

EXPLORING BLACK-JEWISH ALLIANCES IN AMERICA AND
ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Jason W. Epstein

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Daron K. Roberts, J.D.

College of Liberal Arts

Supervising Professor

Robert H. Abzug

Department of History

Second Reader

ABSTRACT

Author: Jason W. Epstein

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Black and Jewish communities collaborated substantially from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s. These efforts helped progress educational, political and social equality for Blacks and Jews in America. However, political, racial and economic factors have strained community ties in recent decades.

College students at campuses nationwide have begun reviving Black-Jewish relations through joint programming and dialogue. Yale University, The University of Texas at Austin and Brandeis University each house unique models of Black-Jewish collaboration. One-on-one dialogue, coupled with an intentional shift in perspective, can help combat implicit and explicit racial biases in society. The practical and psychological benefits of forming Black-Jewish student alliances on campus far outweigh the time commitment and obstacles that may arise.

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Chapter 1: Introductory Remarks

Introduction

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

Blacks and Jews. These two groups have both been marginalized in America for centuries, though they've encountered different struggles. The first Blacks came to America bound in chains, only to endure hundreds of years of brutal treatment in slavery. The American government outlawed formal slavery with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, but systematic oppression and bigotry persists and restricts Blacks from equal opportunity. The first Jewish representation came to America with the early colonial settlers, though the bulk of Jewish immigrants arrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Anti-Semitism had marinated in Europe for centuries, culminating with the destruction of Jewish businesses, the displacement of Jewish citizens and the murder of millions of Jews throughout the region.

One should never compare the struggles of Blacks and Jews in America. However, it is crucial to understand the similarities and differences between the everyday experiences of Blacks and Jews. Both rally within their own communities to fight external injustices in the forms of racism and anti-Semitism, respectively.

But they cannot do it alone. Throughout the 1900s, Blacks and Jews supported one another in addressing community needs. Through joint efforts, they promoted education, employment and basic civil rights for all Americans. These initiatives transcended political views and helped the two communities progress immensely. The

communities matched dreams with dollars, freedom with footsteps and adversity with advocacy. They were stronger together.

But, there have been disagreements. Opposing political views, shifting social statuses and ignorant public statements have fractured Black-Jewish dialogue in recent decades. New generations have begun to forget the rich relationships that existed with their former neighbors and ancestral allies. Jews have progressively rose the ranks in America to become over-represented. Conversely, skin color and prejudice has restricted the Black community from doing the same.

The growing trend of intersectionality shows promise for a revival of Black-Jewish collaboration. This resurrected relationship can help progress both causes, as historical initiatives have illustrated. And it needs to start in universities. Psychologically, college students are willing and able to reverse their subconscious implicit biases against other groups through education and awareness. Practically, Black and Jewish student organizations nationwide collaborate to host open dialogue and social events. Some of these alliances associate with larger umbrella organizations, while other break off entirely to increase their freedom in programming.

College students have both the resources and support systems to jumpstart Black-Jewish relations. Few colleges have formalized Black-Jewish alliances, but many universities dabble in Black-Jewish events. These one-off programs include religious meals, social game nights, puppet shows and even fraternity parties.

According to an FBI study on hate crimes, over half of race-based crimes in America have been committed against those of “Black and African American descent.” In the same study, over half of religious-based hate crimes have been committed against Jews.¹ Collaboration can help both communities stifle the rise of racism and anti-Semitism in America. Together, they can combat societal prejudice and fight for the equality and security of both groups.

As the UT slogan reads, “What starts here changes the world.” Initiatives and experiences in school modify the perspectives of those entering the working world. Together, Black and Jewish students must combat racism and anti-Semitism through advocacy and education, beginning in the college forum and extending beyond.

Association Test Shows Anti-Black and Anti-Jewish Results

Implicit biases manifest themselves inside the brain’s subconscious and influence people to make decisions accordingly. These biases may not align with one’s declared beliefs. Rather, they form unknowingly in response to experiences and perpetuate different ideas such as structural racism.²

One of these implicit biases is the negative perception of Black people. The most common way to identify the existence of one’s implicit biases is the Implicit Association Test. Created in 1998, this 5-10-minute assessment analyzes social perceptions beyond one’s awareness and conscious decision-making. Seventeen different IAT tests exist and within the first decade of its inception, more than five million IATs had been

¹ “2016 Hate Crime Statistics: Victims.” *FBI*.

² “Understanding Implicit Bias.” *Kirwan Institute*.

completed. Parallel demonstration sites have opened in 22 other countries in 16 languages.³ In these tests, 72 percent of respondents identified as White, while 6.7 percent identified as Black. Researchers analyze these empirical results to predict behaviors and discriminatory practices in the professional workplace, the health industry and the court room.

The “Race attitude” test was the most popular test of the 17 categories, generating 732,881 responses. This test assesses one’s preference for “African Americans” versus “European Americans,” roughly one’s implicit preference between Black people and White people. If a participant displays a preference, this preference is rated as “slight”, “moderate” or “strong”.

The results of the “Race attitude” test from 1998 to 2007 revealed an overwhelming preference for White people over Black people (Appendix A). To discover this, the IAT assessed individuals’ association between Black people and White people with positive and negative descriptors. The 2-part exercise operates via two keys on the keyboard, one on the left side and one on the right side. At the beginning of the test, the individual aims to correctly identify a picture of a face as White or Black by pressing one of the two keys. Next, one must press one key when presented with a positive descriptor and another key when presented with a negative descriptor. Finally, each identity is paired with a descriptor and one must press the correct key associated with the affiliated identity or descriptor that appears on the screen. Afterwards, the test is

³ Nosek, Brian A., et al. “Pervasiveness and Correlates of Implicit Attitudes and Stereotypes.” *European Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 18, no. 1, Nov. 2007, pp. 36–88.

repeated, with the descriptor-identity combination reversed. Participants are instructed to go as quickly as possible to most accurately depict the strength of their associations.

Other notable results from racial survey tests relate to skin tone and violence. Approximately 68% of participants paired “Black/dark-skin” with “Bad” and “White/light-skin” with “Good” more times than not. Also, White, American Indian, Hispanic and Multi-racial participants showed strong preferences for White over Black. Regarding violence, more participants showed stronger associations of Blacks with weapons than did with Whites (Appendix B).

One of the other 17 categories measured individuals’ preference for Judaism over other religions. In the implicit measurements, 50 percent of individuals preferred Judaism and only 26 percent preferred other religions. This remained consistent across ethnicities and political views, with White liberals expressing the strongest implicit preference for Jews.

However, this is another aspect of the test where Jewish preference went the opposite direction: explicit biases. After taking the implicit section of each IAT, individuals are requested to self-report their explicit biases about the category being assessed. This reflects how individuals consciously perceive their beliefs toward a group of people. Members of every ethnic group explicitly preferred other religions to Judaism. Black individuals represented the ethnicity with the strongest explicit preference for other religions over Judaism.

IAT assessments measure sufficiently the existence of implicit biases. But, how do we combat these biases? And more importantly, when is the optimal age to do so? The following case study provides insight into implicit bias reduction.

Reversing Implicit Biases in Children – A Study

In February 2017, the Society for Research in Child Development published a study about transforming implicit biases in young children. The researchers aimed to diminish children’s implicit racial attitudes to combat negative public perceptions of certain minority groups in youth settings, such as schools and play groups. This study featured 369 Caucasian and Asian children, aged between 5 and 12 years old.⁴

Researchers split the sample evenly into two groups: “older children” aged an average of 10 years old and “younger children” aged an average of 7 years old. This separation assessed if developmental differences factored into reducing implicit racial biases among children. Each participant completed an IAT test to assess their implicit bias levels before and after participating in the experiment.

Within each subgroup of the “younger children” and “older children,” participants were exposed to three conditions. The base condition exposed the children to vignettes of flowers, predicting no change in implicit race biases. The second condition exposed participants to pictures of famous White individuals. Participants were expected to increase their Pro-White bias following this exposure. The third condition exposed participants to positive Black exemplars, with the intention of countering societal

⁴ Gonzalez, Antonya M., et al. “Reducing Children’s Implicit Racial Bias Through Exposure to Positive Out-Group Exemplars.” *Child Development*, vol. 88, no. 1, 2017, pp. 123–30. *PubMed*.

stereotypes about Pro-White biases and diminishing the children's implicit biases against Blacks.

Within the group of "older children," there was a noticeable shift in personal biases upon exposure to positive Black exemplars. Participants reduced both their anti-Black bias and pro-White bias. However, there was no noticeable shift among the "younger children" in the study. This sheds light into how developmental differences affect the reduction of implicit biases. Researchers concluded that "younger children" may not understand the implications of their biases yet, making it very difficult for them to change them. So, the low end of reducing implicit biases exists around age 10.

However, this may not be the optimal age nor optimal methodology to reduce implicit biases. Later in the paper, I will highlight another implicit bias case study performed on college-aged students. While research on implicit biases continues to develop, explicit successes and struggles between Blacks and Jews are evident, as illustrated in the subsequent sections.

Chapter 2: Highpoints in History

Beginning of the Road to Freedom

The Black and Jewish communities in America have endured different hardships, though their freedoms became linked by Black activist Marcus Garvey. In the early 19th century, Black and White abolitionists disagreed on the resettling location of freed slaves. One side supported relocation within America, allowing these citizens to fight for the freedom of those still enslaved. The other side supported resettlement to Africa, an idea proposed by a White organization called the American Colonization Society. Specifically, this organization proposed shipping freed slaves to Liberia, a colony in west Africa established in 1822 for this exact purpose.⁵

In 1920, Garvey made a similar pitch advocating heavily for the Back-to-Africa Movement.⁶ Few people supported Garvey's cause, concerned about uprooting themselves and their families to return to a continent pillaged by the slave trade. Most African-Americans were American citizens and viewed Africa as their ancestral roots, not as a place to relocate. Still, Garvey's push spurred a conversation in the Black community about the yearning for security and self-determination. "There are twelve million negroes in this country," Garvey said in an interview with the *New York World Magazine*. "Many white men have tried to uplift them, but the only way is for the negroes to have a nation of their own, like the Jews, that will command the respect of the world

⁵ Cuffee, Paul, et al. "Colonization - The African-American Mosaic Exhibition." *Library of Congress*, 23 July 2010.

⁶ "The Back to Africa Movement: From the American Colonization Society to Marcus Garvey." *Middle Tennessee State University*.

with its achievements.”⁷ This notion of “Black Zionism” linked the Black and Jewish causes as persecuted peoples seeking autonomy and security. The Back-to-Africa movement became a cornerstone through which many African Americans preserved their African roots and persevered through racial discrimination in America.⁸

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring Blacks legally free in southern areas of America. But that didn’t erase pseudo-slavery and discrimination toward Blacks. As such, Black civil rights leaders mobilized to establish organizations committed to the fight for the equal rights of Blacks and other marginalized groups.

In the early 1900s, Jewish leaders helped their Black counterparts in founding numerous civil rights organizations. In 1909, W.E.B. Du Bois led a group of founders, including Jewish leaders Julius Rosenthal, Lillian Wald, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Stephen Wise and Henry Malkewitz; to create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On September 29, 1910, Blacks and Jews united again to form the Committee on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, which later merged with two other groups to become the National Urban League. The first two presidents of the NAACP were Jewish and a Jewish professor at Columbia served as chairman of the National Urban League from 1911-13. Other civil rights initiatives cofounded during this

⁷ “The Purple-Robed Champion of ‘Africa for the Africans.’” *The Literary Digest*, Volume 66: Part 2, Page 329, 4 Sept. 1920.

⁸ “Black and Jewish Relations, An Article.” *African American Registry: A Non-Profit Education Organization*, 23 Sept. 2002.

time include the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.⁹

Washington and Rosenwald Enhance Education in South

In the early 1900s, civil rights leader Booker T. Washington sought educational reform within the Black community. Born a slave, Washington used his life savings to attend Hampton Institute at age 16. Upon completion of his degree, he recognized that African American schools failed to help Black students succeed beyond graduation. Washington established the Tuskegee Institute in 1881 in Tuskegee, Alabama. In his 34 years at the Tuskegee Institute, Washington turned it into “one of the most important and innovative education institutions in the United States – white or black.”¹⁰ He lectured, fundraised and committed to community outreach to build the school, gearing campaigns toward Northern White philanthropists like Julius Rosenwald, a wealthy Jewish businessman.

Rosenwald was born to Jewish German immigrants and raised in Illinois. He received limited formal education and dropped out of high school at age 17 to attend trade school. Rosenwald jumped around jobs for a few years before investing successfully in Sears, Roebuck and Company. He put his wealth toward philanthropic endeavors, beginning with Jewish institutions in Chicago. After reading about Washington’s rise from slavery and educational initiatives, Rosenwald added Black charities to his list of recipients.

⁹ “Historical Alliance of Blacks and Jews.” *Cultural Leadership*.

¹⁰ Ciomek, Summer Anne. “The History, Architecture, and Preservation of Rosenwald Schools in Georgia.” *University of Georgia*, 2007.

Washington and Rosenwald first met at a luncheon in Chicago in 1911, after which Rosenwald donated \$25,000 to Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Washington upgraded both school facilities and faculties with the funds, allocating the last \$2,800 to build six rural public schools. Their partnership led to the construction of 80 schools before Washington died just four years into the project. Rosenwald later established the "Julius Rosenwald Fund" to continue this endeavor. In total, Rosenwald donated more than \$70 million to public schools, colleges, universities and Black and Jewish charities. And his influence went beyond his monetary contributions. In each instance, Rosenwald committed to contributing one-third of the necessary funding, prompting the local Black community and other members of the White community to become invested as well.¹¹ In total, seed money from the Julius Rosenwald Fund helped construct over 5,000 schools in 15 southern states. By 1950, over 40 percent of southern Blacks were educated in one of the institutions funded by Julius Rosenwald.¹²

HBCU's Provide Refuge for Jewish German Professors

Jews weren't immune from educational setbacks, either. During the Holocaust, Hitler and the Nazi regime exploited growing anti-Semitism in the region and imposed discriminatory laws on Jews and other minorities. The government barred Jewish German professors from civil service and academic positions, prompting a mass immigration of Jewish professors to the United States. The most prestigious professors, such as Albert Einstein, found jobs and continued to teach. However, ordinary

¹¹ Hostein, Lisa. "New Film, 'Rosenwald,' Tells Story of Jewish Philanthropist Who Transformed Black Lives." *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 17 July 2015.

¹² "Jews and the Civil Rights Movement." *Religious Action Center*.

educators entered America unemployed and plagued with the undesirable foreign immigrant status. “They soon found themselves in a strange and mysterious country, a nation reeling from the Depression and filled with anti-Semitic and anti-German sentiment,” the African American registry states. “They discovered a new form of persecution in the Jim Crow South.”¹³

During that time, segregation in America extended to all aspects of society, including education. Accordingly, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to provide Black students with higher education. While no other non-Black faculty taught there, HBCUs opened their doors to Jewish German professors, providing these refugees with jobs. These professors fleeing persecution seemed to relate better to Black students and professors than most fair-skinned people. “I came from a situation of forced segregation where we were victims, and now I belonged not to the oppressed, but to the oppressor,” said Ernst Moritz Manasse, an immigrant Greek philosophy expert who taught at the North Carolina College for Negroes. One of his students grew to be a prominent Charlotte civil rights attorney, while another student became a Fulbright scholar and leading expert on ballistic missile defense at MIT.

While teaching at HBCUs, many Jewish German professors welcomed Black and White faculty alike for dinner celebrations and discussions. Others faced legal trouble for engaging with their Black colleagues in public. Donald Rasmussen and his wife Lore, a Jewish refugee from Germany, were arrested for sitting with the executive director of the Southern Negro Youth Congress in a Black restaurant. They were fined \$28,

¹³ “Jewish Prof’s and HBCU’s.” *African American Registry: A Non-Profit Education Organization*, 4 Apr. 1933.

charged with violating Birmingham's segregation code for dining with Blacks and accused of inciting a riot in the process. Despite this, the Rasmussens' children worked in a Black-owned cooperative store and the family continued to actively participate in the Civil Rights Movement. In 2003, Talladega College presented both Donald and Lore with honorary doctorate degrees for their "contributions to education and [their] untiring fight to ensure human rights."¹⁴

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel Unite

Perhaps the most well-documented Black-Jewish relationship existed between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel was born in 1907 in Warsaw, Poland and immigrated to Berlin in 1929 to study at the University of Berlin. There, he witnessed Hitler's rise to power, including the burning of the German Reichstag (parliament) building in 1933. In October 1938, the Gestapo arrested Heschel in the middle of the night and deported him, and his Jewish counterparts with Polish passports, back to Poland. Just six weeks before the German invasion of Poland, Heschel escaped to London and eventually America in 1940, where he taught at Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.¹⁵

Born in 1929, King grew up in Atlanta, Georgia in a religious household. Both King's grandfather and father served as successful pastors of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. King's educational aptitude showed early on as he skipped two grades at Booker T. Washington High School. He enrolled in Morehouse College at age 15. After

¹⁴ Sanderson, Kristin. "Former Principal Don Rasmussen (1916-2013). *The Miquon School*, 4 Nov. 2013.

¹⁵ Heschel, Abraham J. *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*. 16 May 1997.

college, he engaged religious institutions into the Civil Rights Movement by community outreach and co-founding the Southern Christian Leadership Churches in 1957.¹⁶

Heschel and King first met at a conference on Religion and Race on January 14, 1963, organized by the National Conference for Christians and Jews in Chicago. Biblically, both clergy identified strongly with the Exodus narrative. At this gathering, Heschel compared the Jews wandering in the desert to American citizens fighting for civil rights. There is an episode in the bible, Heschel explained, where the Israelites are parched and cry out to Moses for clean water. “What shall we drink?” Heschel chanted. “We want adequate education, decent housing, proper employment.” In sermons at marches and churches, King drew parallels between civil rights activists and the Moses liberating the Jews from Egypt. Both arduous tasks, but both necessary nonetheless.

Heschel served as a key figure in Jewish history, as well as a respected clergyman in the broader secular community. A few days before the Selma March, Heschel led 800 protestors to the FBI headquarters in New York City. Though much of the group stayed outside, Heschel entered the building and presented a petition to the regional FBI director, accompanied by 60 police officers. King recognized Heschel’s efforts on March 19, two days before the Selma march, when he sent Heschel a telegram invitation to join in the march. Upon Heschel’s arrival, King brought Heschel to the front row to march alongside himself. Heschel endured hatred from the White community in Alabama during this time, but he persisted through the march.¹⁷ Heschel recalls conversations with King during the march. “Dr. King expressed several times

¹⁶ “Martin Luther King Jr.” *Biography*.

¹⁷ Heschel, Susannah. “God and Society in Heschel and King.” *MLK + 50*.

to me his appreciation,” Heschel recounted. “He said, ‘I cannot tell you how much your presence means to us. You cannot imagine how often Reverend [C.T.] Vivian and I speak about you.’” Heschel even invited King to attend Heschel’s Passover Seder that was to take place on April 16, 1968 – 12 days after King was assassinated.

Just ten days before his assassination, King attended the 68th Rabbinical Assembly to show solidarity with the Jewish community. At this assembly, King met with rabbis to discuss controversial issues and solidify Black-Jewish relations in America. The leaders at the Rabbinical Assembly addressed many questions, including the recent uptick of anti-Semitism within the Black community. King recognized this trend and addressed it methodically before a crowd. First, he distinguished between the hate of the Black community and historic anti-Semitism. In the past, King said, anti-Semitism was based on two “false, sick, evil assumptions”: that Jews are innately inferior, and that the Jewish religion should be shamed and held responsible for killing Jesus.¹⁸ King believed modern anti-Semitism in the Black community did not align with these prior ideologies, but rather stemmed from a combination of unethical business practices and age-old stereotypes about Jews and money.

King traced this hatred to the urban Northern ghettos, where Black and Jewish communities once lived among each other peacefully and isolated from the neighboring affluent areas. In the North, many Jews strengthened Black-Jewish ties by supporting the Black community and playing active roles in the Civil Rights Movement. Yet also, Blacks encountered Jewish storekeepers and landlords, like other White citizens,

¹⁸ “Conversation with Martin Luther King.” *Sixty-Eighth Rabbinical Assembly*. 25 Mar. 1968.

racially discriminated against people of color. Black patrons were charged the “color tax”, or premiums on basic products simply due to their race. Jewish participation in these acts led to an increase in Black contempt of the Jews. In addition, an anti-Semitic stereotype was created in the Middle Ages about Jews stealing money. At that time, both the Church and the State appointed Jewish money lenders and tax collectors to serve citizens, as the authority prohibited usury among Christians. Since the Jews handled all the money in society, they became scapegoats and blamed for inevitable, cyclical financial crises. Between the exploitative business practices of some White, Jewish businessmen and the perpetual myth of Jews mishandling funds, anti-Semitism marinated within the homes and communities of Blacks in America.

Another fracturing element in the two communities, sourced in politics, severed a rift in Black-Jewish relations from the 1960s to date: Israel. King recognized that opinions varied in the Black community regarding support for Israelis, Palestinians, neither or both. One extreme perspective condemned any people they did not consider “of color”, meaning Israel in this scenario. This was a minority view. As for his personal beliefs on the situation, King vouched for peace in the Middle East – for both Israel and the Arab world. For Israel, he noted the importance of its right to exist, territorial integrity and security. For the Arab world, King believed peace meant obtaining the economic security to improve third-world conditions of hunger, illiteracy, and disease. Overall, King’s vocal support of the State of Israel in the late 1960s became a testament to his positive relationship with the Jewish community.

In response, the rabbis at the convention addressed concerns in the Black community as well. “What can we best do as rabbis to further the rights and equal

status of our colored brethren?” Rabbi Everett Gendler asked. “What specific role do you think we as rabbis can play in this current civil rights struggle?” King noted the need for religious institutions to openly address racism as an attitudinal problem. Just like with anti-Semitism, King requested religious institutions improve their education to erase myths and half-truths disseminated against Blacks. In addition, King requested both physical and financial support from the Jewish community in the Civil Rights Movement and help to prop up Black institutions around the country.

At the end of the Rabbinical Assembly, Gendler reflected on his and Heschel’s relationship with King. “King, recall the words of Professor Heschel at the beginning of this evening,” Rabbi Gendler said. “He spoke of the word, the vision, and the way that you provide. We certainly have heard words of eloquence, words which at the same time were very much to the point...Thank you, King.” The direct relationship between the Jewish community and King would conclude in the coming days, largely concluding Black-Jewish ties in America after King’s assassination. Modern-day activists frequently reference stories of the friendship between Jewish clergy and King. The close relationship between these positive community exemplars epitomizes the mutually beneficial potential of Black-Jewish relations.

Chapter 3: Disagreement on Key Issues

Affirmative Action Creates Rift in Black-Jewish Relations

After King died, Black-Jewish relations stagnated and diminished in subsequent decades. In 1978, the Jewish response to a court ruling left many in the Black community feeling betrayed by their allies. In *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the University of California challenged a previous ruling that the school system had unfairly rejected a White male because of his race. This applicant, Alan Bakke, earned MCAT scores, GPA, and benchmark scores “significantly higher” than the scores of some of the minorities admitted during the time. Yet he was rejected twice from the Medical School of the University of California at Davis [UC Davis]. He argued to the California Supreme Court that the policy of maintaining quotas to reserve spots for minorities like “Blacks,” “Chicanos,” “Asians,” and “American Indians” was unjust and a violation of the Constitution. Specifically, he claimed the quota policy violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This title prohibits “discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.”¹⁹

The California Supreme Court ruled that, “No applicant may be rejected because of his race, in favor of another who is less qualified, as measured by standards applied without regard to race.”²⁰ The University of California argued in its appeal to the United States Supreme Court that these quotas were crucial in promoting diversity amongst the students. The Black community called on the Jewish community for support. But the

¹⁹ “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1064 42 U.S.C. § 2000D Et Seq.” *The United States Department of Justice*, 1964.

²⁰ McBride, Alex. “*Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978).” *PBS.org*, December 2006.

Jewish community viewed the case differently. While it supported equal opportunities for minorities and valued affirmative action, it took issue with the quota concept. Prestigious institutions, such as the Ivy League schools, had used quotas to limit Jewish admission during the 20th century. So, Jewish institutions spoke out in support of Bakke instead.

Justice Lewis Franklin Powell wrote the final decision stating that in a vote of 5-4, the UC Davis medical school could no longer use quotas as a preclusive factor in the process of admissions. However, a state can still consider race as one of many factors in its admissions process, on a case-by-case basis.

The Jewish community applauded the ruling and clarified its stance that universities should continue to utilize affirmative action to help marginalized groups advance in America. “We continue to support effective affirmative action programs based on economic, cultural and social disadvantages designed to provide opportunities for employment and education to those whom have been denied them,” said the American Jewish Congress (AJC), an organization committed to fighting for the civil rights and civil liberties of minorities.²¹ The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a Jewish organization committed to speaking up against anti-Semitism and other forms of hate, responded in a similar manner. After hearing the Jewish response and support for the Supreme Court ruling, the head of the Urban League decided to not attend the AJC press conference. Even though Jewish community members supported affirmative action, their positive response toward the ruling caused great debate between Black and Jewish organizations in America.

²¹ “Jewish Organizations Hail Court Ruling in Bakke Case; Say It Vindicates Their Stand Against Quotas.” *JTA*. 29 June 1978.

The “Movement for Black Lives” Targets Israel

More recently, another source of division has festered between Blacks and Jews. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been debated among the Black community for decades, though the recent difference in opinion stems from rhetoric within the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. BLM platforms promote Black unity and encourage people to rally around unjust occurrences, such as the shootings of unarmed Black teenagers and police brutality motivated by racial bias. BLM supporters organize demonstrations and circulate social media posts with the tagline, “Black Lives Matter,” to unify over a common cause. Overwhelmingly, Jews support the movement. According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Social Policy and Understand (ISPU), 57 percent of Jews support BLM, a higher percentage than Catholics, Protestants, the general public, and the non-affiliated.²²

Despite the Jewish support for BLM, across America Jews feel betrayed by their Black allies over a harsh political statement. In 2016, over 50 Black organizations, under the united name “The Movement for Black Lives” (MBL), released an extensive platform that lists concerns within the Black community. BLM leaders were some of the main contributors to this resolution that was issued “in response to the sustained and increasingly visible violence against Black communities in the U.S. and globally.”²³ The resolution is titled “A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands For Black Power, Freedom and Justice” and lists six “demands”: “End the War on Black People,” “Reparations,” “Invest-Divest,” “Economic Justice,” “Community Control” and “Political Power.” Most of

²² Ochieng, Akinyi. “Black-Jewish Relations Intensified and Tested By Current Political Climate.” *NPR*, 23 Apr. 2017.

²³ “Platform.” *The Movement for Black Lives*.

the platform points are geared toward domestic policy and improving the lives of Blacks in America.

However, one recommendation within the “Invest-Divest” section targets Israel and its treatment of Palestinian citizens. The overall recommendation focuses on cutting discretionary foreign military spending to reallocate toward domestic social programs. This includes America’s foreign military aid to Israel.²⁴ “The US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people.” This bullet labels Israel, the one Jewish State, “an apartheid state.” Since its inception, Israel has fought eight wars and countries, such as Iran, are committed to its destruction. American foreign military aid helps protect Israel from both domestic and foreign missile attacks, among other uses. Anyone reserves the right to question Israel’s policies and actions, as with any country. But many Jews believe that vouching for an end of Israeli foreign aid equates to challenging the existence of the Jewish State.

Other matters discussed in the section criticize the allocation of American funds to the prison system and various government-funded programs. This specific condemnation of Israel fails to identify the complexities of the issue and illegitimately questions the Israeli government’s policies. On a federal level, the platform recommends launching divestment campaigns toward Israel. On the state level, the platform urges people to fight the anti-Boycott Divestment Sanction (BDS) bills that are being passed in states across America. The BDS campaign encourages companies to

²⁴ “Invest-Divest.” *The Movement for Black Lives*.

boycott, divest and sanction Israeli products – a movement the American government consistently deems not only anti-Israel but anti-Semitic. In response, states have begun signing these anti-BDA bills. Twenty-four states have already passed anti-BDS legislation and 12 more states have legislation pending.²⁵

Ben Ndugga-Kabuye, a co-author of this platform passage, defends the language used to describe Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. He says he wants to prompt action within the government and just as the resolution is separated into "demands," he believes phrasing is key. "The way we look at it is, we take strong stances," Ndugga-Kabuye said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.²⁶ He works as an organizer in New York City for the Black Alliance for Just Immigration.

Even though this resolution issued by MBL is primarily about the demand for Black rights, Ndugga-Kabuye said this statement as relevant as he deems these two causes linked. He equates the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians to tension between the American government and Black citizens – a strategy commonly employed by Palestinian activists on college campuses.

But Jewish community members and organizations, from conservative to liberal ideologies, condemn this rhetoric found in the MBL platform. Many have since broken ties with affiliated groups. Even progressive Jewish organizations like the Anti-Defamation League and the National Council of Jewish Women [NCJW] condemn the statements. "While we are deeply concerned about the ongoing violence and the human rights violations directed at both Israelis and Palestinians," the NCJW said in a

²⁵ "Legislation." *Palestine Legal*.

²⁶ "Black Lives Matter Author Defends Platform Accusing Israel of 'Genocide.'" *Jerusalem Post*, 10 Aug. 2016.

statement, “We believe the terms ‘genocide’ and ‘apartheid’ are inaccurate and inappropriate to describe the situation.”

The entire MBL platform does not represent the views of the entire Black community. However, its inclusion of the anti-Israel statement has led the Jewish community to question the motives of BLM activists and supporters.

Chapter 4: Reducing Implicit Biases in College Students

There is precedent for Black-Jewish relations in America on a professional life. However, introducing initiatives in earlier years brings psychological benefits as well.

University of Wisconsin - Madison – A Study

Four researchers at the University of Wisconsin – Madison conducted a study where they tested implicit bias reduction through education and exposure.²⁷ Published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* in 2012, this study offers effective ways to not just reduce, but break down implicit biases. In prior studies, researchers viewed implicit biases as inherent beliefs. Their procedures aimed to change participants' beliefs about a specific race, religion or ethnicity. In this study, researchers identified the nature of implicit biases in different terms.

They treated implicit biases like habits. Just like breaking habits, they believed the process of breaking implicit biases took time and effort. “The implicit system is highly contextual and only changes in an enduring way after considerable time, effort, and/or intensity of experience,” the study reads. Breaking implicit biases required an intentional, proactive mindset.

Researchers created a three-step process for participants to address and treat their implicit biases: develop motivation to break the biases, learn how to identify situations that prompt the biases and determine alternatives to replace the biases.

²⁷ Devine, Patricia G., et al. “Long-Term Reduction in Implicit Race Bias: A Prejudice Habit-Breaking Intervention.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 48, no. 6, Nov. 2012, pp. 1267–78. *PubMed Central*.

The two sources of motivation to break implicit biases are awareness and concern. First, people must acknowledge their biases exist affect decision-making, even when created unintentionally. Second, people must express discomfort toward the negative effects and consequences of their implicit biases.

Once people develop awareness and concern, they can identify environments where these biases may emerge and brainstorm ways to address them. It's a common understanding that biases surface in states of impaired judgment, but they also appear in everyday settings. Identifying these settings prepares a person to handle the inevitable situations as they arise. In the study, a sample participant identified a college house party as prime breeding ground for the appearance of implicit biases. Alcohol, music and social pressure can augment one to revert to heuristics, or instinctual shortcuts, in their conversation and behavior. In one instance, the participant recounts his reaction when two "tall and strong" African American males walked into the party. The participant immediately assumed these men were on the football team. Thinking back to study, consciously the participant retracted his thought, realizing it had stemmed from a racial stereotype and implicit bias. The two men were, inevitably, on the football team. However, after personal conversations with them, the participant decided their depth extended well beyond their athletic abilities. The participant's initial profile subjected the two men to their appearance and athletic abilities, rather than their personalities and individual forms of expression.

In the final step of combatting implicit biases, participants must develop unprejudiced alternatives to replace the biased responses. In the athlete incident, the participant's replacement strategy involved viewing the men as ordinary party-goers.

This enabled him to reform his initial response and become more aware of this implicit bias for future situations.

Reduction from one-shot exposure is likely to be “highly contextual and short-lived,” according to research on dual-process theories in psychology. Accordingly, the researchers in this study exposed the participants to a 12-week program. These longer, methodical methods allowed the participants to reflect on the exposure, apply their acquired knowledge and return periodically to assess their progress in combatting implicit biases.

Ninety-one non-Black introductory psychology students at the University of Wisconsin - Madison partook in this study for course credit. Sixty-seven percent of the students were female, and 85 percent of the students were White. Participants were randomly assigned to either a control condition or an intervention condition, with more students in the intervention condition to provide sufficient data to analyze this condition. The results of preliminary IAT tests revealed that 90 percent of the sample had a pro-White implicit bias. In addition, explicit tests were conducted to assess the participants' awareness of their prejudicial tendencies and concern about discrimination in society. Preliminary IAT and explicit test results were compared against later tests in the experiment to track the change in implicit and explicit biases in the two conditions. After each participant in the control group completed the initial IAT test, they were dismissed. The intervention group, on the other hand, participated in a bias education and training program.

In this program, participants read material that associated implicit racial biases and thoughts with discriminatory behaviors in personal, employment and health-based

settings. For the training program, participants were supplied a variety of bias reduction strategies to apply to their lives. The five strategies were as follows:

- stereotype replacement – replacing stereotypical responses with non-stereotypical responses;
- counter-stereotypic imaging – utilizing positive exemplar imagery to combat stereotypes;
- individualization – evaluating members of a target group personally instead of as group;
- perspective taking – taking the first-person perspective of a member of a stereotyped group; and
- increasing opportunities for contact – seeking more encounters with “out-group” members

At the end of the experiment, the intervention group posted lower IAT scores than the control group. This intervention did not show one-shot progress at a point in the experiment, but rather an incremental change over time. The intervention procedures continued to modify the participants over the course of the study, with similar levels of bias reduction at both the 4-week and 8-week marks.

While the implicit biases were altered, data showed no change in most of the explicit biases of the intervention population. Neither the participants’ reported racial attitudes nor their inclinations to respond in situations with explicit prejudice diminished during the study. However, one explicit bias, the motivation to change, became heightened during the experiment. Participants became both more aware and more concerned with their prejudice-relevant discrepancies that stemmed from their implicit

biases. This motivational shift during the study will prompt the individuals to begin to identify and address their biases going forward, just like those beginning to kick bad habits.

Chapter 5: Conflict on Campus

These implicit and explicit biases have manifested themselves at three universities in recent years: Yale University (“Yale”), the University of Texas at Austin (“Texas”) and Brandeis University (“Brandeis”). Each of the following sections highlights a conflict and a response from the targeted minority community involved. In addition, these three universities host Black-Jewish dialogue on campus, with current initiatives dating back four or five years. The nuanced Black-Jewish collaboration in college mirrors the dynamic nature of Black-Jewish relations across America.

Minorities Targeted by Yale Faculty and Students

Different forms of Black-Jewish relations have existed on Yale’s campus for many years. The most recent wave of collaboration came amidst racial tension on campus in Fall 2015 sparked by two events in late October and early November. Just before Halloween, the Intercultural Affairs Committee sent out a routine email to students requesting they avoid wearing “culturally unaware and insensitive” costumes that might marginalize minorities on campus.²⁸ Erika Christakis, the Associate Master of one of Yale’s residential colleges, issued a response to this email in a statement to the students in her residence hall. She expressed frustration over the email’s limitation of students’ freedom of individual expression.

Christakis’ statement incited immediate protests of hundreds of students. These students, mostly from minority groups, expressed their sense of insecurity on Yale’s campus as members of marginalized communities. Hours of debate ensued in the

²⁸ Stack, Liam. “Yale’s Halloween Advice Stokes a Racially Charged Debate.” *The New York Times*, 8 Nov. 2015.

center of campus between students and Christakis' husband, also a faculty member at the university. The couple resigned from their posts the following semester.²⁹

That same weekend, a student accused a Yale fraternity of racially discriminating against minority women. The student recounts getting to the door of the party and being turned away by a fraternity member who said, "No, we're only looking for white girls." This, too, led to protests of hundreds of Yale students. Two months later, the Yale College Dean's Office issued a statement informing the students that no disciplinary action would be taken since no conclusive evidence was found of the incident.³⁰ Regardless, this episode, detailed on Facebook, prompting responses from other students with similar experiences. Neither of these incidents occurred directly between the Black and Jewish community, but they prompted collaboration nonetheless.

Anti-Semitism Arises in Texas Elections

In Spring 2018, student government elections fostered division and animosity, specifically between the Black and Jewish communities at Texas. It stemmed from a series of tweets issued by a student government vice presidential candidate, as well a tweet from the official campaign account of hers and her running mate. This candidate, a Black student, had expressed frustration with certain groups of people such as Whites, men and Zionists. These tweets appeared over a series of time, but one in particular upset the Jewish community on campus when the campaign account

²⁹ Hartocollis, Anemona. "Yale Professor and Wife, Targets of Protests, Resign as College Heads." *The New York Times*, 26 May 2016.

³⁰ Miller, Michael. "Yale Investigation Finds 'No Evidence' of Racism at Frat Party Alleged to Have Been for 'White Girls Only'." *The Washington Post*, 11 Dec. 2015.

“favorited” a tweet of someone who was “tired of straight white Zionist men in power.”³¹

The presidential alliance was suspended for campaigning following an anonymous complaint, but later reinstated after the Election Supervisory Board decided this action did not violate election standards.

Students quickly deemed both the statement and the author anti-Semitic. However, this anti-Semitic remark seemed to stem from a place of ignorance and lack of understanding, rather than malicious intent. Merriam-Webster defines the term “Zionist” as “an international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national or religious community in Palestine and later for the support of modern Israel.”³² For the Jewish community, this term largely describes the right to self-determination of a Jewish State, similar to the first definition issued by Merriam Webster. The latter part of the definition, referring to the support for Israel, raises confusion and controversy due to the multidimensional nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In response to these tweets, a Jewish student created a Facebook post that generated 766 reactions, 112 shares, and 43 comments as of April 30, 2018 (Appendix C). In this post, he expressed concern about what he referred to as “hateful anti-Semitic rhetoric” coming from the campaign. A week later, the Jewish community followed up with a statement detailing its concern with the campaign and the subsequent anti-Semitism of the campaign supporters.³³ This statement discussed the “marginalization

³¹ Davis, Delaney. “The Tweet Heard ‘Round The World.” *The Texas Orator*, 5 April 2018.

³² “Zionism: Definition of Zionism.” *Merriam-Webster*.

³³ “Jewish Response to Recent Anti-Semitism at UT.” 20 Mar. 2018.

of the Jewish people” and the failure to include the Jewish community in intersectionality on campus.

The Vice President of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement met with members of the Black and Jewish community to assuage the situation. In this meeting, leaders from the Jewish community discussed the concerns of Jewish students and brainstormed action items to better educate students on campus about the existence and threat of subtle forms of anti-Semitism. Two weeks later, Texas Hillel hosted a multicultural dinner open to the community. Thirty students from more than seven different identities, including a few students from the Black community, gathered to eat a hot meal and discuss one another’s cultural upbringings. Printed questions were provided to jumpstart conversation, but the attendees hardly used them as natural conversations flowed throughout the evening.

The student government campaign poked a hole in the Black-Jewish relationship on campus. But just as with mending physical injuries, the two communities assessed the damage and began to strengthen the relationship between the Jewish community and the multicultural community on campus. Before this incident, Black and Jewish communities had gathered a few times to discuss shared experiences and historical Black-Jewish collaboration in America. After this event, there is a heightened awareness of the need for to go beyond community similarities, and emphasize the unique aspects of Judaism, including being subject to anti-Semitism. increased education and understanding about anti-Semitism and racist alike will better equip the Black and Jewish communities, as well as the Texas community, to be more aware of the destructive power of words.

Anonymous ‘Confessions’ Post Sparks Controversy

In Spring 2018, another social media incident fragmented Black-Jewish relations at Brandeis. It started when a student submitted a post to a Facebook Group called Brandeis Confessions. The “pinned post” in the Facebook Group lays out the group guidelines as follows: “This is completely anonymous. Put down any confession, story, question or comment you want to make about Brandeis or yourself. No hate towards anyone!” Next to this post, Facebook users can find a link to a Google Form where students, or anyone with a Facebook account, can submit “confessions” anonymously. If the submissions follow the group guidelines, they will be posted on the Brandeis Confessions Facebook page. As of March 31, 2018, 746 “confessions” had been posted.

On March 17, 2018, post #365 was published in Brandeis Confessions and read as follows: “As a black woman on campus I often feel assaulted by Orthodox Jewish boys because I’m so different from them. Honestly considering transferring” (Appendix D).

This statement carried glaring insights into the Brandeis campus climate. First off, the person who submitted this post used the word “assaulted” to describe her response to Orthodox Jewish boys. This post does not detail what the assault has entailed, but “assault” is an especially heavy term used to describe a serious encounter on a college campus today. Next, the woman attributed her discomfort to her cultural differences from the Orthodox Jewish boys on campus. Again, the differences were not specifically identified. However, this highlights an expressed concern of Black students at Brandeis, and specifically Black women, of feeling different.

Immediate responses mirrored the magnitude of the post. The first responder deemed the original post “borderline anti-Semitic” and noted his frustration with the anonymous post criticizing an entire sect of Judaism. His post received 49 “likes.” The second comment on the post mentioned diversity and inclusion, but he reverted to challenging the anonymous author’s character instead of words. This, too, did not welcome discussion.

Just five days later, post #462 recognized and legitimized the frustrations of both sides. (Appendix E). Post #462 acknowledged the original author of post #365 may have experienced past racist encounters with Orthodox Jews on campus. At the same time, the author of the new post noted the Orthodox Jewish community reserved the right to be frustrated with the generalization of an entire group.

Social media forums are notorious for instigating anonymous feuds. In fact, “Confessions” groups exist in universities and youth groups across America.³⁴ Students enjoy reading the content for comic relief and shared understanding. However, these groups are not conducive to productive discussion nor addressing key social issues, such as race and religion. Hot topics and misunderstandings create the need for multicultural campus experiences and discussion groups, such as Brandeis Bridges. Made up of Black and Jewish students, Brandeis Bridges provides learning opportunities for those involved, but also creates de facto point people within the communities to reach out to with questions and concerns.

³⁴ Diluna, Amy. “Anonymous Facebook Group Allows Poor College Students to Speak Out.” *NBC News*, 3 Nov. 2015.

When the posts in the Brandeis Confessions group sparked controversy between the communities, a dialogue began between Black and Jewish Brandeis Bridges participants. The participants sought to understand where each community was coming from. Jewish participants brought up the concerns of the Jewish students on campus, particularly the Orthodox community. They explained how the Orthodox Jewish community felt targeted by the anonymous post. This statement came from one presumably Black woman and no participants in the discussion could speak to this woman's experiences. Yet, Black students responded with sympathy to the emotional response of the Jewish students. They acknowledged the exposure gap between the two communities and the need for more joint programming and consistent dialogue, not just meetings when trouble arises. More specifically, the Black students asserted the Jewish community needs to preemptively reach out to minority communities, like the Black community, on a more consistent basis. This will foster a greater sense of understanding and replace hurtful, misdirected assertions with intentional, productive conversation.

Chapter 6: Collaboration on Campus

Yale's Black-Jewish Partnership

Yale serves as a prime example of a decentralized, developing Black-Jewish relationship. No formal alliance exists, but great collaboration occurs nonetheless.

With tensions high at Yale in 2015, Juli Goodman, the Director of Jewish Student Life, connected with Jason Coker, a Pastor at the Wilton Baptist Church at the time. Coker had founded a grassroots organization called Delta Hands for Hope and invited Goodman and the Jewish community to travel to Mississippi to volunteer there. Delta Hands for Hope began operating in 2009, incorporated in 2013, and has embarked on several beautification projects since its inception.³⁵ It provides educational, recreational, health and spiritual benefits for underprivileged youth in the community. After researching the organization and speaking with her community, Goodman, at the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life, partnered with the Afro-American Cultural Center to send Black and Jewish students on a joint trip to the Mississippi Delta.

“We couldn’t stand idly by while another community was suffering,” Goodman said. “Just as the African American community has supported the Jews, we needed to support them.”³⁶

Each year since, the two communities have worked together to send around a dozen participants. While the organizers aim for roughly even splits, variations in participation occur. In the first few years, more Black students than Jewish students

³⁵ “History.” *Delta Hands for Hope*.

³⁶ Goodman, Julianne. Personal Interview. 9 Apr. 2018.

attended the trip. This year, no Black students attended the trip due to scheduling confusion.

In 2018, 11 students traveled on a week-long trip to the Mississippi Delta to learn about the effects of the Civil Rights Movement on the Black population and the Jewish community. The students traveled to Shaw, Mississippi, a 90% impoverished Black city, and volunteered with Delta Hands for Hope. on both short-term and long-term projects. For an immediate impact, Yale volunteers helped the children with reading books, doing arts and crafts and playing kickball. For a long-term impact, Yale volunteers picked up brushes and painted classrooms alongside the schoolchildren.

These experiences exposed the Yale students to educational experiences beyond the classroom. “I want the participant to come away thinking about the world a little differently,” Goodman said. “A good Jewish community is engaged with all types of communities.”

The trip participants also met with leaders in the community and visited significant Black and Jewish sites. In Jackson, Mississippi, they embarked on a historical site tour with a Jackson State professor. In Indianola, Mississippi, they spoke with the mayor – a Jewish man in a predominantly Black city. In addition, they went to the National Civil Rights Museum and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. The students attended a reform synagogue in Cleveland, Mississippi and a reform synagogue in Greenville, Mississippi. This trip does not lead to action items after the trip, but instead aims for one-shot exposure and service opportunities.

“There's no official follow up to it, but I guarantee that we all learned a ton that we're bringing back with us,” freshman Alan Presburger said.

Black and Jewish students at Yale collaborate on a number of events. They've cosponsored relevant speakers, an MLK commemoration event and other forms of dialogue. As evident in prior years, minorities at Yale endure hardships and disparate treatment on campus. This ranges from personal insults from fellow students to statements issued by the administration – a body intended to support the student body. However, as two minorities at Yale, the Black and the Jewish community recognize the importance of building relationships on both an individual and a community level.

Room for Growth

At Yale, approximately 15 percent of the undergraduate students and 21 percent of the graduate students are Jewish, according to Hillel International.³⁷ There is Kosher food available and the campus fosters a vibrant Jewish community. On the other hand, about seven percent of undergraduate students are Black, while just four and a half percent of graduate students are Black.³⁸ The Black Student Alliance at Yale, formed in 1967, advocated for the creation of the Afro-American Cultural Center in 1969 and continues to develop it today.

Both the Jewish community and the Black community have centers on campus to congregate. However, the collaboration between the two communities stems more from the community administrators, as demonstrated with Goodman's initiative, than from the

³⁷ “Yale University - Hillel College Guide.” *Hillel International*.

³⁸ “2017 Student Population - Yale University.” *College Tuition Compare*.

students. This tactic could lead to increased stability, since Goodman and her colleagues in the Afro-American Cultural Center are not subject to graduation dates. However, the social justice and non-profit sector post high turnover rates with their staffers. Once these professionals leave the university, the intercultural ties leave with them, stripping the university of its Black-Jewish dialogue.

To address this risk of turnover, Yale organizers might consider extending their long-term relationships to interested students. With students in leadership positions, they will engage their friends in the initiatives, increasing event participation, and pass down the roles to other students as successors in a cyclical manner. Little can be noted about the challenges and opportunities within Black-Jewish student collaboration, other than the need for such efforts to form.

Texas Campus Programs

Contrary to Yale, the Black-Jewish relationship at Texas stems entirely from the students. Thus, the event details and collaborative challenges can be analyzed to shed light into forming the ideal Black-Jewish student initiative.

The most recent attempt to heal Black-Jewish relations began at Texas in early 2015. Since its inception, Texas Hillel and the Black Student Alliance (BSA) have co-hosted five events and engaged over 300 people. The alliance hopes to form an official structure in the upcoming school year and expand outreach beyond Hillel and BSA to more students in the Black and Jewish communities.

In my second semester of freshman year, I served as a David Project intern at Texas Hillel. The mission of the David Project is to “[empower] student leaders to build

mutually beneficial and enduring partnerships with diverse student organizations so that the pro-Israel community is integrated and valued on campus.”³⁹ After hearing of Texas Hillel’s limited contact with Black students on campus, I reached out to several different Black organizations on campus. One organization, the Black Student Alliance, responded to my introduction and invited me to attend its weekly meeting. I was immediately intrigued. Despite being the only yarmulke-wearing attendee, let alone White student in the room, at the events, BSA regulars welcomed me into their community with open arms. The Black community, and more specifically BSA, seemed like a great group to collaborate with to develop Black-Jewish relations on campus.

This proved to be true. In Spring 2016, BSA and Texas Hillel cohosted their first event titled, “Recharge. African American and Jewish Relations: Then & Now.” The first portion of the event included a PowerPoint presentation exploring the histories of African Americans and Jews in America, as well as collaborative efforts by the two groups in the 1900s. These efforts included the founding of the NAACP and participation in Freedom Summer and the Selma March. We also discussed the imperfect nature of the Black-Jewish relationship, specifically regarding racism and anti-Semitism.

In the middle of the program, students discussed cultural identity questions in groups of eight. On the surface, students explored similarities and differences between the two communities. This included shared familial, religious and social customs. Also, attendees discussed their prior knowledge before attending the event, or lack thereof, of

³⁹ “Our Mission.” *The David Project*.

the practices of the opposite group. This highlighted ignorance among the students. But more importantly, it generated individual interest to learn more, both at this event and beyond.

In the final portion of the event, the group was addressed by Dr. Leonard Moore, a professor at Texas. Moore articulated his experiences growing up as a Black man in Cleveland alongside an orthodox Jewish community.

“On Friday nights, we would be walking on one side of the street heading to football games, and they would be walking on the other side of the street heading to synagogue,” Moore said. Moore stood at the podium as living proof of the historical familiarity between the Black and Jewish communities, humanizing the intersectionality that the participants had learned about a few minutes earlier. It was a shame, he noted, that the relationship had fragmented in recent decades. Moore proposed various contributing factors to this dissolution. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of supporting one another on campus.

The second event ran similarly to the first, except attendance doubled from 30 students to over 60 students. This metric seemed to reflect success and increased interest. However, another ratio qualified this number: the ratio of Black attendees to Jewish attendees. At the second event, just eight Black students showed up, compared to the 12 Black students who attended the first event. The Black community attributed this to a miscommunication and scheduling conflict with an event organized by another Black student group. For the third event, BSA and Texas Hillel hosted a joint Shabbat dinner, attracting over 150 attendees, including 25 Black students.

At the fourth and fifth events, a dinner and a social game night respectively, the ratio began to flip. For the fourth event, I collaborated with the Schusterman Foundation and Daron Roberts, a Texas lecturer and my thesis supervisor, to hand-pick 40 attendees: 10 Black, 10 Jewish students and 20 community members. The ratio of attendees at this offsite dinner sat around 35-40 percent Black, 60-65 percent Jewish. The fifth event, a social game night at Texas Hillel, brought in a crowd of 30 students – 22 of whom were Black students. Similar to the Black community’s problem with the second event, the lack of Jewish student attendance could be attributed to unforeseen conflicts that evening. Nonetheless, the significant spike in Black student attendance demonstrates their interest and commitment to this bicultural relationship.

Historically, minorities groups at Texas unite with other groups to combat shared enemies. At Texas, seven percent of the undergraduate students are Jewish,⁴⁰ while just under four percent are Black.⁴¹ The Black-Jewish relationship is a bit different. It is centered around relationships and social interactions, rather than advocacy and alliances.

“Before we ask people to commit to a shared and collaborative effort for social justice, we must first give the opportunity for friendship,” Kayla Eboreime, a junior at Texas, said.⁴²

After friendship and understanding, presumably, the Black and Jewish communities will be more inclined to support one another for personal reasons, not

⁴⁰ “University Of Texas Austin – Hillel College Guide.” *Hillel International*.

⁴¹ “Facts & Figures.” *The University of Texas at Austin*.

⁴² Eboreime, Kayla. Personal Interview. 8 Apr. 2018.

political reasons. This will combat the trend of declining Black-Jewish relations in America that has largely resulted from political differences. Developing strong social bonds between the Black and Jewish students will forge a steadfast relationship between the communities, immune to foreign policy and domestic disagreement.

Challenges

Three interrelated challenges exist in the Black-Jewish dialogue at UT: communication, consistency and leadership turnover. Initial communication between the groups took place through an online website for student organizations. For the next few years, leadership exchanged emails and Facebook messages, with extensive follow-up, to solidify dates and event ideas. Today, event planning occurs through one-on-one meetings, text messages and phone calls. Yet, this only occurs at the leadership level. For the Black and Jewish communities to truly develop a genuine relationship with one another, general members need to correspond as well. This takes individual effort to foster personal relationships. Social media exchange shows promise for these friendships.

Though a contributing factor to limited communication appears to be the infrequency of programming. Weeks pass without formal communication between the leadership, and months pass without any communication between the general members. To address the consistency concern, students have discussed increasing the frequency of events from semesterly endeavors to monthly or even weekly outings. This would help establish a sense of permanence between the two communities, rather than the occasional spurts of cultural appreciation. Geared toward social interactions, these events would prompt students to want to return to the next event, not for the content but

for the people. Establishing the Black-Jewish space as a social environment, similar to that of a fraternity or a spirit group, would prompt students to bring their friends to events, growing the organization exponentially.

The third concern, leadership turnover, has strained the relationship from the start. Right now, Hillel partners with just one Black organization: BSA. Since the first interaction between the two organizations, BSA has had five different presidents and its weekly meeting attendance has fluctuated from highs of 30 or 40 students a few years back to numbers in the low teens just last year. This internal inconsistency within BSA contributes to inconsistency between BSA and Hillel. Each semester, relationships are formed, and the alliance resurrects itself for one event. By the next event, a leadership shift in the organization beckons new introductions once again.

To counter the third concern, Texas Hillel should develop a permanent Black-Jewish student group with BSA and other Black and Jewish student organizations. This move will protect the alliance from organization-specific fluctuations and attract unaffiliated participants as well. Students will be able to participate in the organization throughout college, no matter their participation in other interest groups. This organization will normalize friendship between the two communities and assuage future conflict between the Black and Jewish communities at Texas.

The Best Current Structure: Brandeis Bridges

While Yale lacked student leadership and Texas lacked permanence, Brandeis thrives in both arenas. As with the other groups, Brandeis has challenges within the

organization. Although, its advanced structure prompts a more detailed analysis of its annual operations, featured programming, student initiative and plans for the future.

On most university campuses where Black-Jewish dialogue exists, it is a collaboration between two minority populations. On the contrary, at Brandeis, this collaboration is between a campus majority and a campus minority. Jewish undergraduate students make up 44% of the 1600-strong undergraduate student body, according to Hillel International.⁴³ The university offers Kosher meal plan options and there are Hebrew letters engraved in the official seal. Named after Louis D. Brandeis, a Jewish Supreme Court justice, the university correlates its seasonal breaks with Jewish holidays.

On the other hand, 5.4 percent of the Fall 2016 enrollment class at Brandeis identified as “Black, non-Hispanic,” according to Brandeis’ website. This classification exists as the smallest identified minority group, in considering ethnicities with at least three students.⁴⁴ Of the 17 affiliated clubs within the university’s intercultural center, three relate to Black students: Brandeis African Student Organization (BASO), Brandeis Black Student Organization (BBSO) and Woman of Color Alliance (WOCA).⁴⁵

History of the Organization

Brandeis Bridges (“Bridges”) was founded in January 2014 after five Black and five Jewish students traveled to Israel together. To sponsor this trip, founders raised \$48,000 through grants and business proposals and gathered support from Brandeis

⁴³ “Brandeis University - Hillel College Guide.” *Hillel International*.

⁴⁴ “Schools and Enrollment.” *Brandeis University*.

⁴⁵ “The Intercultural Center: Affiliated Clubs.” *Brandeis University*.

administration, academic departments and off-campus nonprofit organizations. While in Israel, the students explored different cultural areas of the country and met with people across political, social and economic spheres. When they returned to Brandeis, they shared their experiences at a conference to an audience of 80 students and formalized the Bridges organization. Bridges hosted a few more events in Spring 2014, exploring race and identity and addressing historical racial tensions between the two communities.

Bridges is student-led organization, independent from a larger umbrella organization. This structure gives the organization flexibility and freedom in programming, discussions and travels. “The mission of Brandeis Bridges is to create a safe space where members of the Jewish and Black community can speak freely about racial and religious relations at Brandeis, in their community, and beyond.”⁴⁶ Through discussion and shared experiences, the organization fosters personal, long-lasting relationships between students and chips away at the cultural and religious divide between the two groups.

Bridges unites the two groups on campus through conversation and a fellowship. In the fall, the organization hosts weekly discussions open to the university. The first few talks engage up to 50 students, with weekly attendance averaging 15 to 20 people throughout the semester. Most of the frequent discussion attendees apply to the fellowship, which takes place in the second semester.

Student Spotlights

⁴⁶ “Brandeis Bridges - Home.” *Facebook*.

Two students, Myles Porter and Ariella Gentin, are 2018 Bridges fellows. Porter, a sophomore at Brandeis, heard about Bridges through word of mouth. Originally from New Orleans, Louisiana, Porter grew up around Jewish friends but knew little about their culture and community. Similarly, as a Black man in the South, he engaged in few conversations about race and intersectionality in his hometown. He thought this would change when he stepped foot on a college campus in the North, especially at a university that was “founded on Jewish principles.”

As a freshman, Porter discovered a scarce number of spaces on campus for dialogue. And rather than learn more about the rich Jewish culture, he gained exposure to the contrary: religious stereotypes. He heard statements like “all Jews are White” and “all Jews are wealthy,” providing him a unidimensional perception of his Jewish counterparts.

When a Porter’s friend, and future trip leader, introduced him to Bridges, Porter jumped at the opportunity to get involved. Through weekly discussions, he began to learn more about the Black and Jewish communities’ lengthy shared history and the recent shift in collaboration. “In Bridges, we were able to explore the history of the crossing over of communities and why the communities didn’t intersect so much in different times,” Porter said.⁴⁷

Gentin, a freshman at Brandeis, got involved with Brandeis Bridges through a previous participant in the fellowship as well. In her first semester at Brandeis, Gentin attended general meetings and recognized quickly some familiar subject matters.

⁴⁷ Porter, Myles. Personal Interview. 8 Apr. 2018.

“Some of the issues seemed very Jewish to me, and I didn’t realize they applied to the Black community too,” she said.⁴⁸ These issues, such as identity and diaspora, sparked great conversation among the groups. Jewish culture is largely centered around the historical Land of Israel and ancient Jewish inhabitation, particularly in the times of the Temple. While Israel today exists as a “Jewish State,” the exile and diasporic theme persists in Jewish liturgy and tradition. Similarly, certain aspects of Black culture relate to the times in Africa, before the systemic uprooting and enslavement of Africans to the Americas. In Bridges meetings, they discussed how the parallels between “Zionism” for Jews and the 19th century “Back-to-Africa” movement for African Americans. Toward the end of the fall semester, both Porter and Gentin applied, and were accepted, into the 2018 fellowship class.

Bridges Fellowship

This Bridges fellowship consists of five Black students and five Jewish students. This tight-knit group meets regularly and engages in dialogue, text study and analysis in the spring semester.⁴⁹

Each year, the fellowship meets in December with introductory meetings, culminates in February with a weeklong educational trip and finishes off the year with forward-looking conversations back on campus. In the month leading up to the trip, students meet weekly for one and a half hours, learning in depth about the rich and oscillating relationship between Blacks and Jews in America. Highlights include joint efforts such as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel marching alongside Martin Luther King

⁴⁸ Gentin, Ariella. Personal Interview. 5 Apr. 2018.

⁴⁹ Weimer, Alona. Personal Interview. 9 Mar. 2018.

Jr in the March on Selma. Lowlights detail conflicts such as the Crown Heights riot – a three-day racial riot in 1991 between Black and Orthodox Jewish residents in Brooklyn, New York that left two dead and nearly 200 injured.

Another matter discussed briefly in the preliminary meetings is the large Jewish presence at Brandeis – nearly half the student population. This defines much of the culture and customs of Brandeis, as well the student life demographics seen around campus.

The cohort also explores the personal histories of the fellows via personal presentations and one-on-one meetings. Each student is allotted 20 minutes to present to the group something important to their identity. Prior presentations have included internal religious struggles, financial obstacles for minority students in STEM and environmental sustainability concerns. This ice breaker activity allows fellows to share with their colleagues' personal priorities and experiences. In addition to the presentation to the group, fellows grab coffee with each other to further develop deeper relationships before embarking on the weeklong excursion.

Featured Program: Bridges Trip

Each year, Brandeis Bridges fellows travel to a place of significance to the Black and/or Jewish diaspora. These immersive experiences focus on education and cultural exploration. During the trip, the fellows debrief their thoughts each day and discuss how the places they travel to have shaped the respective communities.

In February 2018, the fellows traveled together to Chicago to explore Black and Jewish city roots. On the Friday night of the trip, they went to Orthodox Jewish services

followed by Shabbat meals at the homes of community members. On Sunday, they stopped by a Mega Black church, followed by historical site-seeing of museums tied to the histories of each community.

In addition to the historical sites, the cohort watched a couple notable cinematic films together. The first film was *Black Panther*. This movie is one of 19 movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and broke financial records from the start. In North America, *Black Panther* set the record for biggest Presidents' Day opening weekend showings. The movie generated \$241.9 million over the four-day stretch, shattering the opening sales of the previous recordholder by nearly \$90 million.⁵⁰ In less than a month of the film's release, its box office sales reached over \$1 billion worldwide.⁵¹

Its financial success was rivalled only by its cultural significance. This movie was the first of its kind to star a Black superhero and feature a predominantly Black cast. Prior superhero movies had included individual Black actors and actresses, but none to this magnitude. This movie provided Black children with a superhero idol that looked like them, Porter noted. Finally, a movie showed Africa to be a place of riches and intelligence, not just a third-world continent. *Black Panther* posted a score of 97% approval across 366 experts on Rotten Tomatoes.⁵²

Gentin had heard about the movie's success but did not grasp the cultural relevance until watching the movie with the cohort. Seeing the production with the other fellows shed light on the movie's societal impact. "I don't think I would have realized

⁵⁰ Pallotta, Frank. "'Black Panther' Crushes Box Office Records in Opening Weekend." *CNNMoney*, 20 Feb. 2018.

⁵¹ "Marvel's 'Black Panther' Surpasses \$1 Billion in Sales." *Fortune*, 10 Mar. 2018.

⁵² "*Black Panther* (2018)." *Rotten Tomatoes*.

how significant this movie was had I not seen it with students that were personally invested in that,” Gentin said. After the fellows finished the movie, they returned to the hotel to unpack the cinema. Once official programming ended for the night, the fellows decided to watch a double feature and filled their nightly free time, and sleep time, with another film called *Get Out*. The premise of the movie: what happens when a Black man meets the racist family of his White girlfriend.

Similar to *Black Panther*, *Get Out* radiated cultural significance, while receiving glowing critic reviews of 99% on Rotten Tomatoes.⁵³ Though this movie expressed a very different plot from *Black Panther*. The “Critics Consensus” section of the movie on Rotten Tomatoes reads, “Funny, scary, and thought-provoking, *Get Out* seamlessly weaves its trenchant social critiques into a brilliantly effective and entertaining horror/comedy thrill ride.” Gentin found this movie to be more powerful than *Black Panther*, due to the glaring relatable nature of the movie. She grasped from the commentary of her Black friends that the artistic expression in the movie largely depicts the Black experience in America.

Porter found that one scene summed up the impact of the movie on the cohort and raised further awareness of everyday racism to the Jewish students. In this scene, the couple is driving together on the highway to the girlfriend’s parents’ house when they hit a deer. A police officer passing by notices the car on the side of the road and stops to approach the couple. This generated mixed responses from the fellows. The Jewish students, Porter recounts, grew excited and began whispering about how the

⁵³ “*Get Out* (2017).” *Rotten Tomatoes*.

police officer will save the day. The Black students, on the other hand, grew nervous since the police officer was White and the boyfriend was Black. Intellectual curiosity, coupled with a desire to understand one another's reactions, sparked a conversation after the movie about police racial biases. Fellows spent the early hours of the morning researching and discussing statistics and occurrences between law enforcement and Black citizens in America.

Future Student Outlook

Next year, Gentin and Porter will build upon their experiences as they spearhead the fellowship and the trip. Gentin would like to carry over a few successful aspects of this this year's trip. First and foremost, she will continue the debriefing sessions. "Some read about history in a book, while others experience history in person," she said. By debriefing the day and engaging in conversation with one another, fellows will better synthesize and retain daily experiences. Gentin also looks to repeat the religious experiences, both with synagogue on Saturday and church on Sunday. "You can't really separate out the religious piece from the cultural piece," Gentin said, noting the great impact these places have on the two communities. The weekend of religious outings allows both communities to experience how the other congregates for prayer and reflection. Finally, Gentin would like to retain the historical site visits. Traveling to a Holocaust museum and an African American history museum further educated the fellows on formative events in history. These buildings shed light on the past, allowing fellows to better understand the obstacles and opportunities that shaped modern-day Black and Jewish communities in Chicago.

Similarly, there are aspects of the experience that Gentin would like to change for next year's fellowship. First, she thinks fellows should have more opportunities to bond on an intimate level before the trip. The trip is centered around shared experiences and conversations. If the fellows feel more comfortable with one another from the start, this will set the tone early for a meaningful trip. To better prepare the participants for the immersive experience, Porter recommends a mini trip to Boston prior to the larger trip. This will give participants an opportunity to witness the collaborative initiatives between the Black and Jewish communities occurring nearby campus. This will better legitimize the experience and perhaps encourage fellows to get involved in local initiatives upon their return.

Regarding location, Gentin recognizes the benefit of staying domestic. Universities pride themselves on diverse study abroad opportunities, across majors and continents. However, the Black-Jewish dialogue being had in Bridges primarily relates to collaborations and tensions in America. The students spend weeks discussing the Civil Rights Movement, American inner cities, the South and modern-day American relationships. Thus, it is more appropriate, as well as financially reasonable, for the cohort to travel to domestic locations for their exploration.

Finally, Gentin would like to focus on the personal stories and dialogue more than the touristy site-seeing. Similar to the domestic note, the experiences and conversations are more relevant to the mission of the organization and the mindset of the fellows while on these trips. Exploring the city's tourist locations distracts the participants from the Black-Jewish focus and takes valuable time that could otherwise be spent learning more about the two communities.

Several universities have hosted joint programs between the Black and Jewish students on campus, though Brandeis is unique. Brandeis Bridges is a steadfast, cyclical fellowship that fosters Black-Jewish dialogue year-round. From the community conversations in the fall to the fellowship in the spring, this organization provides a safe place on campus where students can gather to learn more about one another and about the dynamic natures of both the Black and Jewish communities.

Porter hopes to mirror the success of this year's trip leaders and grow the organization, both at Brandeis and beyond. "It would be so awesome for every university to recreate the structure of Brandeis Bridges," Porter said. This would allow for students across the country to follow suit with Brandeis and become allies of one another. These initiatives will take time to form, but Porter believes the university setting is a prime breeding ground. "It's when you have your ears wide open the most," Porter said.

He identified three main reasons on why students in college should engage in this dialogue and bridge-building. First, in college, students have ample time. In high school, students attend school for as many hours as adults stay at work. But in college, 12- and 15-hour weeks leave students sufficient time to complete classroom assignments and still have substantial extra time to engage in extracurricular activities. Second, in college, people are the most engaged with their dialogue. Children grow up in their homes, formulating many of their opinions from their immediate relationships and environments. In America though, most students leave this haven to attend their universities in unfamiliar cities. This shift in environment allows student to challenge their political and social beliefs through new experiences and conversations. Finally,

college students are most creative with their dialogue and action-oriented initiatives. Students are willing to experiment and take risks since the magnitude of failure is relatively small compared to in later stages of life. The three factors of extra time, heightened level of engagement and enhanced creativity, Porter says, make for a great combination to foster discussion and Black-Jewish collaboration.

Challenges

This organization faces a couple key challenges: funding and staffing. In the five years of its existence, Bridges fellows have travelled to three international destinations: Israel, Ghana and Brazil. In each of these trips, food, housing, airfare and general trip expenses were completely covered by the university, donors and sponsoring organizations. These trips cost tens of thousands of dollars and made the organization dependent on the generous donations. To continue all-expenses paid trips, even if kept domestic, participants will need to begin to fundraise individually – a large financial burden on college students.

Another organization struggle is securing a Jewish adviser. For the first few years of the organization, the university Jewish chaplain helped as an adviser at Bridges. Since she left the university two years ago, the organization has attracted inexperienced and inconsistent Jewish advisers, leading to a vacancy in the position in this past year's trip. The organization should consider enlisting a department chair or professor to advise the group in a more consistent capacity.

Many Black-Jewish initiatives on campus exist as partnerships between umbrella organizations, such as Hillel and various Black student organizations across campus. At

Brandeis, the organization is completely independent and registered as its own student organization. As Weimer noted, this leads to more creativity within the organization and less bureaucracy to manage. However, it creates continuity concerns. In the Yale case study, the Black-Jewish dialogue depended entirely on the administration. In the Texas case study, the students organized the programming, but the official Hillel and BSA umbrella organizations left room for contingency plans upon graduation. At Bridges, the entire organization relies on the students to keep it operating. This leaves no room for a “bad batch,” an especially plausible occurrence in times of political unrest on campus. Bridges should mitigate this risk through increased involvement with umbrella organizations or even perhaps implementing permanent Black-Jewish leadership roles within a multicultural council.

Black-Jewish Student Summit

Most Black-Jewish initiatives are isolated within their respective campuses. Though one organization, the David Project, sought to bring them together in its first annual conference called “Black-Jewish Summit: Building Community, Yesterday to Tomorrow.” This summit gathered 28 students from eight campuses to come to Washington, D.C. to learn about shared histories, discuss current issues facing respective communities and share personal narratives of Black and Jewish experiences.

The trip kicked off with a journey to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the newest museum in the Smithsonian that had opened just one year prior. While in the museum, students wandered in groups on self-guided tours observing the history of African Americans from the 1400s to 2018. The lower levels of

the museum focused on hardships, struggles, racism and the perseverance of the Black community. The upper levels, on the other hand, focused on the extensive success of the Black community in America and the various ways they've shaped American culture. This included sports accolades, pop culture, music genres and more.

Eboreime was one of the four participants to attend the summit from the University of Texas. She was very moved by the exhibits and deemed the museum "a phenomenal homage to the Black-American experience." She walked the museum alongside Black and Jewish students alike, reflecting along the way. "We were able to have some really thought-provoking discussions about the legacy of slavery and oppression on our respective communities," she said.

For the Black community, this legacy refers to the Atlantic slave trade and its lasting effects in American society. For the Jewish community, it refers to the historical slavery in Egypt of the Jewish people. While indirectly correlated to the Jewish slave narrative, anti-Semitic oppression persists in society today.

Throughout the weekend, participants engaged in discussion about what it's like to be Black, what it's like to be Jewish, and what it's like to be both. The variety of perspectives shared highlighted the dynamic nature of a race and religion, recognizing that no two people come from the same experiences. People cannot be defined by simply their religious practices or racial upbringing; rather, it's important to recognize individual experiences as well.

One experience that resonated with many participants was the "fishbowl activity." The setup of the activity was as followed: participants were separated into two identities,

Black and Jewish. One group gathered to sit in the “inner circle,” while the other group sat in the “outer circle.” Those who were both Black and Jewish stayed in the “inner circle” the entire exercise, and those who were neither Black nor Jewish stayed in the “outer circle” during the exercise. Throughout the exercise, the “inner group” engaged in dialogue, while the “outer group” observed the interaction.

Each group was asked a series of questions about their identities. The Black participants started in the “inner circle” and the questions read as follows: “What does it mean to be Black?” “Who speaks for the Black community?” “What is the number one threat facing the Black community?” “What is something Black people debate amongst themselves within the community?” The “outer circle” was required to remain quiet and listen to the conversations occurring in the “inner circle.” After the Black participants discussed these questions, the “inner circle” and “outer circle” switched places. Similar questions were directed toward the Jewish participants replacing the term “Black” with “Jewish.”

The goal of this exercise was two-fold. First, it challenged communities to recognize internal commonalities and disagreements within. Second, outside observers gained an understanding of the united, yet dynamic, nature of the other community. Many students agreed on points offered by their peers, but no two participants held identical viewpoints in all the prompts.

On the final night of the summit, the participants went on a bus tour of the national monuments. These sites included a drive-by of the White House, a walk-thru of the Lincoln memorial and appropriately, a stop at the statue of Martin Luther King, Jr. Despite the rain, participants flooded the statue to take pictures and read the quotes

that surrounded King's image. These quotes came from different aspects of King's life. One quote etched into the North Wall stood out to participants.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," the quote read. "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." This quote came from King's letter from a jail in Birmingham.⁵⁴

King was a leader of the nonviolent movement for civil rights, as well as an expert collaborator. People from different backgrounds and experiences rallied around King to fight for equality of Blacks, as well as justice in America. At this Black-Jewish summit, participants frequently discussed the prevalence of anti-Semitism and racism in society. In some circumstances, these incidents are linked in hate marches and propaganda. In other situations, these incidents may not be directly related, but as King said, intolerance of one kind inevitably affects the entire population.

The students left the summit with program ideas, thought-provoking experiences and 27 new allies. The attendees continue to communicate periodically through group messages and social media. It is too soon to tell the lasting impact of this summit, but this dialogue-oriented initiative educated participants on a different community and created sparks within the participants.

"This summit gave me hope for our future because there are so many passionate, tolerant and brilliant minds making a genuine effort to help their community, but also invest in neighboring communities," Eboreime said.

⁵⁴ "Quotations - Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial." *U.S. National Park Service*.

Chapter 7: Concluding Remarks

The Color, or Lack Thereof, of Jews

It is important to recognize not all Jews are White. Unlike universalizing religions such as Christianity and Islam, Judaism is an ethnic religion and unites itself through religious beliefs rooted in a cultural identity.⁵⁵ Since the Roman expulsion of the Jews nearly 2000 years ago, Judaism has existed in concentrated pockets around the world. Thus, Jews have come to vary in racial identity. “Race is inherently fluid, nuanced and irrational,” the website of Jews For Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ) states.⁵⁶ The JFREJ recognizes four major Jewish ethnic groups: Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, African and Sephardi. Ashkenazi Jews come from Eastern and Western Europe and Russia; Mizrahi Jews are Middle Eastern, North African, Central Asian and Balkan; African Jews come primarily from Ethiopia and Uganda; and Sephardi Jews come from Spain and Portugal. Except for Ashkenazi Jews, the other three ethnic groups are comprised largely of individuals with darker skin.

According to a survey conducted by the American Jewish Population Project, over 11 percent of Jews in America are Jews of Color.⁵⁷ Notable famous Jews of Color include rapper Drake, basketball player Amar’e Stoudemire and comedian Sammy Davis, Jr.⁵⁸ These Jews are subject to racist treatment, just like other People of Color, as well as anti-Semitic rhetoric, like their Jewish brothers and sisters.

⁵⁵ “Ethnic vs. Universalizing Religions: AP Human Geography Crash Course.” *Albert Blog*, 18 Feb. 2017.

⁵⁶ “Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to Our Movement.” *Jews for Racial & Economic Justice*, Nov. 2017.

⁵⁷ “American Jewish Population Project.” *American Jewish Population Project*.

⁵⁸ “Black & Jewish: 11 Celebrities You May Not Have Known Were Jews.” *Huffington Post*, 5 Sept. 2013.

Yet Black anti-Semitism exists, largely stemming from racial differences. Perhaps, this can be attributed to two factors: economic success and Black oppression from Whites in America.

With most of the American Jewish population identifying as White, limited racial barriers have allowed the Jewish community to thrive in America. “On the one hand, Jews have been discriminated against for centuries, including by White cultures from Nazi Germany to the United States,” Tablet Magazine writer Yair Rosenberg said. “On the other hand, many Jews have attained a significant measure of acceptance, and many can often ‘pass’ as White when not wearing traditional Jewish symbols.”⁵⁹ By the late 1960s and 1970s, most Jews had migrated from the ghettos they’d once shared with the Black community to more affluent neighborhoods. A few Orthodox Jewish communities remain near Black communities, such as Yeshiva University in Harlem, but the major shift in demographics stifled communication between the two communities.

Once persecuted for their immigrant statuses and foreign accents, Jews have largely integrated into American society and achieved economic prosperity. In 2015, Forbes discovered that 10 of the top 50 billionaires worldwide were Jewish, or 20 percent. This includes American Jews Mark Zuckerberg, cofounder of Facebook; Larry Ellison, founder of Oracle Corporation; Sergey Brin and Larry Page, cofounders of Google; and Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computer.⁶⁰ In contrast, less than half a percent of the world’s total billionaires in 2017 were Black – just 10 people. This

⁵⁹ Rosenberg, Yair. “‘Jews Will Not Replace Us’: Why White Supremacists Go after Jews.” *Washington Post*, 14 Aug. 2017.

⁶⁰ Friedman, Gabe. “10 Jews in Forbes Top 50 Billionaires.” *Times of Israel*, 3 Mar. 2015.

disproportionate success between Jews and Blacks contributes to contempt between the communities.⁶¹

American novelist James Baldwin explains the role of race in Black anti-Semitism. In a New York Times article published in 1967, he explores his dislike for various authority figures in his early years. He hated the landlord for neglecting the maintenance of the building. He hated the grocer for collecting debt payments from him. He hated the butcher for cheating him and his people with overpriced bad cuts of meat. He hated police officers for not protecting the Black community. He even hated school teachers, the community sages, for treating him and his friends like “dirty, ignorant savages.”

Many of these individuals may have been Jewish, he said, but most of them were not. White citizens filled most of these roles, with the exception of a few Jewish and Black figureheads. “The root of anti-Semitism among Negroes is, ironically, the relationship of colored peoples--all over the globe--to the Christian world,” Baldwin said. He expresses his frustration, and the frustration of his community, toward these authority figures for actively perpetuating racist practices in America. Instead of stopping at anti-White rhetoric, negative responses to these people transcended into anti-Semitism.

Even so, “White privilege” for Jews only goes so far. In Eastern Europe, the Jewish community was at its peak of prosperity before the Holocaust. In America, despite Jewish success, White supremacists persecute minorities and Jews alike. News

⁶¹ Mfonobong, Nsehe. “The Black Billionaires 2017.” *Forbes*, 20 Mar. 2017.

headlines from the Charlottesville marches in the summer of 2017 largely highlighted racism in America. Though, Jewish rhetoric appeared in these marches too. White supremacist marchers chanted, “Jews will not replace us” among other anti-Semitism statements. At these rallies, attendees sported t-shirts with swastikas and quotes from Adolph Hitler. In addition, Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke perpetuated age-old stereotypes against Jews, insinuating that Jews run the media, the political system and the federal reserve.

Eric Ward, a Black scholar at the Southern Poverty Law Center, speaks about the victories of the historic Civil Rights Movement, while noting the angry and often violent response of White supremacists during that time. In an article published in *Tablet Magazine* last December, Ward spoke about the White Supremacist’ treatment of Jews. “Jews function for today’s White nationalists as they often have for anti-Semites through the centuries: as the demons stirring an otherwise changing and heterogeneous pot of lesser evils,” Ward said. “The White nationalist movement that evolved from it in the 1970s was a revolutionary movement that saw itself as the vanguard of a new, whites-only state. This [nationalist] movement, then and now, positions Jews as the absolute other, the driving force of white dispossession.”⁶²

Jews are not homogenous. Their complex racial and ethnic backgrounds allow them to progress in America, but never to achieve permanent success. Some minorities view Jews as too White, while other White supremacists view Jews as “the absolute other,” leading to eternal conflict and challenged status in society.

⁶² Ward, Eric. “Forcefully Opposing Anti-Semitism Must Be a Core Principle of the Movement to Combat White Supremacy.” *Tablet Magazine*, 3 Dec. 2017.

The Risk of Ignorance

At the University of Texas, much of the perceived hatred stems from ignorance and misused terminology. For much of the Jewish community on campus, the term “Zionism” symbolizes the self-determination of the Jewish people and the right to a Jewish State: Israel.⁶³ Said “Zionists” participate in a variety of Israel-focused events on campus, including an annual “Israel Block Party” in a well-traveled area of campus. This event highlights political, cultural, religious and social aspects of Israel through booths and activities, attracting thousands annually.

Each year, a protest equates Zionism to racism, an anti-Semitic statement that was published, but later retracted, in a Soviet Union-backed United Nations resolution in 1975.⁶⁴ Zionism, for much of the Palestinian community, represents social justice concerns within the State of Israel, political strife and a divisive belief associated by some groups with terms such as “apartheid” and “genocide” of minorities within the region.

As demonstrated in the Texas student government election and at Texas’ Israel Block Party, this disconnect in defining Zionism contributes greatly to Black-Jewish disconnect on campuses across America. Israel is a Jewish-majority country, but it is also home to many other religions including Christianity and Islam. Demographically, Israel is 75 percent Jewish.⁶⁵ So, a common question within the Jewish community and beyond addresses the crossover between anti-Israel statements and anti-Semitism.

⁶³ “Zionism - Facts & Summary.” *History.com*.

⁶⁴ Lewis, Paul. “U.N. Repeals Its ’75 Resolution Equating Zionism With Racism.” *The New York Times*, 17 Dec. 1991. *NYTimes.com*.

⁶⁵ “Israel Population 2018 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs).” *World Population Review*.

Israel is not perfect. The country has socioeconomic, religious and ethnic concerns, just like any other country. Legitimate critiques of the country are not only acceptable, but welcome in prompting change within one of the strongest democracies in the Middle East. Illegitimate critiques, however, are unacceptable.

The Anti-Defamation League [ADL] is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civil rights organization whose mission is “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all.”⁶⁶ The ADL addresses this fine line between anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric. The organization recognizes the “3 D’s,” a litmus test designed by Natan Sharansky, an Israeli leader and former Soviet “refusenik.” The “3 D’s” are as follows: demonization, delegitimization and holding to a double standard.⁶⁷

Demonization includes invoking traditional anti-Jewish references, accusations and conspiracy theories when criticizing Israel. This largely includes exploiting medieval stereotypes and portraying Israelis in demonic depictions. In addition, anti-Semitic rhetoric includes invoking the age-old stereotype of Jews controlling the world to explain Israeli’s strength and favorable U.S.-Israel relations. Another example includes evoking the medieval “blood libel” notion, the accusation that Jews kill Christian babies for religious purposes, to accuse Israel of killing innocent Palestinian babies.⁶⁸

The notion of delegitimization involves comparing the Israeli government to historically malicious and egregious perpetrators, such as the Nazi regime. This

⁶⁶ “Our Mission.” *Anti-Defamation League*.

⁶⁷ Greenblatt, Jonathan. “When Criticism of Israel Becomes Anti-Semitism.” *Anti-Defamation League*.

⁶⁸ “Response To Common Inaccuracy: Israel Critics Are Anti-Semites.” *Anti-Defamation League*.

diminishes the significance of the Holocaust to the Jewish people and compares the victim's homeland, Israel, to the largest massacre of the Jewish people, the Holocaust.

The third idea, holding Israel to a double standard, is less quantifiable than the other categories. Most frequently, this entails the presence of a deeper bias towards Israel than other surrounding nations, and ultimately questions Israel's right to exist. In America, there are ample opportunities to criticize the government and the actions that occur within our society. In fact, this election provides a prime example of disagreement as citizens voted for the candidates they hated least in the 2016 presidential election. Talk-show host Stephen Colbert exercises his right to the Freedom of Speech to produce a show, called "Our Cartoon President," satirically portraying President Trump and his cabinet.⁶⁹ Yet, Colbert and likeminded individuals would not consider themselves "anti-American", rather in disagreement with the country's politics.

Israeli government critiques are legitimate. However, to challenge the only Jewish country's right to exist enters dangerous territory of anti-Semitism. As long as this educational disconnect exists between the Jewish community and different minority communities, including the Black community, conflict will arise.

Conclusion

This thesis was initially designed to discover the most ideal model for Black-Jewish student alliances on college campuses. The conclusion was to include four or five specific criteria required to develop an effective relationship between the two communities. But as more research arrived, the focus shifted. Just as no Black or

⁶⁹ "Our Cartoon President - New Comedy about the Trump Presidency from Stephen Colbert." *SHOWTIME*.

Jewish person is the same, no campus is the same. Personalities, experiences, viewpoints and objectives differ across universities. A model's success at one university does not make it applicable to other universities.

Rather, it is crucial to recognize Black-Jewish initiatives succeed on campuses across America in different forms. At Yale, political unrest on campus prompted professionals to begin paving the road to understanding; at Texas, genuine interest prompted cultural exploration between students from two established campus organizations; and at Brandeis, an Israel trip prompted students to develop a curriculum to engage the Black and Jewish community in dialogue and experiential exploration.

Throughout American history, Blacks and Jews have collaborated and conflicted, marched and marginalized, discussed and debated. These two minorities came to America in very different capacities and their past, present and future struggles in the country should not be equated nor compared.

That said, Blacks and Jews should talk. Between the communities, historical tension stems from ignorance, class conflict and differences of opinions. Yet, racist and anti-Semitic incidents are both on the rise in America. Through education, collaboration and conversation, Black and Jewish students at universities have begun to rewrite the American narrative. Hearing personal stories and undergoing shared experiences humanizes the social issues at hand. These efforts help reverse explicit biases expressed within the communities, both on campus and beyond.

Implicit biases can be modified as well. One study found great success in reducing implicit biases in a sample of college students. Establishing awareness,

concern and alternatives can help students practice combatting their implicit biases while living in the controlled college environment. College students have the time, resources and patience to branch out beyond their environments. Conversations can lead students, and ultimately communities, to become more educated, more tolerant and more prepared to combat hatred and bigotry, racism and anti-Semitism.

There is not one right way to most effectively build community relationships. Often, it is a combination of many strategies. This process will take time. But the short-term sacrifice of going beyond one's comfort zone will pay dividends in the long run. There will be setbacks. As demonstrated in the complex history between Blacks and Jews in America, flimsy foundations will not withstand political and social pressures from global current events. Friendships have been ruined, alliances have been broken, people have been killed. Understanding the trials and tribulations of an intersectional relationship will better prepare an alliance to address conflict.

In America, Blacks and Jews unified to build hundreds of schools for underprivileged children, opened homes for immigrants, marched for those who could not march and fought against common enemies who sought to promote bigotry in America. Martin Luther King Jr. supported Israel and the Jewish people, but hatred and intolerance cut his life short. Had he lived more than 39 years, there's no telling the help King could have provided for the Jewish people and vice versa.

Alliances cannot be built for the sake of a common cause, because once the cause disappears, the alliance will crumble with it. Rather, an alliance should be built on genuine, personal experiences and mutual understanding. Over time, these individual

interactions will slowly chip away at prejudicial biases in society to mold resilient, supportive allies. And it all starts on a college campus.

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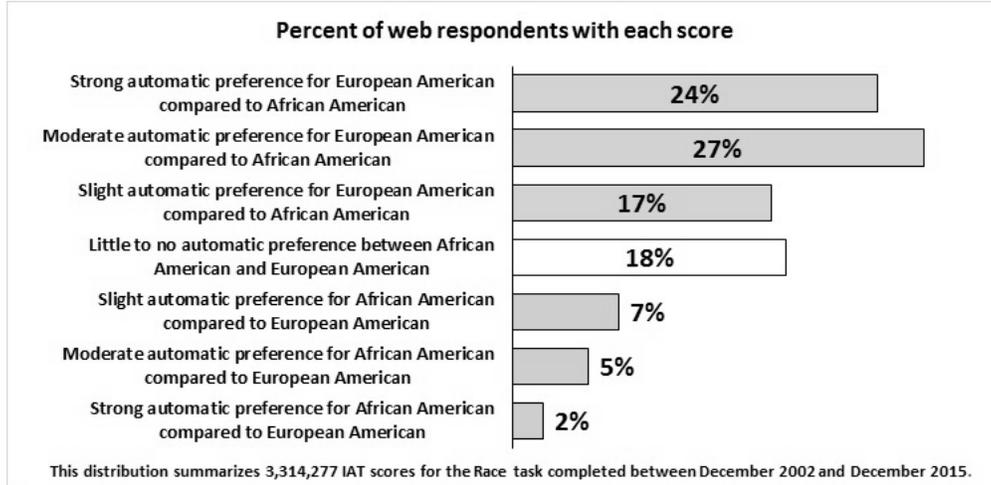
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Appendix A

IAT Test with Preference for White over Black

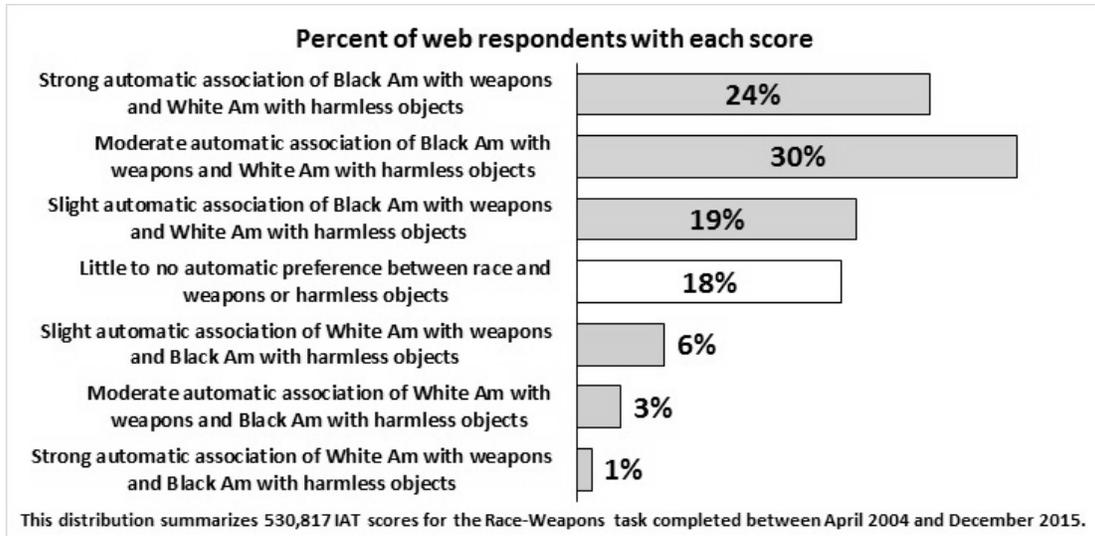


This graphic was screenshotted after an IAT test on the effects of race and personal preference.

Source: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Appendix B

Black/White Association with Weapons



This graphic was screenshotted after an IAT test on the effects of race and weapon association.

Source: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Appendix C

UT Jewish Student Response Part 1



Jonathan Dror
February 27 · 🌐

VOTE NOW AT utexasvote.org

I don't usually post to Facebook unless I think something is very troublesome or worth discussing. This is one of those times. I have witnessed four years of Executive Alliance races, even participated in one myself, but I have never seen such vocal hatred by a candidate. I am very disturbed to find out that a Vice Presidential candidate for one of the Executive Alliances for Student Government at my school has supported such hateful anti-Semitic rhetoric. Out of numerous troubling tweets of hers, I found this one especially frightening where part of the text reads, "imagine a world without Israel and the colonial ideology of Zionism." There are two things very scary about her support of this message.

For starters, I completely support open criticism of Israeli politics, as I would of American politics, or really, any country in the world for that matter. But the moment one questions the legitimization of a country all together, a line is crossed. That person is now essentially saying, "XYZ people do not have a right to self-determination or to seek freedom for themselves." Why does Hannah feel the right or desire to not just criticize Israel, but say the Jewish state shouldn't exist at all? Is it for that very reason that it is a Jewish state? I could not find a single tweet of hers drawing any criticism of the mass civilian deaths in Syria (500 just this week), the lack of basic human rights in North Korea, or the hostility in Venezuela for any political dissent. No. Instead she chooses to imagine a world where the only Jewish country is erased all together for some reason.

Next, she attempts to redefine the word Zionism. This to me is just absolutely insane. Imagine if a person tried to redefine the meaning of a very important word to another community, especially one they are not a part of. If

UT Jewish Student Response Part 2

Next, she attempts to redefine the word Zionism. This to me is just absolutely insane. Imagine if a person tried to redefine the meaning of a very important word to another community, especially one they are not a part of. If someone tried to tell a feminist what that word should mean to them, or what persecution and discrimination REALLY means to a minority. The backlash would be instant. Here Hannah McMorris is trying to reclaim a word and identity of mine, when she has absolutely no connection or tie to it, and to be honest it's sickening. Zionism is my belief in the right of a Jewish State for the Jewish people who have inhabited a tiny sliver of land in the Middle East since before religion itself. This word is part of my identity and my people.

It is one thing to be "pro" something, and it's another to be "anti." Hannah is "anti" my homeland which she has never been to and has no personal connection to. I, on the other hand, am Pro-Israel and Pro-Palestine, and in favor of a two-state solution where each people EXIST and self-govern. Being a Zionist does not mean that I do not support the right of self-determination of Palestinian's or support colonialism? When I lived in Israel for a year and volunteered as a first responding paramedic, I treated both Israelis and Palestinians with equal care and without hesitation. These are complex things about the Jewish state that Hannah is so out of touch and does not understand at all, and I'm offended she would try to insert herself in this.

This candidate running to represent all 50,000 students at UT is choosing to spend her time bashing the very existence of the one place the Jewish people can take refuge in times when they see violent anti-Semitism around the world at record highs and to avoid fear of the return of a Holocaust.

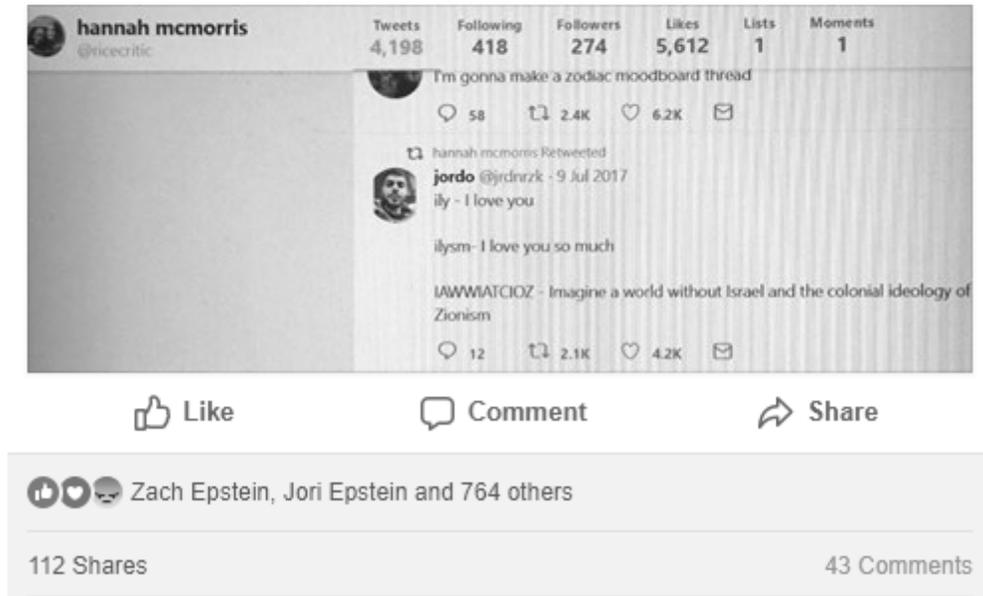
The last thing that is frightening is that this candidate has been campaigning for the past couple weeks and I have not seen a single utterance or attempt to draw attention to this. Jewish students that I have spoken to say they have not spoken up out of fear that this will anger anti-Israel and anti-Jewish students even more. Read that last line again. Jewish students that I have

UT Jewish Student Response Part 3

students even more. Read that last line again. Jewish students that I have spoken to have not spoken up out of fear that this will anger anti-Israel and anti-Jewish students.

So enough is enough. I had planned to not get involved this year, but this election is too important to be silent. It is the day before voting opens and I know who I WON'T be voting for: the Guneez & Hannah ticket. After looking at their platform and accomplishments over the past years, I will be voting for the ticket that chooses to unite versus divide and that is Colton and Mehrnaz 2018. Today I will be looking through all of the platforms and posting a full list of the candidates for all of the rest of positions that I will be supporting and hope you consider them as well for the sake of our University.

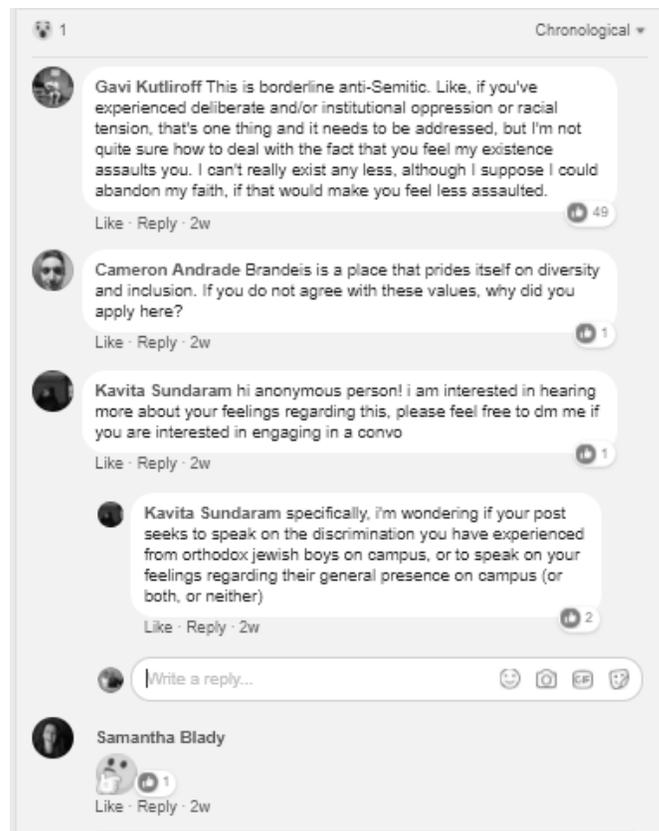
Vote at utexasvote.org



Source: Jonthan Dror's Facebook Profile.

<https://www.facebook.com/drordoesmore/posts/10215808766835280>

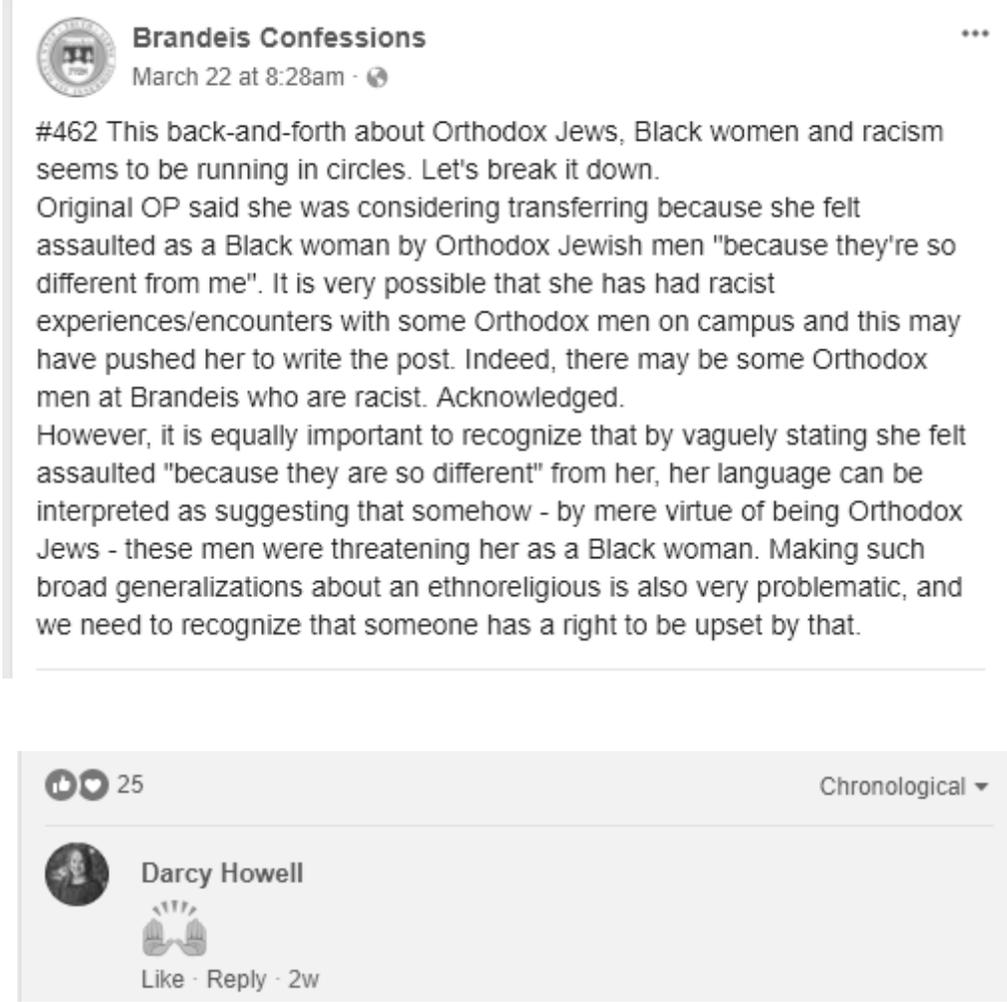
Appendix D



Source: Brandeis Confessions Facebook Page.

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=As%20a%20black%20woman%20on%20campus%20I%20often%20feel%20assaulted%20by%20Orthodox%20Jewish%20boys%20brandeis%20confessions>

Appendix E



The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook post from the page "Brandeis Confessions". The post is dated March 22 at 8:28am and is public. The text of the post discusses a back-and-forth conversation about Orthodox Jews, Black women, and racism. It mentions that the original poster (OP) felt assaulted as a Black woman by Orthodox Jewish men "because they're so different from me". The post acknowledges that there may be racist Orthodox men on campus but also points out that the OP's language could be interpreted as suggesting that being Orthodox Jewish is a threat to Black women. The post concludes that making such broad generalizations is problematic and that everyone has a right to be upset by such incidents.

Brandeis Confessions
March 22 at 8:28am · 🌐

#462 This back-and-forth about Orthodox Jews, Black women and racism seems to be running in circles. Let's break it down.
Original OP said she was considering transferring because she felt assaulted as a Black woman by Orthodox Jewish men "because they're so different from me". It is very possible that she has had racist experiences/encounters with some Orthodox men on campus and this may have pushed her to write the post. Indeed, there may be some Orthodox men at Brandeis who are racist. Acknowledged.
However, it is equally important to recognize that by vaguely stating she felt assaulted "because they are so different" from her, her language can be interpreted as suggesting that somehow - by mere virtue of being Orthodox Jews - these men were threatening her as a Black woman. Making such broad generalizations about an ethnoreligious is also very problematic, and we need to recognize that someone has a right to be upset by that.

👍❤️ 25 Chronological ▾

 **Darcy Howell**
🙌
Like · Reply · 2w

Source: Brandeis Confessions Facebook Page.

<https://www.facebook.com/search/str/brandeis+confessions+this+back+and+forth+about+orthodox+jews%2C+black+women+and+racism/stories-keyword/stories-public>.

Biography

Jason W. Epstein was born in Dallas, Texas on January 26, 1996. He enrolled in the Plan II Honors program at the University of Texas in 2014 and studied in the integrated Master in Professional Accounting (iMPA) program as well. Jason graduated with his bachelor's degrees in liberal arts and business in 2018 and plans to return for one more year to complete his master's degree in accounting. Upon graduation in 2019, Jason plans to pursue a career in management consulting. Jason spearheaded the Black-Jewish student initiative at Texas from his freshman year through his senior year. His greatest takeaway from this experience was the power in genuine outreach. Only friendship and dialogue will foster sincere, lasting relationships between individuals and their communities.