Anti-Semitism on the Rise in America -- ADL Survey on Anti-Semitic Attitudes Reveals 17 Percent of Americans Hold "Hardcore" Beliefs

New York, NY, June 11, 2002 … A nationwide survey released today by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) shows an increase in the number of Americans with anti-Semitic attitudes, reversing a ten-year decline and raising concerns that "an undercurrent of Jewish hatred persists in America."

The national poll of 1,000 American adults conducted April 26 through May 6, 2002 found that **17%** of Americans - or about 35 million adults - hold views about Jews that are "unquestionably anti-Semitic." Previous surveys commissioned by ADL over the last decade had indicated that anti-Semitism was in decline. A survey of attitudes four years ago found that the number of Americans with hardcore anti-Semitic beliefs had dropped from **20%** in 1992, to **12%** in 1998.

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| The findings in brief … Strongly anti-Semitic: * 17% of Americans
* 35% of Hispanics
	+ 44% of foreign-born Hispanics
	+ 20% of Hispanic Americans born in U.S.
* 35% of African-Americans
* 3% of U.S. college and university students
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"We are greatly concerned that many of the gains we had seen in building a more tolerant and accepting America have not taken hold as firmly as we had hoped, and have to some degree been reversed," said Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director. "While there are many factors at play, all of the evidence suggests that a strong undercurrent of Jewish hatred persists in America."

One of the most important findings of [ADL's 2002 Survey of Anti-Semitism in America](http://archive.adl.org/anti_semitism/2002/as_survey.pdf) concerns Hispanic Americans, one of the most significant and fastest growing segments of the American population, in which the poll found an extraordinary gap between those born in the United States and those born abroad. **The survey revealed that while 44% of foreign-born Hispanics hold hardcore anti-Semitic beliefs, 20% of Hispanic Americans born in the U.S. fall into the same category.**

The anti-Semitic propensities of foreign-born Hispanics were significantly above the national average. Meanwhile, the number of **African-Americans with strong anti-Semitic beliefs continued to hold steady at 35%.**

"Religious background has always played a role in determining one's beliefs about Jews. So it is not surprising yet very distressing that one of the fastest growing segments in America holds strongly anti-Semitic views," said Mr. Foxman. "There is no doubt that this is a reflection of what is being learned about Jews in the schools, churches and communities of Hispanic nations, which is anti-Semitism at its most basic. We need to re-focus our efforts on reaching out to these groups in addition to the larger American public."

The survey, which has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points, was conducted by the Marttila Communications Group, a Boston-based public opinion research firm, with the polling firm SWR Worldwide. Marttila has conducted ADL's previous surveys on anti-Semitism, using similar questions and criteria to measure and monitor levels of anti-Semitism in the U.S.

**The survey findings come at a time of increased anti-Semitic activity in America.** A five-month ADL Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents, released today, shows that [attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions were up 11% in the first five months of 2002,](http://archive.adl.org/anti_semitism/audit_JanMay_2002.asp) compared with the same period in 2001

Major Findings

* Anti-Semitic attitudes are up; the most widely held stereotype is that "Jews have too much power in the U.S." The poll found 17% of Americans were "most anti-Semitic" in their views, while another 35% were in the "middle" category, holding neither prejudiced nor unprejudiced views, but not completely prejudice-free in their attitudes toward Jews. The survey based its findings on an "index of anti-Semitic beliefs" used by researchers in previous surveys in 1964, 1981, 1992 and 1998. The survey found that 48% of the American public is prejudice-free in their feelings toward Jews, down from 53% in 1998.

Less educated Americans continue to be more likely to hold anti-Semitic views. Race and age also continued to play roles in determining anti-Semitism. However, **new stereotypes about "Jewish power" in the U.S. have replaced many of the classical ethical stereotypes previously attributed to Jewish Americans. In the 2002 survey, 20 % of Americans agreed with the statement "Jews have too much power in the U.S. today." Nearly three-quarters (72%) of those in the most anti-Semitic category believe that Jews have too much power.**

* **Anti-Israel feelings are triggering anti-Semitism**. For the first time, negative attitudes toward Israel and concern that American Jews have too much influence over U.S. Middle East policy are helping to foster anti-Semitic beliefs. Slightly more than half of Americans (**51%**) said the U.S. has been tilting too much toward Israel, while three-quarters of the most anti-Semitic Americans (**73%**) said they felt this way. While **41%** of Americans say their sympathies are more with Israel than with Arab countries, sympathies are more closely divided among the most anti-Semitic Americans **(29% sympathetic to Israel versus 23% sympathetic to Arab countries.) The most anti-Semitic Americans were four times as likely (42%) to believe that American Jewish leaders have too much influence over U.S. foreign policy than Americans holding non anti-Semitic beliefs (11%).**

**"We have said that anti-Israel feelings are linked to anti-Semitism, and the responses from Americans in this poll make this connection clear," said Mr. Foxman. "Anti-Israel sentiments are used in this country to fuel, legitimize and rationalize anti-Semitism."**

Those Americans who believe that Jews have too much influence over U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East; that U.S. policy tilts too much toward Israel; that the U.S. is more likely to be targeted for a terrorist attack because of American support; and who see increased anti-Jewish activity around the country and world, have a significantly greater likelihood to fall into the most anti-Semitic category.

Previous polls conducted during two contentious moments in the U.S. - Israel relationship found that the upper-educated Americans were highly critical of the Israeli governments at that time. However, these upper-educated Americans were also the least anti-Semitic of all Americans. The 2002 survey tells a different story. The analysis reveals that attitudes toward Israel are actually fostering anti-Semitic beliefs among some Americans.

* **Anti-Semitism among foreign-born Hispanics is extremely high.** The survey uncovered, for the first time, that Hispanic Americans who were born outside of the U.S. are much more likely to hold anti-Semitic views than Hispanics born in the U.S. In both this survey, which included an oversample of 300 Hispanics, and a previous 2001 survey of 1,000 Hispanic Americans also conducted by ADL, a portrait of two very different Hispanic communities emerges, each holding very different views of Jews and tolerance in general.

**Forty-four percent (44%) of foreign-born Hispanics** fall into the most anti-Semitic category, while only **20% of Hispanics born in the U.S.** fall into this category. As a result, it is only foreign-born Hispanics whose anti-Semitic propensities are significantly above the national average. Perceptions of "Jewish control," influence and power as well as more traditional canards about Jews, religion and ethical practices appear to be driving anti-Semitism among foreign-born Hispanics. For example, more than half of foreign-born Hispanics **(55%)** agree with the assertion that "Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind." Forty-four percent **(44%)** of Hispanics born outside the U.S. agree with the assertion that "Jews were responsible for the death of Christ," compared with **26%** of those born in the U.S.

* **Campus faculty and students are the least anti-Semitic among Americans.** Anti-Semitism on U.S. college campuses is virtually non-existent. Only **3%** of undergraduates, and **5% of faculty fall into the most anti-Semitic category. Fully 74% of undergraduates, and 79% of faculty, are prejudice free.**

**"The campus findings are paradoxical, coming at a time when anti-Israel rallies, divestment drives and other pro-Palestinian activism on college campuses stemming from the Mideast conflict have been at an all-time high. Many of the anti-Israel rallies led to expressions of anti-Semitism, which is why we selected this particular group for polling," said Mr. Foxman.**

**"The good news is that the overwhelming majority of students and faculty have by and large rejected the hate being promulgated by a select few. Too often, anti-Israel activism crosses the line into anti-Semitism in an environment where there is none. The bad news is that there is a silent majority on campus that is not speaking out against anti-Semitism."**

ADL Reports Rise in Anti-Semitic Incidents

Coinciding with the rise in anti-Semitic attitudes, ADL released the [most recent statistics on anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S](http://archive.adl.org/anti_semitism/audit_JanMay_2002.asp). ADL's Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents reported an 11 % increase in the number of anti-Jewish incidents during the first five months of 2002, compared with the same period in 2001. ADL collects and compiles information on anti-Semitic incidents across the country through its 30 Regional Offices in conjunction with law enforcement and periodically issues reports on its findings.

"It is especially disturbing that while anti-Semitic attitudes are rising, so too are the number of violent anti-Semitic attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions," said Mr. Foxman. "We believe that September 11 and the Mideast conflict have clearly had an impact. As these life-altering events have transformed us as a nation, they have also triggered the anti-Semitism that was already there, but buried beneath the surface."

Glen A. Tobias, ADL National Chairman, added, "We are gravely concerned about what has been happening in Europe, where anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiments have led to violent attacks against the Jewish communities in France and in other countries. As the 2002 survey shows, America is not immune to anti-Semitism. We are concerned that what is happening in Europe could lead to a similar reaction here."

In January - May 2002, 626 anti-Semitic incidents were reported to ADL, compared with 564 incidents reported during the same period in 2001. The activity was comprised of 435 acts of harassment or intimidation and 191 acts of vandalism. The audit found that the number of incidents increased steadily during the first four months in 2002, with 81 incidents in January, 98 in February, 124 in March and 222 in April (101 in May). Campus incidents were up dramatically. ADL tracked at least 63 incidents nationwide on campus, while only 15 incidents were reported during the same period in 2001.

EDITORS NOTE: To speak with an expert on anti-Semitism, contact the ADL Media Relations Department by e-mail or by phone at (212) 885-7749.

*The Anti-Defamation League, founded in 1913, is the world's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism through programs and services that counteract hatred, prejudice and bigotry.*

**Philadelphia Police walk through Mount Carmel Cemetery after more than 100 headstones were vandalized, February 27, 2017**. Jacqueline Larma/AP (read more: <http://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-1.774485>)

The spate of bomb threats against Jewish institutions across the U.S. that has become a weekly phenomenon since the first round on January 9, 2017 recalls another period when synagogues and other Jewish facilities were targeted by bombers.

The 29 messages received at Jewish community centers and day schools on Monday brought the total of such threats up to approximately 90 over the past two months. Fortunately, to date, no bombs have been reported to have been found. That’s in contrast to a spate of incidents in the American South in 1957 and 1958, when the bombs were real, and some of them went off.

The first incident occurred on November 11, 1957, when a caretaker at Temple Beth-El, in Charlotte, North Carolina, found six sticks of dynamite in the synagogue sanctuary. None of the explosives detonated, just as the 30 sticks of dynamite discovered three months later, outside Temple Emanuel, in nearby Gastonia, North Carolina, failed to explode, due to a bad fuse.

On the same day the following month, however, on March 16, 1958, bombs went off at a synagogue’s religious school and a Jewish community center in Florida and Tennessee at hours when no one was present. A month later, in Jacksonville, Florida, a man claiming to represent the “Confederate Underground” called a newspaper to take credit for the simultaneous bombings of a Jewish community center and an all-black high school there. The attacks would continue, he said, until segregation was restored throughout the south. (At the same time, a caller warned a rabbi in Jacksonville that Jews would die if they didn’t leave Florida, “except Miami Beach.”) Nobody was hurt in any of the incidents.

It was a moment in American history when white supremacists could have felt they were losing ground. Starting with the Supreme Court Brown Vs Board of Education ruling in 1954 (which found the policy of “separate but equal” to be unconstitutional), a series of court decisions and popular movements were bringing down the Jim Crow laws that had kept the south segregated nearly a century after the end of the Civil War. Although southern Jews were by no means united in supporting the civil rights movement, large numbers of them were involved in the efforts, including in the movement’s leadership, and many of the same people who feared for the future of the white race viewed Jews as undesired aliens too.

Early on the morning of October 12, 1958, the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, a Reform synagogue founded in 1868 by German-Jewish immigrants, and known popularly as “The Temple,” was rocked by an explosion. The young rabbi of the institution, Jacob Rothschild, was an outspoken advocate of equal civil rights and spoke frequently on the topic at the synagogue, to the discomfort of some of his congregants. (The incident showed up in Alfred Uhry’s play and later movie “Driving Miss Daisy,” when the title character, based on the author’s grandmother, is informed by her black chauffeur that her synagogue has been bombed. She is incredulous, telling him that it must have been a mistake: “I’m sure they meant to bomb one of the Conservative synagogues or the Orthodox one. The Temple is Reform; everybody knows that.” To which Hoke, the driver, responds, “A Jew is a Jew to them folks. Just like, light or dark, we all the same nigger.”)

Shortly after the attack, a local wire service received a phone call from someone calling himself “General Gordon of the Confederate Underground,” who claimed responsibility for the explosion and threatened that, “this is the last empty building we will bomb…. Negroes and Jews are hereby declared aliens.”

The bombing of “The Temple” not only helped unite synagogue members around their rabbi and the cause he had embraced, it also elicited a great deal of attention and sympathy from Atlanta’s non-Jewish population. Perhaps the most touching gesture came from the inmates of a local African-American prison, who took up a collection for the synagogue’s building fund, and asked the prison chaplain to pass it along to Rabbi Rothschild.

Atlanta’s mayor, William Hartsfeld, rushed to the scene of the bombing to survey the damage (which ended up exceeding $100,000 in value), and initiated a drive to raise funds to help the police in their effort to find those responsible. When President Dwight D. Eisenhower was informed, that same Sunday morning, of the terror attack, and asked for a response, he said, “I think we would all share in the feeling of horror that any person would want to desecrate the place of worship of any religion, be it a chapel, a cathedral, a mosque, a church, or a synagogue.” Several days later, after police had charged five members of the white supremacist National States’ Rights Party with the crime, he referred to them as a “bunch of Al Capone gangsters.”

None of those charged were convicted of the crimes: An initial trial resulted in a mistrial, a second one in acquittal. But the public outcry, at all levels of society, and the increased vigilance of law-enforcement authorities, brought this particular wave of anti-Semitic incidents to an end.

The bomb threats of 2017, all of which were reportedly phoned in by automatic dialers, making tracing the perpetrators far from simple, should be disturbing not so much because they reveal that American society still has undercurrents of racism, but rather because they are another sign – a very dangerous one – that the holders of white-supremacist and anti-alien prejudices feel increasingly comfortable giving vent to their sentiments of hatred. The recent incidents of grave desecrations at Jewish cemeteries in St. Louis and Philadelphia would seem to be additional examples.

The ADL, which has been tracking anti-Semitic incidents since 1999, has reported a steady decline between 2006 and 2015. Last year, however, the number of overall incidents rose, and the number of violent incidents jumped by 50 percent, from 36 to 56.

Last June, when the ADL reported the numbers for 2015, its CEO, Jonathan A. Greenblatt, announced that the advocacy group intended to start tracking online expressions of anti-Semitic harassment, something it had not previously seen the need to do. According to Greenblatt, “The issue has grown exponentially in recent years because the Internet provides racists and bigots with an outlet to reach a potential audience of millions.” He also noted “the anonymity afforded by certain platforms which facilitates this phenomenon.”

One doesn’t need a doctorate in history to understand that attacks – even verbal – on Jews one day, African-Americans another day and Muslims on a third will eventually be extended to all minorities. And if politicians and law-enforcement agencies don’t act against prejudice, and do so swiftly and unequivocally, the mixed signals communicated to the public are likely to give the racists the little encouragement they need to rear their heads.

1. What is the main idea behind this article? (summarize it briefly in 3-5 sentences)
2. What is the connection to what we are currently studying?
3. Is the ***Holocaust*** really “over”? Why/why not?
4. Why do you think it is important to learn about the past? Could history “repeat”? How?
5. Are there still “victims” of the Holocaust today? Explain your answer.