

Thank you, Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Nadler, and other members of this committee for inviting me to be here today.

My name is Eyal Yakoby, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania. For two weeks an unlawful and dangerous encampment was erected in the heart of Penn's campus.

Bigotry, violence, and harassment have become part of Penn's daily syllabus. The encampment at Penn waved the PFLP flag while chanting "Al-Qassam make us proud." The PFLP is a terrorist organization, and al-Qassam is the armed wing of Hamas. While students walk to class, they are met with masked individuals screaming at them "Go die," "You are Hitler's children," and "nazis." One member of the encampment wore a sweatshirt with two rats surrounding a Jewish star.

In another incident, a student walking on his own campus was surrounded by four masked figures flashing strobe lights in his eyes. They proceeded to threaten him, saying "If you know what's good for you, you'll get out of here," "Hope you have a good doctor," and "How's your dental plan?"

During a unity rally held by Jewish students, we chanted, "Rape is not resistance," while the encampment chanted "Resistance is justified." When people reveal their beliefs, pay attention. Because at Columbia, they chanted, "Globalize the Intifada," right before smashing windows, barricading doors, and taking a janitor hostage. For anyone wondering, that is what the start of a global intifada looks like.

This is not just an issue for Jews— it is an issue for all Americans. On October 7th, Israel was physically attacked, but ideologically, every free country had been infiltrated. Because the same people who wave the flags of Hamas are burning the flag of the United States.

I am a firm believer in the First Amendment, but the vandalism, assault, and trespassing that is taking place across college campuses are conduct, not speech. More specifically, it is unlawful conduct. But at Penn bigotry and violence seems to be permitted.

Within 24 hours of the encampment being assembled, President Jameson released a statement and said in no uncertain terms, "blatant violations of University policies and credible reports of harassing and intimidating conduct" have occurred.

The president went on, he stated "Failure to disband the encampment immediately—will result in sanctions."

The encampment went nowhere.

The following week, The president of Penn released another statement, whereby he said "Every day the encampment exists, the campus is less safe. Some have aimed to characterize this as a peaceful protest. It is not." Despite this, he said that he still believes negotiations are the best way to go while admitting that "the protestors have refused."

What happened a mere 24 hours after this statement you may ask? The encampment took over the other side of Penn's college green, chanted "We don't want no zionist pigs," and compared the Philadelphia police to the KKK. They also vandalized the Benjamin Franklin statue with Nazi and Hamas logos and graffiti reading "Zios get fuckt."

While the encampment persisted, on an anonymous social media app exclusive to Penn students, posts read, "Burn—filthy Zio!" and, "Keep protesting louder! Hamas just made a statement, and they're with us!"

Penn, after 16 days finally disbanded the encampment, declaring, "Our community has been under threat—for too long." The university finally acknowledged reality: we, as students, for far too long endured danger. So let me ask you this, what value is such an acknowledgment if action takes two weeks?

The lesson that Penn has been teaching students and faculty is that violence and harassment work. Penn has allowed individuals to act with impunity. As former President Harry S. Truman stated, "appeasement only makes the aggressor more aggressive."

Moreover, four days prior to the encampment disbanding, in Penn's own words, "We have heard reports of circulating documents with instructions for escalating—including through building occupations and violence." The Penn crimes log even included "terroristic threats."

To be clear, the university knew about documents circulating within the encampment having instructions for violence, there were terroristic threats, and they waited at least four days to do something. On top of that, once the encampment was cleared the university found "weapons" within the encampment.

This right here is the moral degradation of higher education and an utter neglect of safety.

When we applied to Penn, we expected to be nervous about our final exams. What we didn't expect was to have counter-terrorism units roaming on our campus. Taxpayers weren't aware their federal dollars would support the hate that has taken root at Penn.

But make no mistake, it is not the administration alone. Some professors at Penn are also abetting hateful speech and conduct. To illustrate, one professor posted a cartoon mocking 9/11. Another posted on Oct. 7th “beautiful and timely” referencing Hamas terrorists entering Israel. While in class, a different professor remarked that not all Jews should be thrown into the sea, but only because it was “not practical.”

I sit here today because I am urging the administration to redeem themselves. Penn’s coat of arms reads “Laws without morals are useless.” Well, right now Penn has laws with zero morals.

Just last week, students put up six American flags on campus. Within 24 hours, the flags were removed. Yet, the PFLP flag that sat just yards away was left untouched. Apparently at Penn, flags of terrorist organizations that rape, murder, and take American hostages can fly freely, but the U.S. flag cannot.

As Bari Weiss profoundly stated, “When people turn against freedom, they turn against Jews.”

And so just as encampments chanted 'death to America,' I will sit here and shout 'God Bless America' because I refuse to let hatred drown out my love for freedom.