

Antisemitism Animates the Hard Right

By Alon Milwicki and Rachael Fugardi

Antisemitism is a constant in American history; 2022 was no different.

Throughout the year, celebrities, politicians and other public figures have promoted and embraced antisemitic rhetoric. This normalization of antisemitism has boosted the profile of many extremist groups and has resulted in direct threats to the Jewish community.

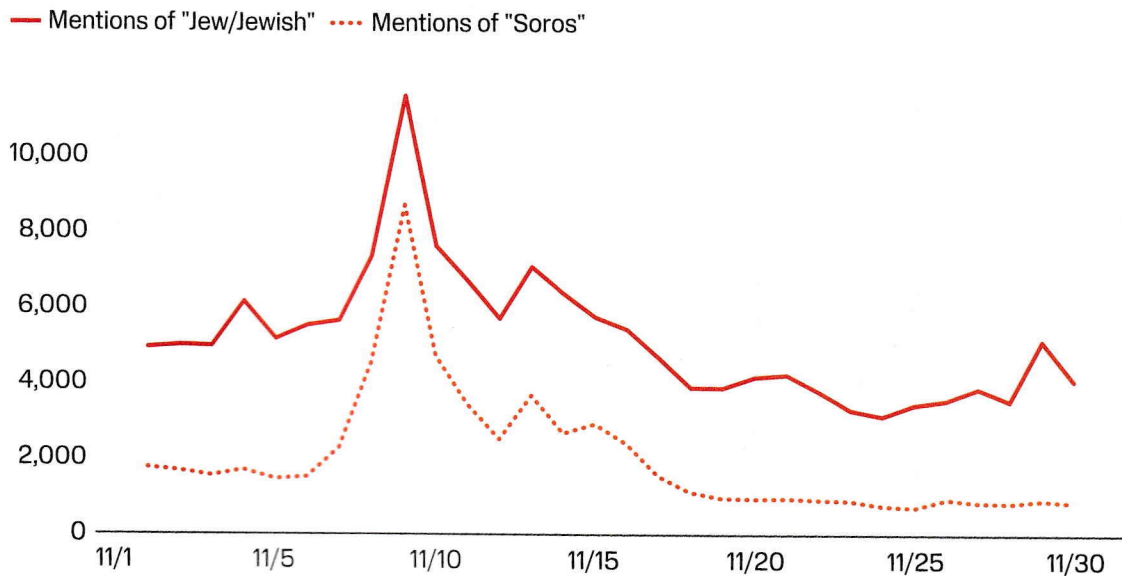
In 2022, Jewish people and spaces were regularly harassed, assaulted, vandalized and threatened. The beginning of the year was marked by an armed standoff outside a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, when a gunman disrupted Sabbath services and took four people hostage. In December, a

man shot a pellet gun at a Jewish man and his son outside of a kosher supermarket in Staten Island, New York.

In the weeks following the takeover of Twitter by Elon Musk, the platform saw a 61% increase in discriminatory posts about Jews and Judaism according to a collective of non-profits.⁷⁸ While reports of violence and nakedly antisemitic rhetoric this year made the country's problem with antisemitism clear, the problem is far from new, and the consequences we now see were unfortunately predictable.⁷⁹

In 2022, the growth of overtly antisemitic groups, including those that ascribe to Christian

Mentions of "Jew/Jewish" or "Soros" in Election-Related Posts by Hard-Right Users on Major Social Media Platforms in Nov. 2022



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue

Identity theology, remained relatively stagnant. However, key elements and beliefs were evident in the white nationalist hate group actions and rhetoric.

In a November livestream⁸⁰ white nationalist and Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes laughed about the history of violence targeting Jewish people around the world and warned, "The Jews had better start being nice to people like us because what comes out of this is going to be a lot uglier and a lot worse for them than anything that's been said on this show." On the ground, hate groups like Goyim Defense League targeted communities across the country with antisemitic flyers, more than tripling their propaganda efforts from 2021, according to Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt.^{81 82}

The total number of Holocaust denial groups did not grow significantly, however, new documented activity by Clemens and Blair publishing in 2022 further clarifies how interconnected Holocaust deniers and Holocaust revisionist organizations are in the U.S. These groups and publishing companies claim to be centered on open discussion, but they often blame Jewish forces for suppressing their revisionist history of Nazi Germany and for

controlling the U.S. understanding of the horrors of Nazi Germany.

Throughout the 2022 election cycle, no name was invoked more in association with dirty money, control of media and politics or the existence of shadow government and "deep state" than George Soros, the Hungarian-American Jewish businessman and philanthropist. Right-wing media and politicians have consistently positioned Soros as a boogeyman whose influence and ideas will destroy American democracy and replace it with a Marxist communist society. These attacks bare all the hallmarks of standard and persistent antisemitic tropes, including that Jews control the media and government and that a small cadre of Jewish leaders is in control of all world affairs. Soros' name serves as a basis for the normalization of antisemitism and acts as a stand-in for more explicitly bigoted statements.

In partnership with the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and CASM Technology, the SPLC found a noticeable peak in online social media posts about "Soros and Warnock" and "Jew and Warnock" when analyzing social media trends regarding the midterm runoff election in Georgia. Antisemitic activists and groups spread false ideas about Jewish influence in elections in order to discredit the

powerful, difficult and successful work of African American people and the multiracial coalition working for voting rights and representation in the South.

In early October, Ye—formerly known as Kanye West—launched into an antisemitic tirade that garnered national attention. In an interview with Fox News host Tucker Carlson, Ye made several hateful statements about Jewish control and greed and subsequently doubled down on social media, threatening to go “death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE.” He eventually joined far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones for an interview during which Ye claimed, “I like Hitler” and went on to add, “They did good things too. We have got to stop dissing the Nazis all the time.”

Ye has nearly 18.5 million followers on Instagram—a number that far exceeds the global Jewish population. This is a sizable audience that extremists are eager to tap. In mid-October, the hate group Goyim Defense League leveraged the media attention brought on by Ye’s remarks by hanging banners in Los Angeles that read “Kanye is right about the Jews.”

Ye’s online threats also appear to have had real-world consequences. In November, dozens of headstones in a Jewish cemetery outside of Chicago, Illinois, were vandalized with swastikas and the message “Kanye Was Rite.” The following month, a man was assaulted⁸³ in Central Park by someone who allegedly shouted “Kanye 2024” during the attack in addition to antisemitic comments.

Similarly, when neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin’s Twitter account was reinstated, he immediately expressed his support, posting, “I am Officially endorsing Ye For President Of America.” This support was not limited to white supremacists. In a November webcast, notorious antisemite and leader of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, reiterated antisemitic tropes about Jewish power and influence. Farrakhan praised a film and his own book which falsely promote the antisemitic conspiracy that Jewish people initiated the transatlantic slave trade and continue to exert control over Black people.

In the lead-up to the 2022 general election, Minnesota Secretary of State candidate Kim Crockett used Soros⁸⁴ image to display a consistent and abhorrent antisemitic trope in a video played at the state GOP convention. The footage showed Soros acting as the puppet master behind the scenes and pulling the strings behind her Democratic oppo-

nents. Jews as the heads of a shadow government controlling world events is a trope traced back to World War II and earlier.

When public figures use their large platforms to endorse antisemitism, the consequences are not confined to online spaces or extremist circles; this rhetoric threatens the safety of the Jewish community. The Soros-related conspiracy theories that were popular in political advertisements this year were the same ones that Cesar Sayoc shared online prior to his conviction for sending 16 pipe bombs to 13 public figures including Soros in 2018.

On December 7, second gentleman Doug Emhoff convened a meeting in response to the increase in antisemitic rhetoric. Invited to the meeting were several prominent Jewish leaders of notable organizations dedicated to monitoring and combating antisemitism and the “epidemic of hate facing” the country.¹ This sentiment was later echoed by White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, who stated that President Biden believed antisemitism is an issue all Americans need to acknowledge, adding that he called on “all Americans” to “forcefully reject antisemitism.”⁸⁵ While administrations in the past have appealed for a more robust examination of antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiments and hate groups in America, President Biden has put words into action.

At a conference on December 16, Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the Biden-appointed special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, reflected on Emhoff’s meeting, asserting, “Antisemitism is not a niche issue” and that it cannot be fought in silos. Lipstadt’s point is supported by recent demographic estimates⁸⁶ that 12-15% of American Jews are people of color, 10% are immigrants and 20% are children of immigrants. The recognition that anti-Jewish hatred represents a core facet of other bigoted ideologies emphasizes the need for a more robust and intersectional approach to combating antisemitism in America.

As the executive director of the Atlanta-based nonprofit SOJOURN⁸⁷, Rebecca Stapel-Wax seeks to dismantle silos among civil and human rights groups and build inclusion for LGBTQ communities in harmony with her Jewish faith. “We are grounded in a faith that really uplifts and encourages and supports all community members,” Stapel-Wax said of her organization’s guiding beliefs. “We empower communities to advance and celebrate gender and sexual diversity across the South,” Stapel-Wax explained.



Rebecca Stapel-Wax, Executive Director of the Atlanta-based nonprofit SOJOURN.

“You’ll notice that there’s no ‘Jewish’ involved in that particular [mission] statement because our Jewish values are really the foundation.”

In SOJOURN’s work to build a collective movement for equality and to celebrate the multifaceted nature of people’s identities, the organization has created comprehensive and queer-inclusive sex education programs for teens, as well as materials that dismantle rigid and regressive gender stereotypes for children. SOJOURN also advocates on behalf of Jewish and LGBTQ individuals seeking to adopt and provides resources and support to parents of gender-expansive children.

SOJOURN also has become a hub for both regional and national collaboration through its partnership with Keshet⁸⁸ to “work with Jewish

organizations in the South to build or support an LGBTQ+ equality working group.” Joining with such established organizations and networks is an effective way to counter hate and build inclusive spaces in all communities. “Connect through social media,” Stapel-Wax recommends. “Get like-minded people ... people who are active [and] find the passion that you have in a formed group.”

However, such intersectional movements for inclusion will not always be flawless, Stapel-Wax said. “When we get pushback from the folks that we’re trying to support, we listen, and we try to do it differently.” *Tikkun olam*—a concept in Judaism referring to various forms of action intended to repair the world—she explained, “is a constant journey of learning and humility.” ●