

Queer McGill is not a safe space for Jews

By Claire Frankel

The BDS movement works tirelessly to position itself with other liberation movements. In doing so, it has created “solidarities” which seem to extend to every minority group, except Jews. In order to be accepted as a Jew in progressive spaces, you must fit the ideal of a “good Jew” (an anti-Zionist Jew). Otherwise, you are automatically labeled as an oppressor. On many college campuses across North America, Zionism is portrayed as an ideology that exists in opposition to progressive ideals.

The BDS movement on university campuses has instrumentalized the Palestinian cause as a moral license to be antisemitic by creating spaces on campus where no Zionists are allowed. In August 2022, I was asked to speak on a Queer interfaith panel at McGill University. The event was organized by Queer McGill and the McGill Office of Religion and Spiritual Life. I was so excited for this opportunity where I could discuss the intricacies of my identity as both a Jew and a Queer woman. However, that same month I was singled out by one of the organizers of Queer McGill and asked not to speak about Zionism at the event in order not to upset anyone else who would be speaking on the panel.

I wish I could say that I was surprised by this request. But the latest trend in progressive spaces and specifically on university campuses, are only to be supportive of Jews who reject any connection to their ancestral homeland. Like most Jews in North America, Zionism is integral to my Jewish identity. And to ask me to separate the two from one another is not only impossible, but it is, frankly, antisemitic.

After I spoke on the panel, I believed I had started to build a friendly relationship with the folks at Queer McGill. However, when I reached out to them to help me advertise for a JQueer

event, I was told that they would not be able to promote the event due to “concerns over the incompatibility of our political mandates.” This appears to be a common problem experienced by Jews on college campuses and in progressive spaces.

In December 2021, two Jewish [students](#) at SUNY at New Paltz were kicked out of a sexual assault awareness group and were subsequently cyberbullied over their “Jewish and Israeli identities.” And in 2017, Jewish marchers at the [Dyke March](#) were kicked out of a rally for inclusiveness because of their Zionist beliefs. These events are just a few instances that showcase the extent to which Jews are being excluded from student groups and progressive circles.

For progressive Jews like me, this perceived acceptable premise of discriminating against Jews based on their connection to Israel is incredibly dangerous. It is irresponsible for groups like this to further isolate already marginalized people based on their identity. This is precisely the type of prejudice groups like Queer McGill should stand against. Jewish students deserve to participate in progressive spaces without having to compromise on aspects of their Jewish identity.