

Anti-Defamation League Chief: Elon Musk's Purchase of Twitter May Not Be Such a Good Thing

Elon Musk made waves when his purchase of Twitter was announced. But already Jonathan Greenblatt, the chief of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), has warned that any changes to Twitter's content moderation policies could spark an increase in online anti-Semitism.

That may surprise you, but it shouldn't. The ADL has just released an audit of anti-Semitism in the United States and has found that incidents of anti-Semitism are at an all-time high. In 2021 alone there were 2,717 incidents of anti-Semitic violence and vandalism reported to the ADL, amounting to more than seven incidents every day – a 34% increase over the year 2020.

The unfortunate and tragic truth is that anti-Semitism is on the rise, and anti-Semitic violence, whether in the form of physical attacks or targeted hate speech, is increasing both online and in our communities.

This isn't just about what may or may not happen on Twitter; it's about what's already happening across the country, and how we can stop it.

Through my work at Passages, I've met with Jewish communities in Israel and America, and I've seen firsthand how deep the wounds of anti-Semitism can go in harming these communities' sense of belonging and well-being.

Anti-Semitism is an evil we shouldn't – and don't need to – abide in any form. But it will take concerted action and

community effort to uproot it and repair relationships to the Jewish communities it has injured.

If we want to make fighting anti-Semitism a priority, here's how.

The first step may be the most important: get educated. Most Americans, especially most American Christians, simply don't know how harmful anti-Semitism truly is – nor how prevalent.

The truth is that our country's history, and the history of the Christian religion so many of us share, is riddled with anti-Semitism. Throughout American history, religious freedom was often subtly and not-so-subtly denied to Jewish communities. Martin Luther, one of the leading lights of protestant Christianity, held incredibly harmful anti-Semitic views.

We can start combating anti-Semitism today by acknowledging and reckoning with this history of past Christian and American involvement in it. This shouldn't be about assigning blame or making accusations; it should simply be about understanding where anti-Semitism has taken root in our past so we can better prevent it from happening in our present and future.

The second step is to build relationships, form friendships and forge community ties.

Because anti-Semitism spreads through misinformation, ignorance and hate, the best remedy for all three of these problems is lively, friendly relationships between the Jewish community and other communities. The more that people in our towns, cities and church communities interact with, learn from and grow in friendship toward Jewish people they meet and know, the less that anti-Semitism will spread – whether online or elsewhere.

There's plenty of experience to back that up. In the wake of anti-Semitic attacks, interfaith work, in particular, has been

a key weapon in the fight against anti-Semitism. When Jewish communities aren't alone, hate can take less of a foothold.

That brings me to my last point. Relationships aren't just good for their own sake; they provide the experiences and connections we can use in advocacy in defense of Jewish people. Right now Jewish people are a minority in America; while they can stand up for themselves, their voice can be louder if we join our voice to theirs.

If we want our education and our relationship-building to truly have an impact, we need to combine them with advocacy. That can be as simple as speaking up on social media or as complex as hosting in-church or on-campus events to spread awareness and share a message of change. Whatever form our advocacy takes, the important thing is that we do it.

The ADL's report should be a warning that we cannot view anti-Semitism either as a thing of the past or as a minor issue that only concerns others. Anti-Semitism is real, it's here now, and it concerns all of us. Before things get worse for Jewish communities in America, we have to take action. {eoa}

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