

Deborah Rosmarin [debbie.rosmarin18@gmail.com](mailto:debbie.rosmarin18@gmail.com)  
Laurie Josephs [laurierjosephs@gmail.com](mailto:laurierjosephs@gmail.com)

May 5, 2018

Dear Trustees,

We are parents of current students and are writing about continuing issues of antisemitism on the Tufts college campus.

You may remember that a year ago, a vocal group anti-Zionist (i.e., anti-Israel) students engineered the passage of a BDS resolution targeting Israel on the eve of Passover. This was extremely disturbing to many in the Jewish community for both the timing and substance of this resolution, and led to much negative publicity and considerable disenchantment among Tufts alumni and other supporters of the university.

We had hoped that there would be lessons learned from that experience. Yet a recent event has emphasized to us that students, faculty and administrators at Tufts need to be educated about current forms of antisemitism.

Specifically, on April 20th, as part of their coursework for a course titled “Critical Drag,” several students put on drag performances. This event was highly publicized and well-attended. One of the student’s performances included pulling an Israeli flag out of the student’s shirt, shredding it, and then feeding it to the audience. Debbie’s son and several of his friends accompanying him were aghast that this hate-filled action against the Jewish State and the Star of David -- a symbol for all Jews -- was deemed an acceptable part of a class performance. Debbie’s son wrote to the Office of Equal Opportunity to alert them, explaining that such an inherently antisemitic act should not be deemed acceptable coursework, and requesting appropriate action. The response was insensitive, to say the least. The OEO responded by giving lip service to Debbie’s son’s feelings but noted that he wasn’t being “targeted as an individual” and shared the information that the student who performed the act was Jewish -- as if either of these factors would excuse an antisemitic act.

Debbie’s son also wrote the professor, who responded that the intent was not to have the performance “read” as antisemitic and apologized that Debbie’s son experienced it that way. (We can forward all of Debbie’s son’s email correspondence with the OEO and his professor. It is worth reading).

While the professor’s apology seems sincere, his actions in allowing this type of performance highlight the problem: many on campus (including faculty, administrators and students) lack understanding of when criticism of Israel becomes something more than criticism of its government and policies but attacks the very existence of Israel itself. When Israel is delegitimized and demonized, and when Jews alone among the people of the world are denied the right to a homeland, this crosses the line into antisemitism, as many experts on

antisemitism, world leaders (including the UN Secretary General), and others have recognized. See [this](#) and [this](#).

Equally disturbing is the double standard when it comes to acts of antisemitism on campus. Actions that would never be tolerated against any other group are not only permitted, but officially sanctioned, at Tufts. We all know that no professor would have allowed a student to shred an Iranian flag, a South African flag or a rainbow flag, as Muslims, persons of color, and gay people are seen as oppressed. Jews, however, are perceived as privileged and white, and therefore ripe for this type of hate-filled treatment. That double standard is antisemitic, whether those who follow it are acting intentionally or not.

We strongly believe in freedom of expression, and we are not asserting that any student should be prohibited from expressing his or her views, including shredding an Israeli flag on his or her own time and own platform. What we find so alarming and unconscionable is that this hate-filled act occurred in the context of fulfilling coursework, at an official class event with the full approval of the professor, and that neither the professor nor the Office of Equal Opportunity even understands the issues involved.

As we noted at the outset, there clearly needs to be some education not only of students but of faculty and administration as to modern day antisemitism, which is on the rise in the US, Europe and elsewhere, and so often occurs in the guise of anti-Zionism. Debbie's son is doing his part to alert the administration to this critical issue at Tufts, but to convince the administration to take the problem seriously is a very difficult task that we cannot expect students to shoulder by themselves. We are urging you, the Trustees, to get involved.

Sincerely,

Deborah Rosmarin Parent '20 and Laurie Josephs Parent '20