

Jonathan Olesky ([03:55](#)):

Good afternoon and welcome to The Upside. I'm Jonathan Olesky with Jmore, and this is our virtual show brought to you by The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and Jmore magazine to keep Jewish Baltimore informed during this time of uncertainty. Now, if you have questions for our guests today, please be sure to type them in the chat or message us on Jmore's Facebook page. Now, it is my pleasure to introduce your cohost for The Upside today. Beth Goldsmith, chair of The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore and Dr. Scott Rifkin, publisher of Jmore. Beth and Scott, take it away.

Beth Goldsmith ([04:29](#)):

Thanks Jonathan. And welcome everyone. Last year, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. A time when the world said never again. Yet, unfortunately we are now seeing a disturbing uptick in antisemitism throughout the globe. Neo Nazis are gaining currency. Holocaust deniers are distorting the truth and rewriting history. We've come to a crossroads in our country, and we must work very hard to combat what is going on? Fortunately organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, ADL, and The Associated's Baltimore Jewish Council, BJC, are committed to this task through education, advocacy and more. Scott, please introduce our guests.

Scott Rifkin ([05:26](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, Beth. We're excited today to welcome Doron Ezickson and I hope I pronounced your last name right, Doron, and your first name, for that matter. I hope I did well with that. He's vice president of the ADL's Mid-Atlantic and Midwest Division and Howard Libit, executive director of The Associated's Baltimore Jewish Council. Let me start with a couple of comments. It seems that in the United States, we can talk internationally as well, but in the United States over the last four years or so, there's been an empowering of groups with antisemitic beliefs and you saw it in the attack on the Capitol where folks were wearing Nazi paraphernalia and you see it in a politician out on the who's claiming that lasers from a Jewish, a billionaire are causing forest fires or something crazy like that. There seems to be an empowering and unholy alliance between some of the right wing in this country and antisemitic groups. And I'd love to hear your thoughts, both of you gentlemen, on where we are in this country and we're nationally on antisemitism and how it plays into the current politics. Doron, if you want to start, maybe?

Doron Ezickson ([06:43](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, Scott and Beth, and it's a pleasure to be here and thank you for everybody who's tuning in. It's I think a very important to understand what we are seeing today in part in historical context. And we at the ADL start with an understanding of what is antisemitism and at its core, antisemitism is a conspiracy theory. It is animated by conspiracy theories. And when we, when we see historically periods of time where there is social discord or economic uncertainty or political upheaval, unfortunately people are given in a variety of cultures and, you know, over the millennia or religious contexts conspiracy theories emerge, and the, the most ancient and persistent of conspiracy theories is of those of Jewish power, Jewish control and the like, and so we have seen, yes, we have seen an unleashing if you will,

an amplification of what we refer to as most, mostly the seven tropes, the seven tropes about Jews.

Doron Ezickson ([07:59](#)):

And we have seen that absolutely on the far right and quite violently so, but not exclusively so. So it's important that we understand that on elements of the far left, we have seen also similar types of conspiracy theories, espoused. We have seen it always in the context of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict as well as in certain so-called religious leaders like Nation of Islam and Louis Farrakhan, who has a brilliant form of antisemitism and misogyny and anti white attitudes By far the most violent and the most, and the most deadly however has been on the far right. And the new tool that we have not yet come to grips with is social media and the internet, which is a platform that allows all of this traditional hate and the conspirators themselves, to find one another, to educate one another and to plan. And we saw that in high relief on Capitol Hill, as you referenced Scott, and quite frankly, I speak of this in terms of bookends to this particular chapter, you know, from Charlottesville to Capitol Hill, we saw the same in Charlottesville also with deadly results. Howard, perhaps you'd like to add to that.

Beth Goldsmith ([09:27](#)):

Yeah, well, Howard's on mute, so I'm not sure if he can control that or John, if you need to get involved.

Doron Ezickson ([09:33](#)):

Sorry, I didn't mean to toss it to him. If that wasn't the plan,

Beth Goldsmith ([09:42](#)):

[Inaudible]

Howard Libit ([09:43](#)):

My apologies. I had a little coughing fit and I muted myself to not step over you with my coughing and I couldn't unmute, but anyway ... Everything Doron says, is of course, spot on. I guess I, and I tend to think of it here in the Baltimore area and Maryland is kind of, we have the, the, the antisemitism we may see in people's communications, that we may see in in conversations in, in every day, everything from you know, graffiti, the kind of to to what you hear or what you see in conversations to then the real concerns about safety and the real concerns about the most extreme forms which, which fortunately here we haven't experienced directly in the Baltimore community. The, the violence that we may have seen it, you know, in, in Pittsburgh or in, in San Diego or New Jersey, or, or even the attacks we've seen in some of the Orthodox communities of New York which is all driven by antisemitism.

Howard Libit ([10:51](#)):

And, and we've been lucky so far, but that doesn't mean we're not investing in the safety and security. It's, it's really important, but also the education piece. And, and I know we'll get into that more, but, but really the I guess I, you know, the Baltimore Jewish Council was founded in response to the rising antisemitism and the 1930s. And six, seven years ago, before I started

with the BJC, as they thought about goals and priorities, at that time, it felt like antisemitism while, you know, certainly hadn't, wasn't totally gone, antisemitism wasn't the, the driving concern it was today. And as, as we kind of, as, as the board, then thought about staffing, thought about resources, antisemitism didn't have its own position or its own person just because it wasn't, it didn't feel like we were in that moment. Now in the last two, three years, we really feel like it's, we're in that moment and we really need to devote more time and thought and resources. And we're lucky we have national partners like ADL to, to help call on to help us.

Doron Ezickson ([11:59](#)):

And if I might, Scott, just add one other thing also for context, and, you know, we at ADL believe in, you know, in data and in trends and really following things to be able to speak objectively about about what we are, you know, experiencing maybe on a more ad hoc basis. And, you know, there is overall, there's an underlying positive trend in some respects about Jewish life in America. We have polled routinely attitudes about Jews. And attitudes have improved. And in fact, in our most recent national poll 69% of respondents U.S. Adults responded that they felt warmly towards Jews, that they, there was no animus. There was none and only 7%, you know, would acknowledge some hostility which is, you know, pretty much improved over many years. That said fully 40% of the respondents did believe multiple antisemitic statements to be true. And 11% believed six or more of these stereotypes, which are again, rooted in those tropes. I referenced; Jewish power, Jewish money, Jewish influence, dual loyalty, or disloyalty, you know, first loyalty to Jews, first loyalty to Israel, as opposed to where they live. And so in order to understand the antidote, we have to, I think we have to understand the, you know, the ill. And the ill has always been there. It's just, and now we're, we're in this spasm, if you will, as you know amplified by the internet, as I said. And, and I think Howard mentioned in, and we are very focused and in partnership with the BJC on education. I mean, you would think that the Holocaust would have stood still today as the symbol and the reason and the undeniable basis to, to confront antisemitism. And yet in a poll that we just did in January. We found that 40% of American adults that are in terms of their online activity, confront Holocaust denialism on online. We're looking at the gaming space where a lot of young people spend an inordinate amount of time. You can tell, I have young kids young adult kids but fully 10% of gamers saw Holocaust denialism in the gaming context and the online gaming context. So, you know, that's another one of the strands, if you will, of antisemitism, but it it's emblematic of the work that we have to do to push back to eliminate the existence of antisemitism and Holocaust denialism in those spaces. And then to counter that with affirmative education.

Beth Goldsmith ([14:48](#)):

So I want to jump in, I want to jump for a second, Doron. You just zipped through several of them, but you, when you began, you talked about the seven tropes, and I think it would help our audience to know exactly what those actually are, those seven. So what are the most common tropes, and means, being used against us? If you guys mute yourselves, you cannot unmute yourselves. That's John's control. So John, you need to unmute, we need to unmute Doron again. So please don't mute yourselves when you're not speaking. It that's the way our

system works. Someone else controls the muting. So when it says unmute, you can, but there, there you go. Sorry, Doron. Go ahead.

Doron Ezickson ([15:36](#)):

All right. So Howard and I are even now. So the seven tropes That of Jewish power. So these are the international conspiracies. The, the notion that we control, you know, there's a cabal, it's the protocols of the elders of Zion, right? That there's a secret society of power and government, international governmental control. It is of Jewish greed that the motivation of Jewish action, you know, the Jewish community action is really rooted in money. It is still the decide that Jews are responsible for killing Christ and that we are unholy. We are cursed by the devil and that's still believe it or not is pervasive, not withstanding, at least the Catholic church church's, quite affirmative pronouncement of of that. It is the it is the disgusting trope of Jewish violence against young children most, and, and the idea of the Passover blood and for use in the matzo, which you see in much rhetoric in the context of Israel's actions against the Palestinians.

Doron Ezickson ([16:55](#)):

But you also see it domestically here in the United States, uh in something that's right down the street from me, which was pizza gate. And the notion that there is this pedophile ring with a Jewish component to it hidden at this little pizza restaurant by the way, the individual who arrived there with a gun and shot into the air to try to free the children. You'll recall that about 18 months ago, was free just today from prison And the conspiracy that he touted, which was QAnon. And that is the core of the QAnon conspiracy is of a secret cabal of child abusers with a Jewish element to it. It is Holocaust denialism, which is really a more current manifestation obviously, but that there is a big lie. And it is also about Israel. Anti Zionism or Zionism is really being the, the assertion of Jewish power in an unjust way, over masses of people and Jewish violence.

Doron Ezickson ([18:01](#)):

And that the Jews are responsible here in the United States for advocating for war in aid of Israel and, you know, all the, so those are the core tropes and underlying those are a series of statements about Jews that we test in these about Jewish loyalty and who, you know, Jews really only care about themselves. They don't re, they, you know, they don't really belong to the communities in which they live. They think they're better than everyone. They're greedy, they're powerful. They control Hollywood. They control the media, they control big business. They started the COVID virus so that they could come up with a vaccine had profit from it, which has been a very strong current that we've seen recently.

Scott Rifkin ([18:44](#)):

So, wait, let me ask a question. It's easy for me as an unrepentant liberal, like I am, to blame the former president and say, you know, he really empowered these groups and I can certainly give examples as anybody can, but is it really just the case of a politician riding a wave that they recognized or did the politicians really trigger this resurgence? What do you think?

Doron Ezickson ([19:14](#)):

I'll hasten. I don't know. Look, I want to say, first of all, that ADL is not a bipartisan organization. We are a nonpartisan organization, right? We, we are, we do not take positions in partisan politics. But we speak truth to power. And we have been very clear that president Trump took advantage of old hate and rising fear and utilized it in what we thought was an extremely irresponsible and ultimately deadly way. And so now that does not mean that the president, or even the president's core advisors created this, as I said, this is something that's always existed. It's been animated and unleashed at different times in our history. If you talk to our you know, black brothers and sisters, African-Americans, they feel, you know, they feel this every day and in one way or another it, but there's no question that it was mobilized and given permission, or at least subtly, maybe not so subtly amplified. And that is a huge problem, but if it were only about the president, when the president is gone, so would the problem be gone. And that is absolutely not the case.

Beth Goldsmith ([20:29](#)):

So let's, let's move forward with that. I'm using the analogy of a genie in a bottle. So the genie's been released from the bottle, if you will, how do we put it back in? I know this is the work that you do, both our Jewish Council and at ADL. How do we get that, you know, take back some control and put some of that hate away.

Howard Libit ([20:56](#)):

I'll jump in a little bit. I mean, I think it's, it's it's definitely challenging, but I think when, I mean, Doron mentioned, a couple minutes ago, education, I mean, at the heart of it, I think putting the genie back in the bottle, if you can, I don't know that we can put the genie back in the bottle, but we can try and educate those who are persuadable. I mean, there are some who maybe are beyond where we can reach, but there's some people who are swept up in this, who with, if we engage with them, if we educate, if we, you know, teach at an early age about the Holocaust, if we correct misimpressions when we hear them, if we're willing to speak up, I think we can make a difference. But I can't say that everyone is every, I'm not sure- I'm not sure that everyone can be brought back from over the edge of antisemitism.

Doron Ezickson ([21:56](#)):

I would agree with Howard and add maybe a couple of other elements. Number one, I do think we have to go back and ensure that our own community is educated about the history of antisemitism, the construct, and educated in a way not to hold it up as a sword against others., although we certainly do that when necessary, but more to have a, a vehicle for conversation when sometimes folks inadvertently reflect-

Scott Rifkin ([22:30](#)):

We've lost Doron for a minute. Okay. in the absence of, can everybody hear me at this point, Beth? Can you hear me? Good? There we go. Is he back? Nope. I guess not. Okay. So let's move on to another question, and then we'll, we'll come back to that when we get Doron back, I guess one of the questions I have is folks that are antisemitic and folks that have concerns about Israel in various political matters. And how do we separate the two groups?



Because there are people that are going to hate everything Israel does because they hate Jews, but there are other people that have concerns with Israel's this-or-that policy, and they're not necessarily antisemitic. So how do you address that?

Howard Libit ([23:24](#)):

I think you raise a very, you know, a real, a real challenging part. I mean, legitimate criticism of Israel is, is fair, right? You can criticize the government of Israel. You can criticize actions of Israel, just like we criticize actions of the United States. And you know, Israel, you go to Israel, Israelis among the first in line to criticize actions of their government or things. And they're certainly the, the, the issue comes when that criticism becomes unfair, in the sense of, you're holding Israel to a standard where you wouldn't hold any other country, or you're using some of the tropes, classic antisemitic tropes, to describe Israel's actions. You know, you, you hear occasionally people make the comparison to how Israel handles issues on the West bank to concentration camps or to the Nazis, or that it's an apartheid regime, all of which is totally unfair and crosses the line into antisemitism.

Howard Libit ([24:32](#)):

But if you hear people say, look, I don't agree with how Israel is handling issues on the West bank. And your criticism is fair and is rooted in facts that, that doesn't become antisemitism. And I think it's, you need to be clear. You need to call it out when they- when, when, when people cross the line and engage in it. But you also not need to not call people antisemitic just necessarily just because they are disagreeing with the policies of Israel. It's, it's among the more complicated issues of antisemitism and I I get it, but I think I think there's a line you can draw and distinctions you can make.

Jonathan Olesky ([25:24](#)):

Howard, I have a question here from an audience member, which is wonderful. And just to remind everyone type your questions into the zoom chat, we simulcast on The Associated and Jmore's Facebook pages. So we have thousands of people watching today, live [and] in the coming days. Great question here from Joyce, Howard, and she asks 'What about the thesis of Dennis Prager's book that people hate us mostly because of our Jewish values, our conscience, our morality, our ethics, what's your perspective on that?'

Howard Libit ([25:56](#)):

So I'll admit I'm not as familiar with with the thesis there. So I'm not necessarily particularly qualified to speak, to speak to it. I mean, clearly there are Jewish values and Jewish how we, our successes or whatever, or whatever else you want to describe it, that attracts antisemitism. So, I mean, I think the Jewish community for whatever [reason] that, you know, for whatever- people are looking for a scapegoat in many instances, and I think that the Jewish community unfortunately becomes the target eh, historically and currently.

Beth Goldsmith ([26:36](#)):

Scott, I see Doron is back. So can we, and, and he's able to, he's frozen so maybe we can get him involved back into the conversation.

Scott Rifkin ([26:48](#)):

Where, what was, what was the question we left Doron with? And I apologize. I forgot.

Beth Goldsmith ([26:52](#)):

Well, he'll remember what he was talking about, but now we're talking about in response to an audience question about Dennis Prager's theory or postulate, whatever. So Doron, you can chime in with any of it.

Doron Ezickson ([27:06](#)):

I think, well, just to finish the prior thought, and I apologize, we had a power outage here, so it took me a minute to get back. And I'm not in Texas. The but I think the, the understanding by the community and our obligation to educate the generations and our children about the history of antisemitism as something that unfortunately we, we can't afford to ignore not withstanding our relative good position in this country. It's something that we bear the burden of. And we at ADL believe that that extends beyond just antisemitism in the Jewish community. You know, we, we were founded back in 108 years ago following the lynching of a Jewish businessman in Georgia with a dual purpose, you know, clearly the priority to stop the, what was then called the defaming of the Jewish people in the United States.

Doron Ezickson ([27:58](#)):

But also to secure justice and fair treatment to all that's based in Hillel's teaching and Pirkei Avot that, you know, if we're not for ourselves who will be for us, or if I am not for myself, if I'm not for others who am I, there's a moral standard, right? And if not, now, when? This notion of action. So what's critical to understand here is that we must be, we must be subject matter experts on our own histories, and we must teach our children, but we also must remember that in a democracy, the power of this country is that in coalition, we are stronger. And we are uniquely in a position to understand, even if we didn't personally experience slavery or the Holocaust to understand the power of hate. And so if we can speak and also take upon ourselves an understanding of the journey and the challenges of other minorities in America and act in coalition and in those coalitions also educate them about our experience. There is a unique opportunity to really help make democracy everything that it should be and could be. And I fear that our education institutions have kind have taken democracy for granted. They took our society for granted, and we need to get back to the basic levels, teaching our children about hate, about civil rights, about civil society, about our democracy, about civics, the way many of us were educated when we were young.

Scott Rifkin ([29:25](#)):

So where do we go from here? We clearly have an uptick in the amount of antisemitism. What's the big approach that we need to take at this point. Cause if, if we keep doing what we're doing, we don't seem to be winning at this moment. We seem to be losing.

Scott Rifkin ([29:44](#)):

I think, Doron locked up again, unfortunately.

Howard Libit ([29:47](#)):

So let me, let me speak to a little bit, you know, we spent as, and I know you all there was an Upside that focused on the Baltimore community antisemitism task force, a few shows ago, you know, so we, we have seen ourselves as focusing on four essential areas as we try and combat antisemitism Education, as Doron talked about, both education of our community and education of other communities. Advocacy, advocating for additional laws and other efforts to fight hate crimes, to fight antisemitism. We've talked about allyship, you know, as, as Doron was just talking about standing with others, when they encounter hate building deeper relationships and deeper partnerships across different communities. You know, it's why [inaudible] for example, when the Muslim travel ban was put in, the Baltimore Jewish Council spoke up against it and standing with others when incidents occur.

Howard Libit ([30:50](#)):

When the shooting happens in, at the, at the synagogue in Pittsburgh, among the first people to call are leaders from other faith communities who want to check in with us and, and who show up the next day at a service we put on to, to stand with us and kind of the fourth area is the tracking and reporting of incidents. So that, you know, we can't fight antisemitism and fight antisemitic incidents if we're not keeping track and aware of, of, of what's happening. So we know what to be looking out for. We know what to speak to. And that ranges from social media to to graffiti to the clerk in the grocery store, making an antisemitic comment to to a Jewish shopper, to the extreme violence that we've seen.

Howard Libit ([31:40](#)):

And what we're fortunate on, on that last element with the reporting and tracking that on both The Associated's website and the BJC's website, we have created a means for people to report incidents that occur where it goes to the ADL cause they already have an online system. And we're fortunate that that kind of we're sharing these reports across, between the ADL and between our Baltimore community to say, 'Do we need to respond? Do we need to report this to law enforcement? Does someone need a follow up call to help understand how to deal with this, this antisemitic incident in their kid's school?' Whatever it is we people need to be able to communicate, they need to have a way to get the expert resources. And that's what we're trying to provide.

Jonathan Olesky ([32:28](#)):

Howard, so I have a Facebook question here from Claire about a local incident, perhaps you and Doron are aware of it, but Claire writes at Hopkins a TA bragged about grading Jewish and Zionist students differently. She goes on to say hundreds of people in the community contacted Hopkins. She says nothing has been done. Clearly she's a frustrated advocate. Could you comment about this particular instance if you're aware of it?

Howard Libit ([32:56](#)):

Sure. We we've been working with Johns Hopkins administration about it. There's there were a number of students at the university who have filed complaints. There's a process that the university is following. They've been interviewing everybody conducting an investigation. It,



it takes a little bit of time, particularly in the pandemic to get all the interviews with all the different students in that department who felt like they may have been discriminated against or may have been affected. My understanding is that a reports being written, and then it goes to the the higher ups in the administration who will then make a decision on what to do. I mean, it's, as much as we might want Johns Hopkins, as soon as the social media posts were brought to their attention, as much as we might want the university to say, you know, 'We're banning her from the university and throwing her out.' She has due process too.

Howard Libit ([33:47](#)):

There's a process they have to follow, to go through this, because if they don't, it all gets reversed. And so we need to respect that. And you know, be patient but not necess-, but not let it stall. And so we're we're, we're keeping up the quiet pressure and working with the university because we, we, we also have to appreciate our relationship with the university. You know, a couple of weeks later, they had an incident of swastikas being found on the Peabody campus and the university reached out to Hillel, reached out to us to talk to us about it. They when they're they made sure and talked to us about what their statements to the Hopkins community were going to say. And we offered some suggestions to make it more reassuring to the Hopkins students and to make it clear how seriously they were treating it, which they took. And so us being in, in dialogue and partnership with organizations like Johns Hopkins is really important for us to make a difference

Jonathan Olesky ([34:48](#)):

Thank you.

Beth Goldsmith ([34:48](#)):

And I would, I would jump in and, and sort of second that emotion, Howard, thank you that at least we are very happy to know that we have a process, that there is a process. That's a very clear process from The Associated working with our Baltimore- we like to proudly say it's our- Baltimore Jewish Council. And that the process is working. And unfortunately things, as you said, don't always happen as quickly as we might like, but we are very gratified to know that we have a process in place. And that process that the steps have been followed and things are proceeding. So I hope for all of our audience out there that they do understand that, that we do have a process in place and we are following it to the letter. And you will know when we know what the outcome is. Doron, so sorry, we keep having issues um-

Doron Ezickson ([35:48](#)):

I think it's on my end, and I apologize.

New Speaker ([35:48](#)):

-With Your connection. Jump in with whatever you want to say at this moment.

Doron Ezickson ([35:55](#)):

Yeah. I just want to, I want to highlight, because I think it's really important for folks to know that the Hopkins situation which we also coordinated with Howard and his team and the local

Hillel on represents, I think a great example of the wonderful partnership done under Howard's leadership. We have been able to have with your local community. And look in the, in the world of sort of the, the, the competition among organizations, the different philosophies, et cetera. Oftentimes we look at you know, how many different, the alphabet soup of organizations focused on issues. Our commitment at ADL is to work as closely as we possibly can with federations and with JCRCs around the country, to partner with their knowledge of the community, with our expertise about antisemitism and our expertise about how to embed in institutions sensitivity education programs and the like, and this is a great example of that partnership as, as is, you know, the fact that you can report incidents for our antisemitic audit through the websites of The Associated and the [BJC]. It doesn't sound like a lot, but it is actually a model for many, many other communities. And I recite it regularly. this is what we need. If we're going to fight off the amount of hate that exists out there, we need to figure out better ways and ways to maximize our limited resource by leveraging each other and working together. So I just want to thank The Associated and particularly Howard and the BJC for that co-op ongoing cooperation, and we're fully committed to that partnership

Beth Goldsmith ([37:32](#)):

And beyond reporting. What else can people do if they are faced in their own lives with such incidents?

Doron Ezickson ([37:43](#)):

Well, you know, we, we talk about sharing facts to the extent that it's safe to do so, or you're in an environment. And I referenced earlier being more knowledgeable about the roots of antisemitism, and we have materials for guided conversations on our website, under what we call Table Talks. Oftentimes these are styled as conversations between parents and children, but they also apply to colleagues and to other family members or coworkers but figuring out a way in, not get, not a confrontational way and never in the case where somebody might fear for their safety but try to engage in a knowledgeable way, understand where the person's attitude comes from. Secondly it is to look around and to start insisting that our education institutions take the anti bias, anti antisemitism work more seriously that actually commit to programs on an ongoing basis.

Doron Ezickson ([38:40](#)):

We, we work very closely with Howard you know, through the Holocaust Museum there on issues related to Holocaust education, through our Echoes and Reflections program, Echoes and Reflections is a joint program of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, the Shoah Foundation, and ADL. And we have free training and curriculum for teachers and many schools in Baltimore have adopted trainings as we try to encourage Holocaust and genocide education. But we also have programs generically about creating what we call No Place for Hate. So we have a expanding school program for kids as young, as kindergarten, first grade through high school, that empowers them on a peer-to-peer basis to create a place and to commit to no hate in their halls and creating a few activities. And we give them banners, they hang alongside their athletic championships. The fact that people don't get bullied and we don't have hate in the halls of the school is a point of pride.

Doron Ezickson ([39:47](#)):

And that is one of our fastest growing programs. We'd love to see more schools, public, and private in the Baltimore area adopt it. There's no ideology behind it. We're not pushing the particular view. Other than let's have conversations in schools, let's have activities that celebrate diversity. Let's empower kids to talk to their peers, which we know from a pedal-pedagogical perspective is the most effective way to change culture in schools and know when it comes to universities. You know, these ad hoc one-offs are no longer ad hoc. In fact, in terms of expressions of hate, and every university has to have an approach and we're advocating for freshmen orientation, that part of the codes of conduct and what it is to be a citizen in a university or college campus involves not engaging in certain types of activities. And we have a program called Hate/Uncycled, which really is a guide for administrators or professors on how to embed in the university or response mechanism and an education mechanism.

Doron Ezickson ([40:42](#)):

So again, lots of tools available. If you have connections, if you see something happening you, you are, you can be empowered. Obviously we want our legislators to hear as well. We have a lot of legislation pending, state and federal. And today it's easy to register over the internet, your your support for something. And we work on state advocacy with Howard regularly in terms of state-based bills and continuing to elevate this idea that hate crimes are a special category of crime. Lastly, it's a, it's a controversial area right now, but, you know, we firmly believe, and I know Howard does as well that law, that law enforcement has a role in protecting civil rights. And we commit an enormous amount of resource to doing the hard work of educating law enforcement about the history of hate, about how hate unchecked can result in the Holocaust.

Doron Ezickson ([41:37](#)):

We have a program with the Holocaust Memorial, Baltimore County police are participating. We'll be bringing cadets to the Holocaust museum and examine what happens in a putative democracy when local police become complicit with with a hate group and what can happen and reminding folks. And so we train FBI agents, we train local police County, state police on the importance of recognizing and investigating hate crimes, which is a different type of thing. And they don't get it in the Academy. And so there's education to be done there it's fraught right now because of the treatment by so many individual law enforcement members and sometimes leadership of the, of the African-American community. We have to call that out and look for solutions as a priority. There is no question. And even so, we have to recognize that if law enforcement isn't educated about their role we can't count on them to do the right thing.

Scott Rifkin ([42:33](#)):

So let, let me change the topic just a little bit. And it's about whether there's hope out there. And I look at the younger generation of folks and they seem to be more accepting of people that aren't them. There seems to be more acceptance of, of, of racial diversity, of religious diversity. You do a lot of research Doron. Are you seeing that? Do the younger generation seem to be coming around when it comes to the issues that surround hate?

Doron Ezickson ([43:03](#)):

Excellent question, Scott. It's a little bit a tale of two cities and, you know, and we will see. On the one hand, absolutely. You know, particularly if you look at it, for example, in the context of LGBTQ+ rights to the, you know, the members of the community who you know, who are different in their sexual preference or sexual identity, there is a very different construct among young people for the most part than among older folks in terms of what we've experienced and what we've come to understand. And, and to, you know, understand the violation of rights. I think in the race space, there is much less patience among young people for the perpetuation of the violence and the discrimination that they perceive against people of color. And so there is hope there. Now, some of that can get a little extreme also, and can ironically we particularly with regard to the very far left among young people, they associate Israel with a colonialist power and anybody who supports Israel is, you know, doesn't have a place in the domestic civil rights agenda.

Doron Ezickson ([44:13](#)):

And that, that is that's illogical. It's not rooted in history, but it's real. But, but the other side of it is, unfortunately, there are so many young people who are drawn to the extremism of the far, right that, that, that occupy these spaces online, the gaming spaces, et cetera. And whether they're looking for it or not, they see the, the hate content. It's part of the reason why we organize along with NAACP and Urban League and Color of Change and other organizations this past summer, a request for corporate advertisers to stop advertising on Facebook for a month to send a message we had hoped for a hundred or so companies to do so, and over 1200 did. So, you know, we're, we're trying to mobilize and change the conversation about what is online, because what is online on the far right space is truly vile and it's against all people of difference, if you will. And we've seen it activated in, into deadly violence. And unfortunately we see it parroted among new members of Congress. We have down in North Carolina, the 25 year old young man who cites, without understanding, I believe you know, his trip to see the, you know, Hitler's bunker and and you know, his and uses QAnon conspiracy theories to explain things. And this is rooted in, on the far right. And it's gonna take a lot of work to get it out, but work that attempts to be dialogue with those who are willing to engage in dialogue.

Scott Rifkin ([45:52](#)):

Yeah. It's scary the way that people believe these conspiracy theories as fact, that's scary stuff. And you mentioned the gentleman who just got out of jail, who was absolutely stunned and surprised when he marched into that place and found there was no basement full of pedophiles. In fact, the restaurant didn't have a basement. So it was, it was really fascinating how little, how much he just believed this craziness he was hearing online. So what else do we do? This has been a great conversation. You, you both are at the, at the leadership of trying to address this problem. Do we ever get rid of it completely? Probably not. But what other great, big steps do we need to take, or are we on the right path?

Doron Ezickson ([46:38](#)):

Well, I would say we're on it. We're on a path. I think we're on the right path, but I think, I think, you know, we, as a Jewish community need to commit to making sure we educate

ourselves, that we educate our children for example, The Associated and the Insight Israel Forum are launching, later in March, this effort to with OpenDor media, this national effort to better educate 11th to 12th graders about antisemitism and anti Zionism, preparing them for what they may experience on college campuses. So, so steps like that, as well, as you know, here in Maryland, we've persuaded the state superintendent to make Holocaust education, a more rigorous part of the curriculum at the elementary, middle, and high school level. And at the middle school level to teach that at the roots of the antisemitism, that was kind of at the roots of the Holocaust. So that kids begin to understand that. I mean, so there's, there's steps in progress. There's we have to keep it up. We can't get complacent, you know. When I talked earlier about seven, eight years ago, we didn't see antisemitism as a pressing priority of the Baltimore Jewish community, because it, it felt like we had moved past it in some ways, it wasn't out there in the extreme levels like it is now, you know, if, if we move to a place two years from now where we're again, feeling safe and secure, that probably means doesn't mean we need to let up. We, we need to remain just as focused and focused in different ways. We need to, you know, I think we've learned that lesson that when there's economic uncertainty is, as Doron mentioned, when there's other issues nationally, that the forces that push antisemitism can be unleashed almost overnight and we need to stay vigilant for that.

Scott Rifkin ([48:30](#)):

Very good and Doron, what else do we need to be doing?

Doron Ezickson ([48:34](#)):

It's probably not dramatic in a sense that people will go away with 'Wow, I really learned something,' but it really is doing what people are doing today. It's being open to new information, it's being aware and prioritizing and understanding of these hate dynamics and wanting to dig a little deeper, right? Get a little deeper understanding, commit to it, choose one institution that you would like to see change, choose one person that you would like to engage with and have a conversation with whom you disagree, but who you think sometimes inadvertently or without knowledge, you know, spills over into a form of hate. If, if what if, what appeals to you is understanding the hate that others face become more educated about what African-American citizens face in this country every day or, or Asian Americans more recently, you know, in the COVID crisis or you know, Latino, Hispanic Americans and the immigration crisis, and the, the kind of isolation and fear that they live in every day.

Doron Ezickson ([49:36](#)):

There is, there are so many people living under a specter of, of hate or derision. Any person you reach out to help, any community that you indicate a willingness to understand their story will be appreciated. And if each of us does that little thing, we start to turn back the tide, those pebbles create all in the pond, create the wave that ultimately will, we'll turn this and understand that we're not going to do it in a day. We're not going to do it in a year. This is, this is generational, and this is something that we're going to, we're going to have to see through. And hopefully we will identify the young leaders who are already within our organizations or in our communities to take it forward after that. We have to tend to our democracy. We have to tend to our humanity. And it's very difficult to do so right now, but small steps matter.



Scott Rifkin ([50:26](#)):

And it sounds to me, And you've made a couple comments to this effect that it's incumbent on us as Jews to confront our own flaws as well, to understand what an African-American is feeling every day or an Asian or somebody who was gay. Because if we understand how they're being discriminated against, it allows us to form the partnerships that, that attack all this. Is that a fair statement?

Howard Libit ([50:52](#)):

Very much so. I mean, one of the things actually that we've been working on, not just the BJC, but The Associated as a system, is also just looking in-house, you know, at the, at how the white Jewish community deals with and, and treats Jews of Color, and the feelings that Jews of color have with, you know, when they, when a Jew of color walks through a synagogue and the look of suspicion they have, 'Well, why is that person here?' Because when there are, you know, roughly anywhere 10% or more of Jews are Jews of color, and, and we, you know, we, as a community that is predominantly white, need to start there in terms of how we treat Jews of color. And from, and then from there be thinking about how we're working with other communities as well, but we need to confront our own internal biases.

Doron Ezickson ([51:50](#)):

Right. I appreciate you saying that, Howard and I, I will say even we at ADL organization that exists as an anti-biased organization, we have our own diversity equity and inclusion initiative, and we are really looking at how we educate ourselves. We're re-looking at our priorities in this moment because it's an evolving issue. And we can't take it for granted. And we think it strengthens our ability to serve and to create again you know, the, the wonderful country that the great experiment we're still engaged in of our democracy is meant to meant to provide us. We just can't, we can't look away from the obligation to maintain and looking inward is a big part of that. And then being active, activating, remember, remember the Hillel admonition, 'We take care of ourselves, we take care of others, and we act.' That is guidance as relevant today as it was when it was spoken so long ago.

Scott Rifkin ([52:49](#)):

Very good. We just got a chat message asking about the far right politicians and what ADL does to try to oppose them. And you mentioned them briefly a moment ago, but is there a concerted effort in that regard?

Doron Ezickson ([53:08](#)):

We monitor at every level that we can, where true extremists are seeking office or in office, again, we cannot engage in campaign activity. But we can call things out when statements are made.

Doron Ezickson ([53:26](#)):

We call them out. We will engage with people to educate them if if that's appropriate or possible. But when, when not, we will call for action. So with the Congresswoman Marjorie [Taylor Greene] down in Georgia she was an unapologetically, unabashedly, conspiracy

theories, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant many other isms. We finally as we did with the previously with the Congressman Carson King from Iowa, we wrote very strong, strongly to the leadership in the house to strip her of her committee assignments, not, and not allow her to move forward in the committees. And that in fact was done. We weren't the only ones who called for it, but so yes, we do monitor it. If you see it on a local basis, if you see it at the school board or the school committee, if you see it on the council and it's of concern, it is important for people to know about it.

Doron Ezickson ([54:21](#)):

There was, I grew up in an era where sometimes, and for some of you may, may have experienced this, you know, the reaction to my grandparents were 'Sha, Sha'. You know, 'Don't say anything, don't make a big deal. You only elevate it.' We can't afford that anymore. We have to call it out and we will always be there. And, you know, jointly with the BJC where appropriate sometimes it's easier for us to speak in those situations then than on, you know, more local organizations. But we will, we will always speak out where appropriate. And sometimes it's a letter that doesn't see the light of day to engage in a conversation, and sometimes it's something more dramatic. And so please keep us informed if you see those kinds of things.

Scott Rifkin ([55:06](#)):

And you mentioned democracy, and it's really interesting, you mentioned that, and strengthening the democracy. And it strikes me that we often don't realize that it's not government that protects us. It's not politicians that protect us. It's the democracy itself, making our votes important as a voting block. And therefore you get paid attention to. Can you comment, you made the comment about strengthening democracy as a way to deal with antisemitism you mind elaborating on that a bit?

Doron Ezickson ([55:37](#)):

Well, I think it's number one, it's maintaining trust in government institutions. The institutions are intended to have fealty to our constitution and embedded in our constitution is a bill of rights that's supposed to protect each of us, regardless of our religious beliefs or no beliefs, the color of our skin, our gender or our gender preference. And, and so again, people assumed that each institution in the democracy kind of exists and is strong, but I think the last several months have demonstrated that, you know, that even our democracy can be disrupted, that there are ways in which our elections can be interfered with. Where the rhetoric and the masses can attempt, literally in the Capitol insurrection, an attempt to stop the accounting of the electoral votes. I don't think any of us would have believed that was possible. Although I will say that ADL was on record and had publicly communicated to law enforcement our concerns about that exact thing happening days before it actually did.

Doron Ezickson ([56:45](#)):

So part of this is listening. But when I talk about our democracy is it's really about people being active. People engaging. People ensuring that the votes turn out, ensuring that people are called to account that, that move outside of that. If we, if we take the system for granted, if we give over to others, the power to choose who our leaders are within our democratic

system we do so at significant risk today. And so it's about engagement. It's about really understanding and putting pressure on the politicians who make decisions and holding them to account. Not an easy thing but something that we've moved as a society generally away from maybe out of cynicism, maybe out of taking it for granted. So there's an activism opportunity here that I'm referencing

Beth Goldsmith ([57:34](#)):

I'm going to jump in. This has been amazing. I feel like it needs to be a series as, as many of our shows are. But we do have, we do have time constraints. And so we're going to have to wrap up this session. Thank you so, so much Howard and Doron for being here and getting this conversation more in the forefront of our thoughts. I want to remind some viewers. We actually had Noam Weissman on last time talking about the OpenDor program, with Lisa [Bodziner] from Towson Hillel. And we've also talked about antisemitism before. So I recommend to everybody who's watching. You probably know if you haven't seen us live and in all the past shows that you can find all of our shows by going either on the Jmore page, The Associated's Facebook page or on YouTube. So you can view our past shows and please spread the word.

Beth Goldsmith ([58:36](#)):

So again, thank you so much to Doron and Howard. And I want to remind our community about some upcoming dates and some ways they can be involved. On March 1st and 15th, the BJC is hosting virtual meetings with your Maryland delegates and state senators, and you'll have a chance to advocate and support of things like hate crime bills that have been introduced in Maryland. Also on March 8th, join the BJC for an antisemitism program with David Hirsch, go to [[baltjc.org](#)] to learn more and join us on The Upside next Tuesday at noon, we're going to be speaking with Emily Stern of J Day Camp, Marty Rochlin of Camp Airy and Lisa Handelman of Capital Camps, because believe it or not, the time is here for us to talk about what camp will look like this summer. And in the meantime, please continue to visit [associated.org](#) and [jmoreliving.com](#). There's always more information and stories and resources. You can sign up for our weekly newsletter. And again, thank you to our guests. Thank you to our viewers. And please, until we see you again, stay well.

Scott Rifkin ([59:57](#)):

Thank you everybody.