



RUTGERS

Miller Center on Policing
and Community Resilience

John J. Farmer, Jr.
185 Ryders Lane
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

millercenter.rutgers.edu
jfarmer@eagleton.rutgers.edu

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Committee on Education & the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Chairwoman Foxx

Dear Chairwoman Foxx and Committee members:

My name is John Farmer. I am a University Professor at Rutgers University and serve as Director of the Miller Center on Policing and Community Resilience at Rutgers (“Miller Center”) (<https://millercenter.rutgers.edu/>). Earlier in my career I served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, Chief Counsel to Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Attorney General of New Jersey, and Senior Counsel of the 9/11 Commission, among other roles. In 2008, I served as Senior Legal Advisor to General Jim Jones in his capacity in the Bush administration as Special Envoy for Middle East Regional Security, working in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, and border towns like Sderot. We did not visit Gaza because it was run by Hamas and deemed unsafe.

I am writing to provide perspective for the Committee on the work the Miller Center has done under the Rutgers banner to combat antisemitism and other forms of hate in the United States and other nations. The struggle against antisemitism is at the core of the Miller Center’s overarching mission: the protection of vulnerable populations. The reason is simple: the historic persecution of Jewish populations – and their resilient response to that persecution – offers lessons for other diaspora populations around the world.

Our work began when, on sabbatical ten years ago, I undertook to study how the Jewish populations in Europe – which had been subject to discrimination, persecution, pogroms, and near-annihilation over centuries – had developed mechanisms of resilience that have enabled them to persevere. As fate would have it, I and Paul Goldenberg, at the time the head of the Secure Communities Network and now a senior adviser to the Miller Center, had visited Brussels and met with the Jewish community security officials after the Jewish Museum shootings, and were in Paris meeting with the Jewish community security experts when the kosher Deli and Charlie Hebdo offices were attacked.

The bloodshed continued. We arrived in Copenhagen a day after two police officers were shot and a synagogue security official was murdered. Later that year, at the invitation of Belgian authorities, we were invited to Brussels in the immediate aftermath of the subway and airport bombings to attempt to improve the relationship among the police, the Jewish community, and the largely Muslim district of Molenbeek, from which the terrorists had launched their attacks in Paris and Brussels (<https://www.inquirer.com/columnists/worldview-rutgers-teams-antiterror-ideas-travel-far-20160717.html?query=Rutgers%20team%E2%80%99s%20antiterror%20ideas%20travel%20far>).

We provided training to police and communities facing threats, as well as material assistance where necessary (bullet-proof vests for a Jewish community under threat in Malmo, Sweden, for instance). We took inventory of the security practices of Jewish communities in the UK, France, Belgium, Sweden, the

Czech Republic, and Hungary, and published a security guide for faith-based communities drawing from these experiences (<https://millercenter.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Resilience-Report-Vulnerable-Communities-and-Houses-of-Worship-compressed.pdf>).

When the Jewish community in Whitefish, Montana was faced with the threat of a neo-Nazi march, our team worked on site, conducting emergency response training for the community, the town's government and police, and neighboring communities and government agencies (<https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/whitefish-officials-train-for-emergency-situations>).

We have worked with vulnerable populations of varying faiths in various locations: the Sikh community in Milwaukee; the Muslim community in Dearborn, Michigan; the African American community in Mississippi. Our work has been hands-on, pragmatic, solution-based, free of ideological constraints; we have found that solutions become possible when slogans are muted and pandering subsides.

News of our work led to an invitation to participate in the International March of the Living, an annual event commemorating the march from Auschwitz to Birkenau that attracts thousands of students and dignitaries from across the world. That relationship has developed into a partnership, in which we have brought delegations of lawyers, educators, and most recently police executives from the US, Canada, and Europe to participate in the March (<https://millercenter.rutgers.edu/international-law-enforcement-delegation-participates-in-march-of-the-living-in-solidarity-against-hatred-in-all-its-forms/>). Participants hear perspectives on the Holocaust and Genocide Prevention and the essential roles that lawyers, educators, and police played in making the Holocaust possible, but also the roles they have played and can play in preventing genocide (<https://www.police1.com/chiefs-sheriffs/how-the-lessons-from-atrocities-can-improve-our-policing>). To a person, participants have described the experience as life-altering. We have also collaborated with the March on several Kristallnacht programs (<https://www.rutgers.edu/news/rutgers-miller-center-joined-international-march-living-kristallnacht-commemoration-dubai>).

The Miller Center at Rutgers has also been at the forefront of confronting antisemitism and other forms of hatred and extremism online. Beginning in 2020, we partnered with Dr. Joel Finkelstein of the Network Contagion Research Institute and issued reports highlighting the danger to democracy of groups like the Boogaloo militia, QAnon, radical leftists, and others. We have briefed members of the NSC staff, the Joint Terrorism Task Forces, and congressional committee staffs on our findings. In the aftermath of January 6, at the request of a House Republican member, we did an early assessment debunking the idea that January 6 was driven by leftist sympathizers (<https://millercenter.rutgers.edu/library/?topic=ncri>).

We also published the first comprehensive assessment of online antisemitism (<https://millercenter.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NCRI%E2%80%9393AntisemiticDisinformation-FINAL.pdf>). In addition, we have published papers on the rise of anti-Asian sentiment, Hindu hate, and anti-Muslim extremism on social media. We have formed the Network Contagion Lab at Rutgers, in which Rutgers students are trained to conduct social media research and, in the course of that training, to be aware of the power of hate speech and misinformation and to be able to recognize and call it out (<https://www.rutgers.edu/news/rutgers-students-sift-through-social-media-search-emerging-threats-extremist-behavior-and>).

This year, the issues on which we have focused have hit much closer to home. Universities throughout the United States and Europe have been the subject of massive protests of the war between Israel and Hamas. While some degree of hyperbole is inevitable in a wartime climate, there is no question that some of the

speech has been overtly antisemitic and other speech, while debatable, could cause any reasonable Jewish person to feel unsafe. There has also been speech labeling all Palestinians as terrorists, and there has been violence directed at protesters at UCLA and vandalism at the Center for Islamic Life at Rutgers. Fortunately, given the intensity of the rhetoric, to my knowledge no one has been killed.

I reached out on October 7 to the head of Hillel at Rutgers, and Miller Center personnel have been actively consulting with Hillel, Chabad, and other Jewish organizations during this fraught period. We have developed training we will be delivering to interested students on how to remain safe on campus, and we have secured funding to develop a national training platform for university police across the country to assist them in knowing when and how to intervene to assure student safety. That training will be delivered in partnership with the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA).

The Miller Center has not been involved in individual student situations on campus, or in the discussions that took place to end the encampment. That is not our role.

My concern in writing to you, however, is that to the extent your members have felt inclined to comment generally on Rutgers' institutional stance on antisemitism, you need to know that all the work I have described above has had the full support of presidents Barchi and Holloway and the Rutgers administration. I also want you to know that although the administration is aware of this letter, no one asked me to write it.

I have written this of my own accord, because I have found statements like yours – that “Rutgers senior administrators, faculty, staff, academic departments and centers, and student organizations have contributed to the development of a pervasive climate of antisemitism” -- to be both inaccurate and offensive. Such a statement is either profoundly uninformed of our efforts or motivated cynically to mislead the public.

I don't doubt that antisemitism exists at Rutgers, because it exists everywhere. That's the sobering lesson of the Miller Center's work combating it. So do other forms of hatred of populations deemed “the other.” But to conclude that Rutgers as an institution has countenanced its rise is quite simply not true; in fact, we have done as much as any institution of higher education to call attention to its rise and to work in the most directly affected areas to combat it.

I hope this letter will enable your committee to reach an informed and accurate conclusion.

Sincerely,



John J. Farmer, Jr.
University Professor
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Cc: New Jersey Congressional Delegation