

SUMMARY OF TOWN HALL SURVEY FINDINGS

**“A Time to Listen: Antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the
Mizzou Community”**

Hosted by Department of Religious Studies

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PRÉCIS

On March 14th, 2017, the MU Religious Studies Department hosted a town hall forum open to all and aimed at discussing the recent spate of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents on our campus. The attached formal survey (pg. 2) was administered to all attendees.

The first question asked: *“What concerns or fears do you have regarding attitudes or acts of antisemitism and/or Islamophobia on this campus?”* In order of importance and frequency, survey participants responded as follows: first, they mentioned **their fear that the frequency and severity of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents will increase and culminate in physical violence**. Second, they **expressed concern for the general comfort of MU students**, often with reference to those in minority groups. Finally, they **expressed frustration with the lack of response from MU's administration to these incidents**. Several times it was noted that recent administrative behavior has communicated to them that Mizzou does not care about these incidents, and that in some cases, Mizzou actively tolerates hate.

The second question asked: *“Please tell us what you would like to see from MU's Administration in terms of effectively responding to the above,”* **participants spoke extensively of their wishes to see MU's administration exhibit some resolve in fighting against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia**. Very frequently, the responses communicated a fear that the **University of Missouri has become complacent** in fighting hate crimes, and many expressed fear that MU administration is **only acting in attempt to avoid bad publicity**, and not out of genuine concern or care for its students and faculty. These fears culminated in **wishes for harsher punishments** (for those who commit verbal or physical acts of anti-semitism and Islamophobia), **increased transparency on part of the administration, and the implementation of more effective training programs**.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT/EXAMPLE ONLY

“A Time to Listen: Antisemitism and Islamophobia, and the Mizzou Community”

- *The department of religious studies is delighted you're here!*
 - We would be grateful if you would fill out some or all of the following questions below. All responses will be kept anonymous and are being collected for the purpose of better understanding how to plan future events and to share your concerns with members of the administration.
 - **Please leave responses in the box by the door on your way out!**
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1. Please check one:

MU Student

Non Student

2. What concerns or fears do you have regarding attitudes or acts of antisemitism and/or Islamophobia on this campus?

3. Please tell us what you would like to see from MU's Administration in terms of effectively responding to the above?

[SAMPLE – NO RESPONSE REQUIRED]

GENERAL FINDINGS SUMMARIES

PURPOSE OF SURVEY

Concerned about the safety and rights of all students especially in the wake of the recent spate of Anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents on MU's campus, the Department of Religious Studies hosted a Town Hall to engage and listen to students and other members of the MU community.

The purpose of the survey, which was distributed to all town hall attendees, was to understand and record the concerns of attendees regarding anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on our campus and to gain a sense of how they feel about MU's administration's handling of these types of incidents. Finally, we wanted to know what else (if anything) attendees would like to see from University's administration in terms of responding to/handling of these types of incidents.

Our primary goal is to distribute these findings to as many members of the MU community as possible for information purposes, in keeping with an open society and the spirit of a public university. Our secondary, though no less important goal, is for the administration to take further notice of and a closer look at how some members of its University feel about the administration's handling of these types of events.

Although the respondents sample is small, small should not be dismissed as either morally unimportant or irrelevant.

A. Student Responses Question 1 (28)

We selected five general concerns that were presented in the student responses to question one and tallied their frequency of mention. The five recurrent themes are (1) Safety, (2) Comfort, (3) Lack of Urgency/Resolution on part of the Administration, (4) Increased Prevalence/Severity of Incidents, and (5) Lack of General Knowledge & Absence of Training/Discourse.

10 students (35%) mentioned their concern with their own and others' safety on campus as a product of these incidents. Often, comfort is mentioned along with safety. Seven (25%) of the 28 responses express concern for the general comfort of MU students (e.g. acceptance and inclusion of minorities at the university, personal fear for friends' comfort, etc.). The third and fourth concerns were the most flagrant and most frequently mentioned. The third large concern, regarding MU's continued failure to respond to incidents, specifically in an effective, fair, and timely manner was mentioned in 11 (39%) responses. Some responses indicated that these patterns of administrative behavior communicated to them that Mizzou does not care about these incidents, and that in actuality, Mizzou actively tolerates hate. Many of these responses subsequently stated their fear of (4) an increase in the prevalence and severity of anti-Semitic and Islamophobic incidents as a product of MU's lack of urgency in responding to the incidents. In total, 11 (39%) of the 28 students mentioned this fear, many noting that the normalization of hate on campus has become more obvious, specifically after the election of Trump into office. Many surveys indicated their fear that the present hatred will not subside at all, and that campus unity will only continue to disappear. Finally, eight students mentioned concerns about a general lack of knowledge and understanding of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on campus. One student spoke of his/her history as a residential-life staff member, stating that residential staff had little to no acceptable training in handling incidents of hate. Only one response strayed from all of the five general concerns and only expressed fear that hatred on campus might spread to target other groups.

B. Non-student Responses Question 1 (5)

The non-student responses expressed much less concern with administrative action than the student responses. Apart from one mention of getting students and faculty into learning situations, the responses expressed, most generally, concerns about small but mounting acts of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. One response expressed fear of morally unjustified action.

A. Student Responses Question 2 (28)

Largely, students spoke of their wishes to see MU's administration exhibit some resolve in fighting against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Very frequently, the responses communicated a fear that the University of Missouri has become complacent in fighting hate crimes, and many fear that MU administration is only acting in attempt to avoid bad publicity, and not of genuine concern or care for its students and faculty. 10 students (36%) mentioned their desire for the administration to enact rapid and/or more severe punishments on those responsible for hate crimes. 15 students (54%) discussed the administration's lack of transparency in handling these matters, and the blatant lack of information available to the public. These responses indicated a desire for more and better dialogue surrounding anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, for better acknowledgment of the crimes, and for MU's administration to make an attempt to listen to MU students. Finally, 16 students (57%) asked in their survey responses for the implementation by MU of more efficient training programs. These responses generally emphasized the importance of education in minimizing the prevalence of hatred on campus.

B. Non-student Responses Question 2 (6)

The non-student responses expressed similar ideas for what they would like to see from the MU administration. Two surveys did not match up easily with the student responses: one expressed a desire for the public affirmation of Jewish and Muslim students at MU, and the other read "Get the new Hillel building built." The remaining four surveys all discussed MU's need for increased education, discourse and training in these areas. One spoke of the need at MU for harsher/swifter condemnation of hate speech and crimes by the administration.