

Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present – Video Discussion Questions

Watch the video Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present and discuss some or all of the following questions. Depending on the size of the group and time constraints, the questions can be discussed as a whole group or in small groups of 3-5 participants. Optional: Have each small group select a notetaker and reporter to share key points raised during the discussions. Instructors may also assign one of more questions as essay topics.

Part 1 – Jews and Judaism (Beginning until 1:39)

1. The video describes antisemitism as a perception, belief or behavior towards Jews simply because they are Jewish. How does this impact your understanding of antisemitism?
2. Many people consider Judaism to be only a religion and Jews to be adherents to a religious tradition. In what ways is Jewish identity more complex than this?
3. The video speaks about some Jews identifying as part of a culture. Do you have any examples that you've experienced from your Jewish peers that illustrates this?
4. How might Jews identifying themselves as a culture and not simply a religion influence the development of anti-Jewish hostility?

Part II – Short History of Antisemitism (1:40-4:12)

5. The video describes how antisemitism transformed from a religiously based hatred into a form of racial discrimination. What are the implications of this change?
6. What are the similarities and differences between religious and racial forms of anti-Jewish hostility? How do the connections between these two forms affect antisemitism today?
7. Do you see connections between the way racial antisemitism emerged in the nineteenth century and other forms of racism or oppression that emerged at that time?

Part III – Antisemitism Today (4:13-6:33)

8. What were some of the core antisemitic stereotypes and themes mentioned in the video? Which of these were new to you? Have you seen any of these play out in your life, school or community?
9. Do you see similarities or differences between these and negative stereotypes about other oppressed or minority groups?
10. How has antisemitism played out in American history? Does this surprise you – why or why not?

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11. The video shows an American conservative, Catholic periodical from the 1930s and 1940s titled "Social Justice" that has an article title "The Jewish Question." How might we explain this?
12. Think of examples that you may have seen or heard that reflect how Jews occupy, in the film's words, "a complicated position in America's racially charged political landscape?" What are some of the challenges when considering Jews to be "simply white" or not "white?"
13. How do you think the conversation on race today has complicated our current understanding of antisemitism?

Part IV – Fighting Antisemitism (6:34-end)

14. What is the basic definition of Zionism? How is an understanding of Zionism important for understanding many forms of Jewish identity?
15. Why is it important to understand what Zionism is and is not in order to identify and combat antisemitism?
16. How is criticism of Israel different than antisemitism? How can one be critical of Israel without being antisemitic?
17. What are some examples of when criticism of Israel can become antisemitism?
18. Why is context so important to determining if something is or is not antisemitic, particularly when the subject matter relates to Israel?