

Gen Z and the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

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The fight against antisemitism is of increasing importance for the young Generation Z. At least for some Gen Z Jewish teenagers.

Generation Z includes young people born between 1995 and 2015. Zachary W. Singerman is a student at the Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, about 14 miles southeast of Germantown and just a few miles north of Washington, DC. As a ninth grader in January 2020, Singerman called for his generation to take action against antisemitism and published an Op-Ed article in Washington Jewish Week. He reports from his bar mitzvah in April 2018 how much he learned and had a party with a DJ. But just six months later, a neo-Nazi murdered 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. The perpetrator had been strongly agitated by the extremely aggressive, racist, antisemitic and conspiracy myth climate created by Donald Trump. Zack Singerman's grandmother, who fled or immigrated from Europe, goes to the Tree of Life Synagogue. His grandmother was not at the synagogue that day, but friends of hers are among the dead. It was a coincidence that she was not also murdered in what was the worst antisemitic massacre in US history. That was the wake-up call for Zachary Singerman that as a teenager, just 14 years old, he had to become politically active. He organized the Jewish DC Regional Teen Summit on antisemitism.

For March 2020, he announced Bari Weiss as a speaker for his Gen Z group against antisemitism. Bari Weiss is a well-known anti-left former New York Times columnist who now also writes

for the German conservative Springer daily Die WELT, and apart from her conservative ideology and her pro-Selenskyi War agitation, she is by time an eloquent critic of contemporary antisemitism.

I say this as a longstanding critic of anti-liberal, authoritarian, nationalist and even anti-USSR and pro-Zsarist Putin, but I am also not a friend of longstanding antidemocratic and pro-Nazi tendencies in Ukraine, including the now destroyed Asow bataillon, but also hundreds of streets, places or stadiums named after Ukrainian Holocaust perpetrators, but in a recent article by Weiss' she shows not really any interest in ending the war in Ukraine, rather the support for as many weaponry for Ukraine as possible, which will for sure result in even more people killed on both sides. Her piece in German "What is worth fighting for", Die Welt, March 22, 2022, is a pompous and belligerent, anti-diplomatic article, blaming Russia alone and not asking any questions about anti-Russian racism in the Ukraine at least since 2014, or about the insidious aggression of NATO since 1990, when US Secretary of State James Baker and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl promised Soviet Union's Michael Gorbachov that NATO will "Not move one inch eastwards" after a possible reunification of the two Germanys, and in particular taken into account the NATO maneuvers which have taken place in Ukraine in recent years – why? To threaten Russia?, and of course without facing the horrible war before the war, the war against the Donbass in Eastern Ukraine with more than 14,000 people killed.

The two senators Jacky Rosen and James Lankford, who founded a Senate Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Antisemitism, were also invited by Zack Singerman for March 2020.

Then, on May 12, 2022, Singerman published a blog in the Times of Israel, where he again advocated active engagement of his Gen Z against antisemitism.

Singerman reports: According to the FBI, more than 55 percent

of all religious hate crimes in the United States in 2020 were directed against Jews – and only 2 percent of the US population are Jews.

On May 16, 2022, Zack Singerman posted a Zoom talk with two other students and a student from the US and Canada on the fight against antisemitism and Jewish life in North America today.

These are all kids between the ages of 17 and 19. It is remarkable how intensively they deal with Judaism and with antisemitism – yes, horribly, they have to deal with antisemitism on a daily basis. It's a question of whether or not Zack wears his "massive kippa" on public transport. He started wearing his kippa in public. It's still easy for him during the day, he goes to a Jewish school, while the other two students, Arielle Edberg and Carrie Tananbaum, don't. Arielle wears her Star of David necklace and Carrie has many Jewish friends at her high school. Nati Pressmann, on the other hand, the only one who is already at the university, knows about the problems of identifying as a Jew. She emphatically emphasizes that it is not a Jewish student's fault if he or she does not dare to show their Jewish necklace in a certain environment and prefers to hide it under a T-shirt or sweater.

These are times with BDS agitators on campus, but also with right-wing extremists who smear swastikas on schools or university buildings, as the four report. What is interesting now is how naturally they quote the IHRA definition of antisemitism without uttering the acronym – International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Right at the beginning of the Zoom conference, Zack plays a video of Representative (D) Ted Deutch, who is thrilled that Jewish teenagers are so actively involved in the fight against antisemitism.

Deutch will not run again in the midterm elections in the USA

in the fall, since he will then become chief (CEO) of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and succeed David Harris, who has held this job since 1990.

Teenage Zack Singerman could hardly have found a much higher profile supporter for his Gen Z Jews: Fighting Antisemitism. Nati Pressmann emphasizes how violent it is at her university or her college, where recently 69 percent of the faculty – i.e. the employees – spoke out against the IHRA antisemitism definition. The IHRA definition of antisemitism, adopted on May 26, 2016 in the Romanian capital Bucharest after many years of discussion, is currently supported by 35 states. It is less the definition than such a point of contention:

Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews that can be expressed as hatred towards Jews. Antisemitism is directed, in word or deed, against Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, as well as against Jewish community institutions or religious bodies.

, rather than the following detailed explanation from the point of view of enemies of Israel, what is to be understood by today's antisemitism:

Denying the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavor.

35 countries have signed this legally non-binding definition of antisemitism from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including Germany, Austria, Switzerland and many European countries, a definition that is of great importance for political culture and discourse. Canada has also signed the definition, but Nati Pressmann is shocked by the rejection of this fight against antisemitism at a normal Canadian university. This comes at a time when Harvard's elite university newspaper, Crimson, aggressively and offensively

endorsed the antisemitic BDS movement on April 29, 2022.

The commitment of Zack Singerman and his three colleagues is reminiscent of the youthful struggles against Jew hatred, which the later star hairdresser and philanthropist (including the legendary Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (SICSA) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1982 ff.) Vidal Sassoon (1928-2012) led. As is well known, he was a member of Group 43 in London, which was founded in 1946 and opposed the Mosley fascists in street fights. On May 12, 2012, Sassoon died. In 1948 he fought in the Palmach for the independence of the Jewish state of Israel.

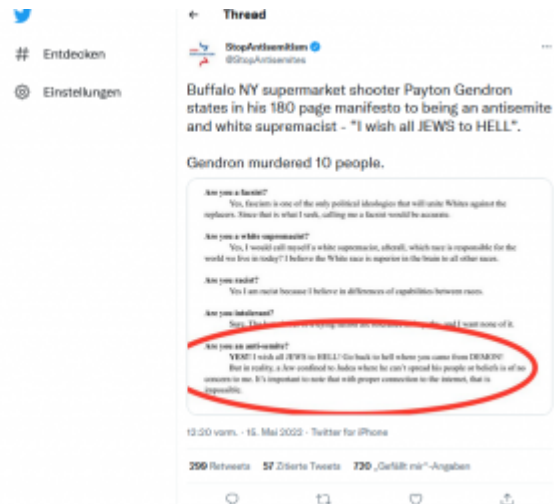
A neo-Nazi antisemitic 18-year-old conspiracy ideologist massacred 10 people on Saturday, May 14, 2022 in Buffalo, New York, all victims were black. He shot them with an assault rifle that he had bought legally. He had specifically chosen a district with the largest black population, which he managed to do with a postcode search (ZIP code). He wanted to specifically murder blacks for racist reasons. His motivation was racist and antisemitic: the "Great Replacement" theory, which is strongly based on the French far-right publicist Renaud Camus, who wrote a book in 2011 entitled "Le Grand Remplacement". This thesis does not always need an antisemitic plot, since it is clear to the recipient that there are evil forces behind the migration. This is the dog whistle, so to speak, that antisemites hear when talking about the "great exchange".

Mainstream American journalists like FoxNews have been preaching this kind of antisemitic conspiracy and racist climate intensification for years, like Tucker Carlson:

I know that the left and all the little gatekeepers on Twitter become literally hysterical if you use the term 'replacement,' if you suggest that the Democratic Party is trying to replace the current electorate of voters now casting ballots with new people, more obedient voters from

the Third World," a visibly outraged Carlson began.

For the 18-year-old neo-Nazi from America, the string pullers and those responsible for this "repopulation" in neo-Nazi slang are now the Jews. He has published a 180-page manifesto which states, among other things:



It is antisemitism that is behind the "great exchange" conspiracy ideology. Jewish billionaires and activists are behind NGOs smuggling migrants or Muslims into Europe or North America, that is at the heart of this far-right conspiracy narrative. The Pittsburgh murderers in the synagogue or that neo-Nazi in New Zealand also believe in this antisemitic conspiracy ideology with racist consequences. Then there is the threat of BDS and those certainly super smart researchers like the one at the university in Canada where Nati Pressmann is studying, who reject the IHRA's definition of antisemitism

by a large majority.

In contrast to older bullies like the New York Times columnist Bret Stephens, who at the time became a columnist for the New York Times together with Bari Weiss and who expressed his doubts about man-made climate change right from the start, the young Generation Z like Zack Singerman also has an understanding of it Climate catastrophe, as he writes as a tenth grader in 2021:

It seems even more urgent now. I am tired of waiting for adults to take a stronger stand. Just like climate change and stopping school shootings, Gen Z needs to get involved in the fight against white supremacy and antisemitism. It's not just that it's urgent. It's that it already feels two months – or two years – too late.

In this text, Singerman addresses the Donald Trump-fueled storm of nationalists and right-wing extremists on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, as he grew up a 30-minute walk away and his mother works there.

So we see how relevant the IHRA definition of antisemitism is today. Much remains to be done for societies in North America or Europe, as well as for Generation Z, in the fight against anti-Semitism. Young Jewish schoolchildren and students should not be left alone.

About the Author

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