true in terms of the debate?
5. What are the possible responses that members of the Jewish community on campus could do in reaction to this letter? Which of these responses is most productive? Who are possible allies you could engage in your response?
6. Who could you turn to in the Jewish community for support in dealing with this issue?
(If students don't list them, be sure to include: their hometown or local rabbi, KESHER, the Religious Action Center, Hillel, the ADL, their local Jewish Community Council and Federation.)

I. Wrap-up – answer any remaining questions

IV. Materials/Hand-outs

- A. “U.S. and Canadian Guarantees of Freedom of Press and Speech”
- B. “What Does Judaism Say about Free Speech”
- C. “Letter to the Editor: Jews Manipulate America” and the *Daily Illini* Letter Policy
- D. “Responses to Jews Manipulate America”

The Constitution of the United States of America

Preamble

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

THE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982

PART I: CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law:

Guarantee of Rights and Freedoms

1. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Fundamental Freedoms

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association.

What Does Judaism Say about Free Speech

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Jewish Values and Civil Liberties

Jewish tradition cherishes free speech. "When a person refrains from speech, the ideas die, the soul stops, and the senses deteriorate," said Moses ibn Ezra, insisting on respect for honest differences of opinion (*Shirat Yisrael* 12c). The assertion of unpopular opinions permeates the Bible: the prophet Nathan denouncing King David for having stolen Bathsheba from her husband; Elijah excoriating King Ahab for his evil doings; prophets chastising neighbors and ruling powers alike; Job asserting his innocence; Abraham arguing with God—these are but a few of the many examples of fiercely unpopular opinions freely and openly expressed.

If one reads the classic texts of the rabbinic era, the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, every page brims with the arguments both of the majority and of those who dissented from them, recognizing that each reflected aspects of God's truth. "These and these are the words of God," the Talmud observes about these disputes (*Eruvin* 13b). Implicit in such an approach was the realization that today's minority could be tomorrow's majority.

More information is available at www.rac.org//issues/issuecl.html.

Anti-Defamation League

Holocaust-Denial Advertisements.

- It is important that university officials be in touch with campus newspaper editors on a continuing basis to educate them about the nature of Holocaust denial, since campus newspaper staffs change from year to year. Outreach is needed well before any Holocaust-denial advertisements are received. Attempted intervention after the fact may be too late.
- Campus leaders need to educate campus editors on the background and agenda of Holocaust deniers such as Bradley Smith, David Irving and Ernst Zündel. Holocaust deniers belong to the larger hate movement and their message, though cleverly packaged, is really one of semicamouflaged anti-Semitism.
- Administrators should stress to the paper's editors that campus newspapers are under no legal or moral obligation to accept unsolicited advertising containing false, misleading and defamatory premises, and that commercial newspapers generally do not accept such advertising. Despite the claims of Holocaust deniers, this is not a legitimate First Amendment issue.
- Appropriate leaders of the academy, such as the university president and the chairs/members of the history department should be encouraged to take a public stand against the use of the campus newspaper to spread Holocaust-denial propaganda.

More information is available at www.adl.org/campus/guide/campus_bigotry.asp.

Letter to the Editor: Jews manipulate America

If living today, President Lincoln would say: "You can fool some of the people, some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time. Unfortunately, Jews will fool Americans forever."

During 40 years, there have been warnings that Jewish oppression of Palestinians, with American help, is unacceptable. Each warning has been bloodier than the others. The Jews, master salesmen that they are, have been able to persuade Americans that it is in American interests to support Israeli oppression of Palestinians. As a result, the clueless Americans, with no end in sight, are now paying a billion dollars daily for protection from Israeli-provoked terrorism and suffer demeaning inconveniences.

To stop anti-American terrorism, give the Gaza Strip, together with the West Bank, to Israel and buy the fake Kingdom of Jordan for a Palestinian state. Then in a couple of years the Israel-provoked terrorism will be a thing of the past.

Will it stop all terrorism? Probably not. Americans have successfully spread the Gospel of Democracy and Human Rights, while at the same time engendering much bitterness by supporting bloody despots. Too often defective foreign policy has been promoted as something in the interest of American people while in reality it was done to satisfy desires of Jewish oligarchs.

Current news from England tells us about discovery of a home stile lab producing potent ricine poison. Since this poison can be manufactured in every home, it constitutes the most serious threat ever. The President should act immediately to deal with this threat. First, separate Jews from all government advisory positions and give them one year fully paid sabbatical. No matter what sort of allegiance they have sworn to the United States, their true Jewish hearts are with Israeli, not American, interests. Secondly, the President should create a Palestinian state within 60 days. Only a free sovereign Palestine will stop poison cooking "homemakers."

Jewish ability to promote their desires, disguised, as being in the interest of the American people, one day will evaporate. Then the Jews might face another Holocaust. The Jews must be mad. The United States has given them a foundation for unprecedented world-wide influence and power but they are prepared to squander it all, for no apparent reason, oppressing Palestinians. Currently Jews have persuaded Americans to lure Iraqi scientists for interviews outside Iraq. Israeli security is prepared to assassinate these scientists.

Ariel Sinovsky

Seattle, Wash. resident

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Daily Illini Letters Policy

The *Daily Illini* reserves the right to edit any contributions and/or reject them without notification. Writers should limit their letters to 250 words. Longer letters on specific topics might run as a Forum. Forums must be no longer than 500 words.

Written contributions must be type-written and signed, and must include the writer's address and phone number. Unsigned letters will not be printed. University students should include their college and year in school. When referring to specific *Daily Illini* articles, please include the date and title.

Contributions submitted via e-mail must also include the above information. All materials should be directed to: Opinions editor, The *Daily Illini*, 57 E. Green St., Champaign, IL, 61820; or e-mail contributions to letters@dailyillini.com

Responses to Jews Manipulate America

From the Chancellor

Like many on this campus I have heard from today, I am appalled at the hateful and polarizing views put forward in a letter from a Seattle resident to Wednesday's Daily Illini. I have been asked for my response. It is the same as it was to the ads that appeared before the break. Hate speech is hate speech. It is designed to drive a wedge between people.

As we were all horrified by the mischaracterization of Americans around Sept. 11, we should be equally appalled at group-based generalizations about Arabs and Jews, Israelis and Palestinians. Ascribing hateful attributes to a group has been at the root of some of the worst atrocities in the history of the world. Wednesday's letter plays upon prejudices, demonizing millions of individuals.

When hateful speech enters the marketplace, its goal is to cut off thoughtful debate. I urge members of the University community to continue to respond to these outpourings of bigotry as members of a university should, through vigorous but civil debate and intergroup dialogue.

Our emphasis in these precarious times ought to be on how we come together to solve vexing social problems, remembering that we are all one people.

Nancy Cantor

Chancellor

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Letter from the editor

Dear readers,

Many readers have voiced concerns regarding a letter printed in The Daily Illini on Wednesday titled "Jews manipulate America." Many of you have called the newsroom and e-mailed the staff questions regarding our editorial policy and our decision to run controversial letters.

The following are some of our guidelines and responses to many of these questions:

- The editors of The Daily Illini do reserve the right to determine what letters are published and edit those letters we decide to run. But we are committed to giving all people a voice in our publication — even those views we find vile, distasteful or simply ridiculous. Our commitment to this mission often means we print the opinions of others with whom we do not agree. This was the case Wednesday.
- We do not print anonymous letters, letters without contact information or letters that slander private figures. The author of every letter is called to confirm authorship; we do not require that authors be listed in telephone directories.
- As is stated on the Opinions pages, the voice of submitted letters reflects the view of the author, not the staff or editorial board.

- It is difficult to read what many feel is racist, hateful or immature speech. But there is also grave danger in silencing these views based on the opinion of the editor or editorial staff. What is hate speech to one member of a society is free speech to another. While we might not agree with the letter, we defend the speech's right to a place in our paper. We choose to set the bar as far from self-censorship as is possible.
- We do not require that authors of letters be part of the University community; many letters were submitted by authors from other states or countries. While The Daily Illini seeks to serve the University community, some of our reporting is done in other states and countries, we run coverage from other universities on a daily basis, students are attracted to the campus from across the United States and alumni live in all areas of the globe. We do not want to restrict editorial opinions to those in the C-U area.
- While The Daily Illini seeks to serve the University community, we are an independent company, independently funded. The University is not responsible for our editorial decisions.
- This voice has the right to speech in our community's paper. But your speech has the same right. Please send your opinions or feelings to letters@dailyillini.com. If you would like to discuss this letter or any other concerns with me or the editorial board, please feel free to call the newsroom at 333-7411 or e-mail us at news@dailyillini.com.

Thank you,

Angie Leventis

Editor in chief

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Hiding behind the First Amendment

The decision to run the letter headlined "Jews manipulate America" was just one of the dozens of judgments any editor must make in a given day. Those decisions, ideally, are driven by a clear idea of what the paper stands for, and of how best the paper can serve its readers and its community.

That the letter was hateful in tone and offensive were not reasons, in themselves, enough to keep it off the pages of the DI. That it was not logical, coherent, well-written or from a member of the communities the DI serves, however, were very good reasons for not running it. We can agree to disagree about the editorial judgment to run the letter. But one thing DI editors and readers shouldn't do is hide behind the First Amendment. That protection states only that the government cannot tell the paper what not to run — or what to run. By the same token, running the letter had nothing to do with freedom of speech. To interpret the First Amendment as license — or even obligation — to run everything, all the time, is a bogus abdication of editorial responsibility, and a perversion of our most critical constitutional right.

Mike Knezovich

Urbana resident

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Wasting readers' time

The really offensive thing about the letter "Jews manipulate America" (Jan. 22) wasn't the writer's inarticulate rant, which can be ignored on account of mental illness. What's scary and sad was the go-ahead the editors gave to publish this fuzzy nonsense — from a writer with no connections to the University, no less.

I'm a former Daily Illini writer and editor (1982-85) who now edits a national magazine. Throughout my career, I have received correspondence from crackpots and cranks, none of which I even consider publishing. Some writers claim America is controlled by a communist, papal or Jewish conspiracy (or some variant); others sign their name as "J. Christ" (or some variant).

Good editors know there is no requirement — First Amendment or otherwise — for a respected publication to waste its readers' time and energy with garbage. That's what editorial judgment is all about. The Daily Illini isn't a listserv or blog.

Unfortunately, the editors who allowed "Jews manipulate America" to reach print and the web have launched the writer from deserved obscurity to a broad platform, thereby besmirching the DI's name and reputation.

I hope the editors eventually learn the difference between reasoned discourse that contributes to an informed debate (even if readers may disagree with the views expressed) and stream-of-consciousness ramblings from a troubled mind.

Ira Pilchen

Chicago resident

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Fostering healthy discussion

The Daily Illini did right to publish the letter "Jews manipulate America" (Jan. 22). Yes, the remarks were hateful and no, they do not contribute to a healthy discussion. It is true that only the most deluded anti-Semites would believe such unverified claims. However, it is the opinion of at least this one guy in Seattle, and, I would bet, of many people in this area as well. The reason we have newspapers is not to foster healthy discussion; it is to describe the world we live in. Thus the opinions section is meant to reflect the opinions of the people, and unfortunately many people share these destructive views.

Nick Georgopoulos

senior in FAA

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