

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

COMBATING WORKPLACE ANTISEMITISM IN POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION: PROTECTING EMPLOYEES FROM DISCRIMINATION

June 26, 2024

Written Testimony

Professor Dafna Golden
Mt. San Antonio College, California

My name is Dafna Golden. For twenty-three years I have been employed as a Geography Professor at Mt. San Antonio College (“Mt. SAC”), located in the eastern part of Los Angeles County, California.

I am here today to share the distressing experiences I have endured at Mt. SAC as a Jewish professor in the wake of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack in Israel.

I have experienced an anti-Semitic hostile environment at Mt. SAC and anti-Semitic discrimination specifically directed at me, which Mt. SAC – my employer -- has failed to properly remedy or protect me from. Mt. SAC is my workplace, and in my opinion, this is unacceptable and illegal in any workplace.

The discrimination began in earnest when I expressed concerns to the administration regarding a professor’s planned screening of an offensive and anti-Semitic film, “The Occupation of the American Mind,” just weeks after the October 7th attack. Narrated by the notorious anti-Semite Roger Waters, the film’s central thesis is that a cabal of “leaders of major Jewish organizations” have conspired to use their power to control and thus “occupy” the minds of innocent Americans so that they would support Israel. The movie is basically a screen version of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and serves no academic function.

In response to my objections, the Equity Center withdrew its support for the event which meant that the film would not be screened campus-wide. However, the professor continues to show this film in his classes on US History, Mexican

American History and Native American History; classes that are unrelated to the movie's topic.

In retaliation for voicing my objections to the film, the professor – my co-worker, mind you – instigated a campaign of harassment against me by emailing his entire class falsely labeling me a “violent Zionist” and a “former soldier in the IDF,” both of which are false, and inciting his students “to stand up” to me. He also repeated these statements in-person to his entire class. A Jewish student in the professor's Mexican American History class documented these actions, including a disturbing incident where the professor mimicked a Nazi salute in class.

Individuals associated with a notorious anti-Semitic organization on campus, Shut It Down 4 Palestine, then vandalized the bulletin board outside my office by removing my Israeli flag and pro-Israel articles, and replacing them with anti-Israel propaganda, including a flyer with demands to “Renounce the Pro-Zionist,” “Remove the Pro-Zionist library display,” and “Declare support for Palestine.” See Exhibit 1.

I had installed a perfectly normal, non-ideological, academic display at the school library on Israel's changing borders from prior to the establishment of the state until the present time (remember, I teach Geography). See Exhibit 2. The display included books such as, “Coexistence & Reconciliation in Israel,” and even included two sets of both the Israeli and Palestinian flags. The library reported that, due to student complaints and division in the community, they removed the display.

My profile on RateMyProfessors.com was bombarded with fake negative reviews. Students making public comments at the open meeting of the Mt. SAC Board of Trustees demanded that I be fired and declared a boycott of my classes. My spring semester on-campus class was then canceled due to low enrollment, limiting me to online teaching. My lack of on-campus presence has deteriorated crucial collaborative relationships, essential for the multi-disciplinary program I manage. My colleagues' reactions during virtual meetings and their reluctance to engage with me professionally underscore the prevalent hostility. My attempts to engage with key faculty and administration, including the head of the Ethnic Studies department, the President of the Faculty Academic Senate and the President of Mt. SAC, have been ignored, leaving the pervasive anti-Semitism on campus unaddressed.

Like so many of my Jewish colleagues at colleges across the country, the *general* anti-Semitic hostile environment turned to focus on me *directly* – because I am a Jew; because I won't hide or reject my connection *as a Jew* to the Jewish state and the Jewish people.

I reported these incidents to the Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences including the professor's emails to his students and a recording of the oral statements he made to the class. The Deans have not shared with me if any remedial action has been taken. Nevertheless, the professor continues leading protests with students demanding reinstatement of the screening of the anti-Semitic film "Occupation of the American Mind." The professor also continues to show the film in his unrelated classes on US History, Mexican American History and Native American History.

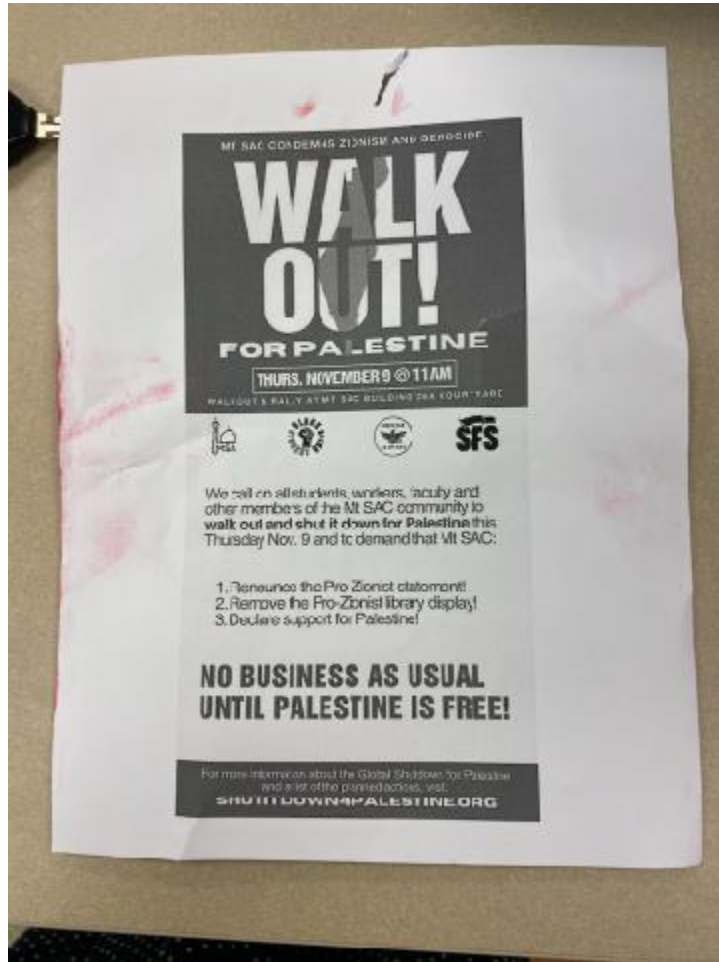
I also filed a complaint with Human Resources Office at Mt SAC. The complaint included the professor's emails to his students and a recording of the oral statements he made to the class. The office found it be unsubstantiated, in part because the student who documented the emails and voice recordings did not want to submit a statement to the Human Resources Office out of fear of retaliation and harassment, and therefore the Human Resources Office took no disciplinary actions against the professor who directed harassment toward me. My employer – Mt. San Antonio College – refuses to act; refuses to take any disciplinary action. And my employer – Mt. SAC – did not help me; did not protect me; and did not fulfill its responsibilities under the law.

This is not about my hurt feelings, but about real and serious adverse impacts on my employment; on my career. This hostile environment has significantly impacted my professional duties and relationships. As a result of the toxic atmosphere and the severe impact on my mental health and professional standing, and the refusal of my employer to protect me in my workplace, I have decided to transition out of academia as soon as possible.

I urge this body to take immediate and decisive actions to address this rampant anti-Semitism and restore a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for faculty and staff on college campuses, no less than what is expected in any workplace.

Thank you.

EXHIBIT 1



MT SAC CONDEMNES ZIONISM AND APOLOGIZES

WALK OUT!

FOR PALESTINE

THURS. NOVEMBER 9 @ 11AM

WALKOUT RALLY AT MT SAC BUILDING 26A FOUR YARD



We call on all students, workers, faculty and other members of the Mt SAC community to walk out and shut it down for Palestine this Thursday Nov. 9 and to demand that Mt SAC:

1. Renounce the Pro Zionist statement!
2. Remove the Pro-Zionist library display!
3. Double support for Palestine!

**NO BUSINESS AS USUAL
UNTIL PALESTINE IS FREE!**

For more information about the Global Shutdown for Palestine and a list of the participating sites, visit:
SHUTDOWN4PALESTINE.ORG

EXHIBIT 2

