

# A Surge of Anti-Semitic Crimes Jars Madison's Pride as a Liberal Haven

By DIRK JOHNSON  
Special to The New York Times

MADISON, Wis., Sept. 16 — As always around the holidays, Jewish children will be asking their parents many questions this week about the meaning of Rosh ha-Shanah.

For those who attend Jewish New Year services Wednesday night at Temple Beth El here, some children will no doubt ask another question: Why are armed guards posted outside the synagogue?

Madison, a city known for its liberal tradition and appreciation of diversity, has been shaken by hate crimes in recent weeks.

"People are in disbelief that these kinds of things could happen in Madison, with its liberalism, education and high level of culture," said Rabbi Jan Brahm of Beth El, who has hired off-duty police officers as guards for the holidays. "We live in a wonderful society in Madison. But sadly, even wonderful societies have kooks and anti-Semites."

### Hate of Homosexuals as Well

Hillel, the Jewish student center at the University of Wisconsin here, has been the target of rock throwers. Jewish fraternities and sororities have been vandalized and scrawled with venomous graffiti. The brake lines were severed on a school bus for a Jewish day camp, although the damage was discovered before the bus was used. Windows were broken and trash

## A city finds that education and anti-bias laws aren't enough.

was strewn on the grounds of Beth Israel Center and Temple Beth El.

It is not just Jews who are targets. A week ago, a Louisiana man shot to death a 21-year-old Madison man who he claimed had made a sexual advance. The Louisiana man, who has been charged with murder, told the police he had brought a pistol to Madison because so many homosexuals lived there.

Madison has a strong human rights ordinance intended to protect homosexuals and members of minorities.

Jews number less than 5 percent of Madison's population. But the city's two top elected officials, Mayor Paul Soglin and County Executive Richard Phelps, are Jewish. And eight elected officials in Dane County are openly gay.

"Maybe this is some kind of backlash," said Ricardo Gonzalez, a Madison City Councilman who is gay. "Madison has been at the forefront of protecting gay people and other minorities. It wouldn't surprise me if

some people think too much progress has been made in the last few decades here."

More than 400 Madisonians, including several top government and university officials, gathered at the Hillel student center last week to express their outrage over the incidents. The university has distributed 25,000 fliers that urge students to watch for hate crimes and report them to the police.

"We're not scared, we're angry," said Howard Schneider, vice president of the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity, which has been the target of several acts of vandalism.

"College is supposed to be the best four years of your life," he said. "You're supposed to be able to tell your children about all your great memories from college. What am I going to be able to tell my children? That I would come home after class and see graffiti on my building that says, 'Jews Go Home.'"

Some Jews here, including Rabbi Brahm, have expressed concern that anti-Jewish attacks might be caused in part by a perception that Israel is responsible for the United States' difficulties in the Middle East.

### 'Classic Jewish Hating'

But others, like Steven H. Morrison, executive director of the Jewish Community Council, see the attacks as unrelated to current events.

"The language in the graffiti is classic Jewish hating," he said. Mr. Morrison contends that the appearance of certain speakers at the university, like the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, has fostered "a climate of hate."

Donna E. Shalala, the university chancellor, said she did not believe the attacks were inspired by speeches on campus.

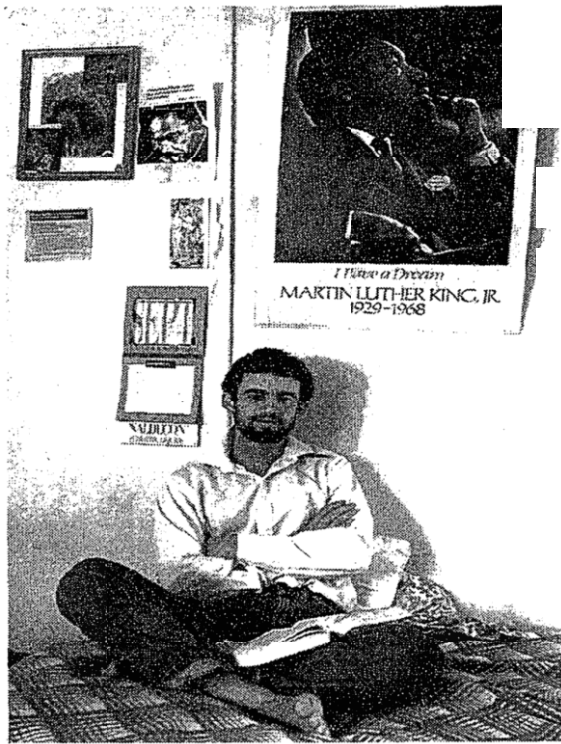
"I don't think these cowards attend speeches," she said. "There are some hateful people out here. And we're going to catch them. We've got 30,000 undergraduates who are going to act as our eyes and ears. These cowards are not going to get away with this."

The university has a strict policy that forbids hateful speech. And state law provides for harsher penalties for crimes in which the victim is attacked simply because of ethnicity, race, religion or sexual orientation.

### Resurgent Pride

In a notice inviting students to gather for a talk, Hillel distributed a circular that read: "Anti-Semitism. How does it make you feel? Alone? Worried? Frightened? Confused? Concerned? Let's talk. Come to share your feelings."

At the meeting at Hillel, some speakers said the attacks had renewed their sense of Jewish values. Gilead Mo-



Photographs by Tom Capp for The New York Times

Madison, Wis., has been shaken by a series of hate crimes in recent weeks. At the University of Wisconsin, the Jewish student center has been the target of rock throwers. Alex Tsesis, a philosophy student, said his mother left the Soviet Union to escape anti-Semitism.

rah, chairman of the Hebrew and Semitic studies department, urged students to proclaim their Jewish identity.

"Every time someone tucks their star of David into their shirt or puts it in their drawer, this is a victory for the creeps who are walking around here breaking windows and scrawling graffiti," he said.

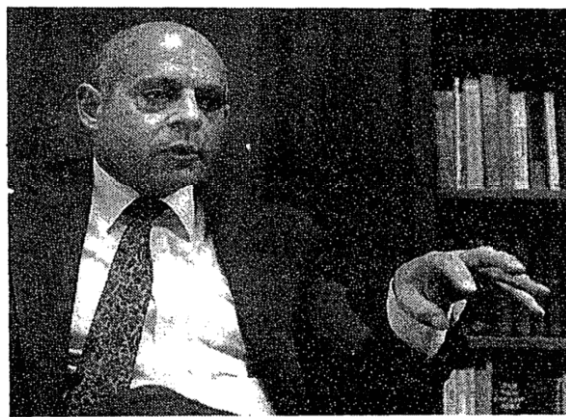
Steven Geiger, a 21-year-old political science major, said he was walking by a tavern on campus one night when he heard shouts like "Jew boy" directed at him.

"There has always been an assumption that prejudice was the result of ignorance, and that education would solve the problem," said Mr. Geiger. "One of the most troubling things about all of this, it seems to me, is that it shows that even people who are educated are capable of anti-Semitism."

Ian Lapp, a student who has started a group called Jewish Coalition, said a spirit of defiance had inspired many Jewish students here. "People are saying: 'We're not going to stop going to Hillel. Basically, we're not going to stop being Jewish,'" he said.

Alex Tsesis, whose family emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1974, said the attacks represented the betrayal of America's promise. On the wall of Mr. Tsesis' bedroom are pictures of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Albert Einstein, his two heroes.

"In order to escape the anti-Semitism of the Soviet Union, my mother was willing to take a job opening envelope at Montgomery Ward in Chicago," said Mr. Tsesis, a philosophy student and an Army reservist. "It is disconcerting, to say the least, to find that we have not entirely escaped it."



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