

Testimony of Alyza D. Lewin
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before the
National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI)
hearing relating to the
American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Accreditation
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I'm Alyza Lewin, President of U.S. Affairs for the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), an American organization dedicated to fighting global antisemitism. I am an attorney with more than 30 years of experience fighting against all forms of discrimination.

There is a theme running through today's (third party) comments that calls into question the APA's ability to effectively monitor and address both antisemitism in programs that receive APA accreditation as well as antisemitism in the APA itself.

The APA has a blind spot for antisemitism that targets Jews on the basis of the Jewish people's shared ancestry and ethnicity.

Judaism is the oldest monotheistic faith. But Jews are defined by more than religious belief and practice. Jews are also a people bound together by shared ancestry and an unbroken historical relationship with the Land of Israel.

The connection between Jews and the Land of Israel permeates the Jewish calendar, Jewish life-cycle events, Jewish law, Jewish prayer, and Jewish history. In fact, over half of the 613 commandments in the Hebrew Bible are connected to the Land of Israel and can only be fulfilled there.

Jerusalem – also referred to as “Zion” in the Bible - was the spiritual and political center of Jewish life long before it became sacred to other faiths. For millennia, Jews have not only prayed facing Jerusalem, they have prayed to return to Jerusalem. Indeed, at the conclusion of the Passover Seder, and at the end of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) Jews say *L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim* “Next Year in Jerusalem.”

The connection between the Jewish people and Israel reflects a historical reality.

One of the defining characteristics of modern antisemitism, however, is the deliberate erasure of Jewish peoplehood and the denial of this Jewish history.

Jews who refuse to erase this history are frequently branded as “Zionists,” and shunned, ostracized or excluded – or at the APA, perhaps told that they suffer from a mental health illness from which they need to be cured.

When Jews are targeted because of their “Zionism,” that inevitably means the victim did not publicly disavow history that connects the Jewish people to Israel – the Jews’ ancestral homeland.

Targeting Zionists (this way) is not a political debate. It’s the targeting of Jews based on Jewish shared ancestry and ethnicity.

When you combine a refusal to recognize Jewish shared ancestry and ethnicity with a diversity requirement – the result can be catastrophic for Jews. As we saw at GW - diversity courses that erase and deny Jewish history and treat Jews as “white, colonizing, oppressors” – foster hostility towards Jews.

As long as the APA fails to recognize the Jewish people’s shared ancestry and ethnicity connected to the Land of Israel, it will not be able to effectively monitor its accredited programs or meaningfully address antisemitism within the APA. It is, therefore, important that Jewish organizations and antisemitism experts, like those who testified here today, be consulted as the APA’s compliance is evaluated.

Thank you.