ADL REPORT:

ANTI-SEMITIC TARGETING OF JOURNALISTS DURING THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

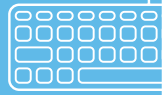A report from ADL's Task Force on Harassment and Journalism

October 19, 2016

ADL
Anti-Defamation League®

KEY FINDINGS

- Based on a broad set of keywords (and keyword combinations) designed by ADL to capture anti-Semitic language, there were 2.6 million tweets containing language frequently found in anti-Semitic speech between August 2015 – July 2016.

- These tweets had an estimated 10 billion impressions (reach), which may contribute to reinforcing and normalizing anti-Semitic language on a massive scale.

- At least 800 journalists received anti-Semitic tweets with an estimated reach of 45 million impressions. The top 10 most targeted journalists (all of whom are Jewish) received 83 percent of these anti-Semitic tweets.

- 1,600 Twitter accounts generated 68% of the anti-Semitic tweets targeting journalists. 21% of these 1,600 accounts have been suspended in the study period, amounting to 16% of the anti-Semitic tweets.

- Sixty percent of the anti-Semitic tweets were replies to journalists' posts (11% were regular Tweets and 29% re-tweets). In other words, anti-Semitism more often than not occurred in response to journalists' initial posts.

- There was a significant uptick in anti-Semitic tweets in the second half (January-July 2016) of this study period. This correlates to intensifying coverage of the presidential campaign, the candidates and their positions on a range of issues.

OVERALL DATA PULL
based on keywords correlating with anti-Semitism

2,641,072
TOTAL MENTIONS

2015   2016

from August 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016 contained these keywords

10,000,000,000
Number of estimated impressions generated

66%
Percentage of tweets posted by male users, based on user-disclosed details

- There is evidence that a considerable number of the anti-Semitic tweets targeting journalists originate with people identifying themselves as Trump supporters, "conservatives" or extreme right-wing elements. The words that show up most in the bios of Twitter users sending anti-Semitic tweets to journalists are "Trump," "nationalist," "conservative," "American" and "white." This finding does not imply that Mr. Trump supported these tweets, or that conservatives are more prone to anti-Semitism. It does show that the individuals directing anti-Semitism toward journalists self-identified as Trump supporters and conservatives.

- While anti-Semitic tweets tended to spike in the wake of election-related news coverage, the language used in the anti-Semitic tweets was not solely election-related. Many tweets referenced classic anti-Semitic tropes (Jews control the media, Jews control global finance, Jews perpetrated 9/11, etc.). This suggests that while the initial provocation for anti-Semitic tweets may have been at least nominally election-related, the Twitter users generating targeted anti-Semitism may have used news events as an excuse to unleash anti-Semitic memes, harassment, etc.

- The words most frequently used in anti-Semitic tweets directed at journalists included "kike," "Israel," "Zionist," and "white" etc., an indication that the harassment may have been prompted by the perceived religious identity of the journalist.
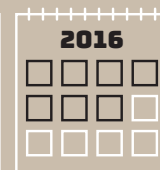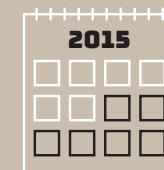
- While anti-Semitism was primarily directed at journalists who are Jewish (or perceived to be Jewish), non-Jewish journalists also received anti-Semitic tweets following criticism of Mr. Trump – presumably intended to be either an insult or threat. This is likely connected to the anti-Semitic tropes related to Jews "controlling" the media, and the media "controlling" the government.

- As previously stated, there is no evidence suggesting these attacks were explicitly encouraged by any campaign or candidate. In fact, ADL has been able to identify individuals and websites in the white supremacist world that have played a role in encouraging these attacks.

- While this report did not investigate whether social media attacks have a chilling effect on journalists, it does show that targeted anti-Semitic tweets raised the cost of entry into (and staying in) the marketplace of ideas for journalists, particularly Jewish journalists.

Please note that this is the first stage of a two-stage reporting process. This data gathering and analysis phase will be followed by a series of recommendations, to be released on November 19, 2016.

NOTE ABOUT THE REPORT AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

ADL is a nonprofit organization and does not take sides for or against any candidate for elective office, so it is crucial to be perfectly clear about what this report says and what it does not say.

This report identifies some self-styled followers of presidential candidate Donald Trump to be the source of a viciously anti-Semitic Twitter attack against reporters. Accordingly, we wish to make it clear that based on the statistical work we have performed, we cannot and do not attribute causation to Mr. Trump, and thus we cannot and do not assign blame to Mr. Trump for these ugly tweets. While candidates can and do affect the environment in which social media operates as well as the tenor of its messages, the individuals who tweet hateful words are solely responsible for their messages.

BACKGROUND: ADL TASK FORCE ON HARASSMENT AND JOURNALISM

In June 2016, in the wake of a series of disturbing incidents in which journalists covering the 2016 presidential campaign were targeted with anti-Semitic harassment and even death threats on social media, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) announced the creation a Task Force on Harassment and Journalism.

Building on ADL's decades of experience in monitoring and exposing hate and hate groups, as well as its critical work with the tech industry in efforts to address online harassment, the Task Force sought insights from a group of experts from the world of journalism, law enforcement, academia, Silicon Valley and nongovernmental organizations. Their advice and counsel will help ADL to do the following:

- Assess the scope and source of anti-Semitic, racist and other harassment of journalists, commentators and others on social media;

- Determine whether and how this harassment is having an impact on the electorate or if it has a chilling effect on free speech;

- Propose solutions and/or countermeasures that can prevent journalists from becoming targets for hate speech and harassment on social media in the future.

With the release of this landmark report, ADL has unveiled the extent to which the 2016 presidential election cycle has exposed journalists to anti-Semitic abuse on Twitter. Our first-of-its-kind investigation included wide-ranging surveys of journalists as well as a quantitative analysis of anti-Semitic Twitter messages and memes directed at reporters.

This initial report, produced by ADL's Center on Extremism, which has worked closely with social media and internet providers for more than two decades in responding to anti-Semitism and online hatred, will be followed by a final report, which will incorporate a broad range of recommended responses to bigotry on social media. The final report will be released at ADL's Never is Now Summit on anti-Semitism on November 17, 2016.

*Participation in the Task Force does not imply agreement with, or assent to, the findings of this report.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the 2016 Presidential campaign, an execrable trend has emerged: reporters who voiced even slightly negative opinions about presidential candidate Donald Trump have been targeted relentlessly on social media by the candidate's self-styled supporters; reporters who are Jewish (or are perceived to be Jewish) have borne the brunt of these attacks.

There is evidence that Mr. Trump himself may have contributed to an environment in which reporters were targeted. Indeed, he repeatedly denounced reporters as "absolute scum," and said of "most journalists" in December 2015, "I would never kill them, but I do hate them. And some of them are such lying, disgusting people. It's true." Accordingly, while we cannot (and do not) say that the candidate caused the targeting of reporters, we can say that he may have created an atmosphere in which such targeting arose.

The social media attacks on journalists were brutal.

When journalist Julia Ioffe wrote a profile of Melania Trump for the May 2016 issue of GQ magazine, a firestorm of virulently anti-Semitic (and misogynistic) responses on social media followed. One tweet called Ioffe a "filthy Russian kike," while others sent her photos of concentration camps with captions like "Back to the Ovens!"

On May 19, *New York Times* editor Jonathan Weisman tweeted about casino magnate Sheldon Adelson's support for Trump, and the anti-Semitic response to Ioffe's article. The reaction was immediate, with Twitter user CyberTrump leading the charge against Weisman: "Do you wish to remain hidden, to be thought of one of the goyim by the masses?" As other racists and anti-Semites piled on, Weisman received images of ovens, of himself wearing Nazi "Juden" stars, and of Auschwitz's infamous entry gates, the path painted over with the Trump logo, and the iron letters refashioned to read "Machen Amerika Great."

After criticizing Mr. Trump, conservative writer Ben Shapiro became the target of a wave of anti-Semitic tweets calling him a "Christ-Killer" and a "kike." Jake Tapper, John Podhoretz and Noah Rothman have all received similar messages after voicing opinions perceived to be critical of Mr. Trump. In the midst of the attacks, Rothman tweeted: "It never ends. Blocking doesn't help either. They have lists, on which I seem to find myself."

While much of the online harassment of journalists is at the hands of anonymous trolls, there are known individuals and
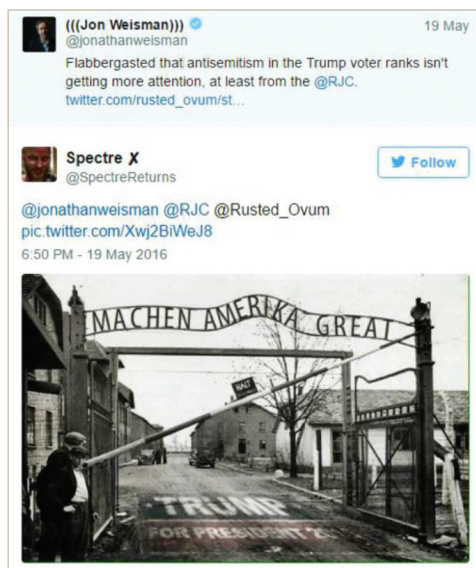
websites in the white supremacist world that have played a role in encouraging these attacks (see "White Supremacists Encourage the Online Harassment of Jewish Journalists" section).

METHODOLOGY

This report covers the time period of August 2015 through July 2016.

To capture the vast sweep of anti-Semitic Tweets directed at journalists, ADL utilized the latest in "big data" techniques. There were four phases to the report.

Phase one: ADL interviewed journalists impacted by the anti-Semitic harassment and they provided critical background information and described their experiences as targets of harassment on Twitter. They also described the effect the attacks had on their work and personal sense of safety.

Phase two: ADL conducted a search of tweets using a broad set keywords (and keyword combinations) designed by ADL to capture anti-Semitic language. These keywords did not include any terms associated directly with the 2016 presidential campaign. This yielded 2.6 million results.

Phase three: We focused our search on tweets received by a list of 50,000 journalists and compared those with the 2.6 million results.

Phase four: We manually reviewed each of these tweets and narrowed the results to 19,253 overtly anti-Semitic tweets, which we found were directed at 800 journalists.

Note 1: One can never include all of the words that might be used in an anti-Semitic attack, and you can't predict the ways in which anti-Semites will create "codes" to avoid censure and potential exclusion by social media platforms. (In October 2016, for example, after this analysis was complete, white supremacists attempted to avoid tech-based approaches to isolate online harassment. To do so they assigned tech-oriented code words to their favorite slurs, referring to "kikes" as "Skypes," among many others).

Note 2: It is impossible to capture all of the anti-Semitic tweets or identify all of the anti-Semitic Twitter users, and because 21 percent of the accounts responsible for tweets containing anti-Semitic language have been deleted (either by Twitter or by the users), there is reason to conclude that the numbers in this report – especially the number of anti-Semitic Tweets received by individual journalists – are conservative.

TWEETS TO JOURNALISTS
based on keywords correlating with anti-Semitism

19,253
ANTI-SEMITIC TWEETS
at US journalists from a pool of 50,000 journalist Twitter handles

45,000,000
Number of estimated impressions generated

CLASSES OF TWEETS
to US journalists

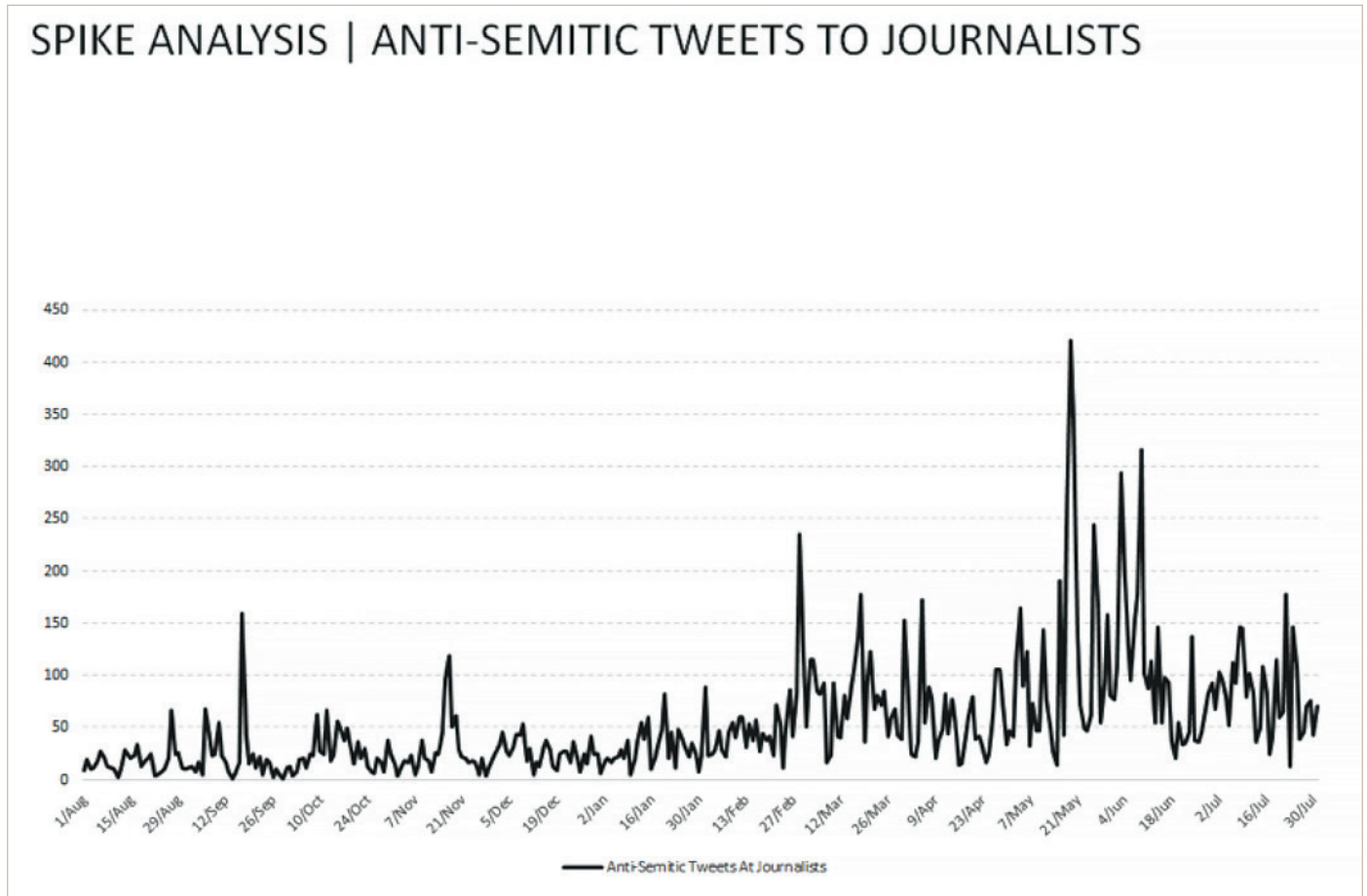| 60%	29%	11
▢ Replies	▮ Re-Tweets	▢ Regular Tweets

WHY TWITTER?

This report is focused on Twitter because it is the primary social media platform used to perpetrate these attacks on journalists, according to the journalists themselves.

While the data are not designed to show why the attackers chose Twitter, the harassers clearly identified Twitter as a target-rich environment journalists routinely use and depend on Twitter for sharing information, soliciting sources and disseminating their work.

We cannot conclude that Mr. Trump's extensive use of Twitter "encouraged" these attacks. Mr. Trump's use of Twitter as a key communications tool is notable, but the platform is used extensively by all candidates.

We are also not attributing the abuse to the Twitter platform: as with all of the major social media companies, Twitter does not proactively monitor and regulate speech, but like other platforms, claims to respond when hate speech is reported.

The above word cloud is based on the 2.6 million tweets.

DETAILED FINDINGS

ADL conducted a search of tweets using a broad set of keywords (and keyword combinations) designed by ADL to capture anti-Semitic language. These keywords did not include any terms associated directly with the 2016 presidential campaign. This yielded 2.6 million results.

These 2.6 million tweets, which were posted by 1.7 million Twitter users, appeared an estimated 10 billion times – which means that this language was potentially seen 10 billion times. That's roughly the equivalent social media exposure advertisers could expect from a $20 million Super Bowl ad - a juggernaut of bigotry we believe reinforces and normalizes anti-Semitic language and tropes on a massive scale.

Our next step, a manual review of tweets containing anti-Semitic language, yielded 19,253 overtly anti-Semitic tweets mentioning 800 journalists. The 19,253 Tweets were seen approximately 45 million times, and 60 percent of these tweets were replies with anti-Semitic content sent directly to journalists or other users.

Sixty-eight percent of the 19,253 Tweets were sent by 1,600 Twitter users, confirming that these were persistent attacks on journalists by a relatively small cohort of Twitter users.

The above word cloud is based on the 19,253 anti-Semitic Tweets directed at 800 journalists.

To the left are the most common Twitter hashtags appearing in the anti-Semitic tweets

Many of the anti-Semitic attackers publicized their role as self-appointed surrogates for Trump and their allegiance to the white nationalist cause. These five words appeared most frequently in the 1,600 Twitter attackers' account "bios:" Trump, conservative, white, nationalist and American. This demonstrates that those with a propensity to send anti-Semitic tweets are more likely to support Donald Trump, and self-identify as white nationalists and/or conservative. This does not imply that Mr. Trump supported these tweets, or that conservatives are more prone to anti-Semitism. It does show that the users directing anti-Semitism toward journalists self-identified as Trump supporters and nationalist.

A very small number of journalists (10), all of whom are Jewish, received 83 percent of the 19,253 anti-Semitic Tweets. Notably, Ben Shapiro, the former Breitbart reporter at the forefront of the so-called #NeverTrump movement, was targeted by more than 7,400 anti-Semitic Tweets.

There was a significant increase in the volume of anti-Semitic tweets in the second half of the reporting period. Seventy-six percent of Tweets at journalists were posted between February to July 2016. This corresponds with intensifying coverage of the presidential campaign, the candidates, and their positions on a range of issues.

TWEETS TO JOURNALISTS
based on keywords correlating with anti-Semitism

15,952
OR 83% OF 19,253

The percentage of all anti-Semitic tweets to all journalists were targeted at

10 JOURNALISTS

6,131
Number of unique users who posted tweets to US journalists, 1,600 of whom generated 13,500 of the 19,253 total tweets.

26%   70%

22%

The percentage of these 1,600 users whose accounts were suspended, or 20% of the 19K-plus total tweets removed.

* The above word cloud is based on the Twitter bios of unique users / authors of anti-Semitic tweets directed at journalists.

TOP 10 JOURNALISTS*

Ben Shapiro

Yair Rosenberg

Jeffrey Goldberg

Sally Kohn

Jonathan Weisman

Jonah Goldberg

Jake Tapper

Wolf Blitzer

Dana Schwartz

Bethany Mandel

* The top ten journalists targeted with anti-Semitic tweets.

SPIKE ANALYSIS

SPIKE ANALYSIS | ANTI-SEMITIC TWEETS TO JOURNALISTS

As stated, there is no known causal relationship between Mr. Trump or his campaign and the wave of anti-Semitic attacks against journalists. However, these self-appointed Trump surrogates used events in the campaign, especially actions by Mr. Trump, as a justification for attacking journalists.

Examples:

- One of the most significant spike in anti-Semitic Tweets occurred on/around March 13, 2016, when Mr. Trump blamed Bernie Sanders for violence at a Trump rally.

- There was a similar spike in anti-Semitic Twitter activity on February 29, 2016, during peak coverage of Trump's refusal to "disavow" the Ku Klux Klan

- Another spike occurred on May 17, 2016, when Melania Trump asserted that Julia Ioffe "provoked" the anti-Semitic attacks against her;

- A similar spike occurred May 25, 2016, when Trump verbally attacked a federal judge whose parents emigrated from Mexico.

TWEETS TO TOP JOURNALISTS | AUG – JAN

TWEETS TO TOP JOURNALISTS | FEB – JUL
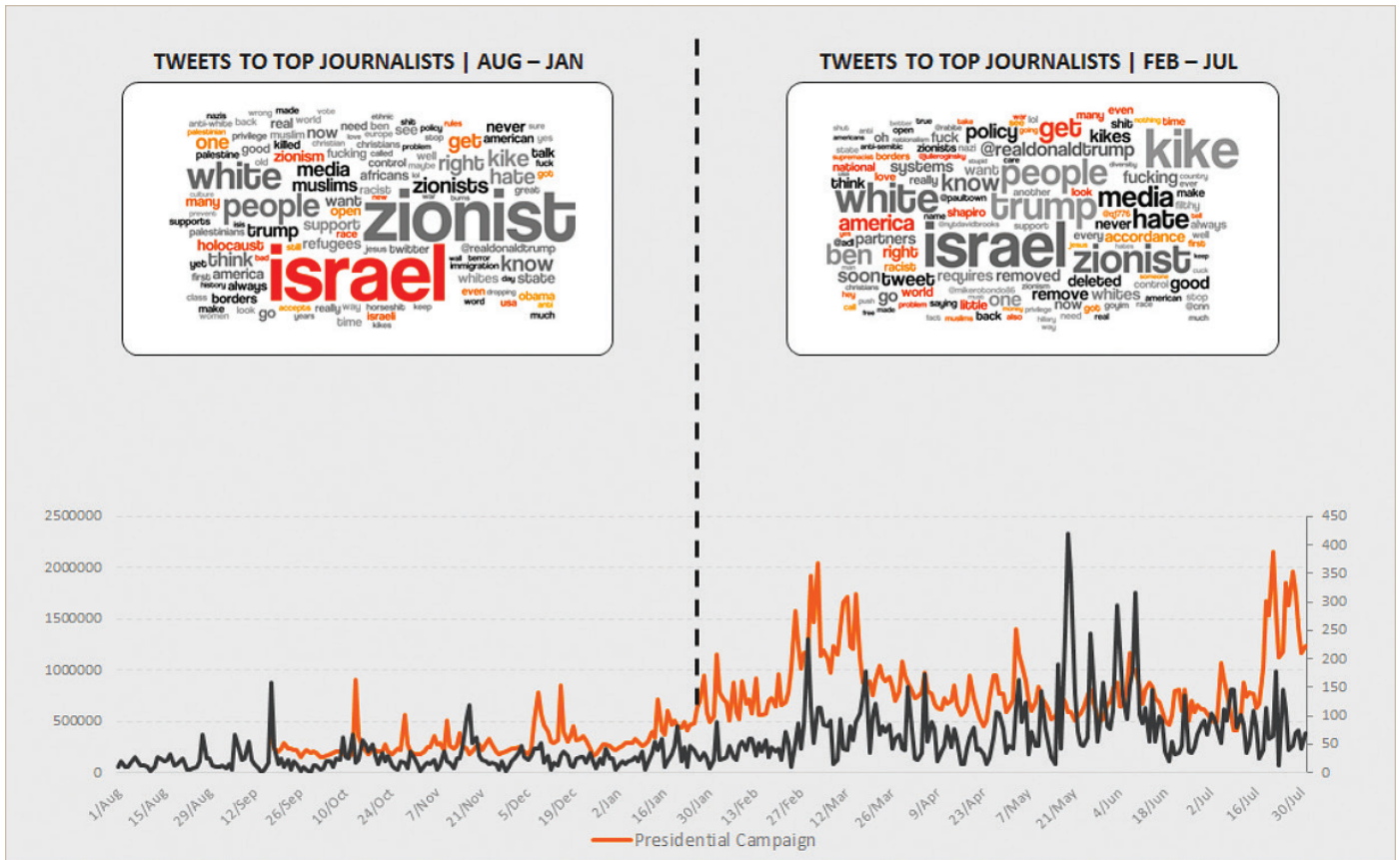
But while anti-Semitic tweets demonstrably spiked following election-related news events, the language used in anti-Semitic tweets was not solely election-related. Many tweets referenced classic anti-Semitic tropes (Jews control the media, Jews control global finance, Jews perpetrated 9/11, et cetera).

Racial slurs and anti-Israel statements were the top two manifestations of anti-Semitism. This suggests that while the initial provocation for anti-Semitic tweets may have been related to the election, the Twitter attackers may have used news events - as well as the public airing of these anti-Semitic tweets - as an excuse to unleash more general anti-Semitic memes and attacks. When Jonathan Weisman tweeted about the racist reaction to his comments about Trump, he was inundated by a wave of anti-Semitic Twitter responses.

In February and March 2016, as the so-called #NeverTrump movement took hold, self-styled Trump supporters from the alt-right attacked. (Alt-right is short for "alternative right, " a range of people on the extreme right who reject mainstream conservatism in favor of forms that embrace implicit or explicit racism or white supremacy). This is when the Twitter attacks on Ben Shapiro, an originator of the #NeverTrump movement, began in earnest.

"It's amazing what's been unleashed," Shapiro told ADL. "I honestly didn't realize they were out there. It's every day, every single day." Despite Shapiro's efforts to shield his family from the abuse, his wife and baby were targeted as well. "When my child was born there were lots of anti-Semitic responses talking about cockroaches."

Bethany Mandel, a freelance reporter who wrote critically about Trump, was also viciously harassed on Twitter. One user tweeted about her for 19 hours straight, and she received messages containing incendiary language about her family, and images with her face superimposed on photos of Nazi concentration camps. Mandel, like the other Jewish journalists interviewed by ADL, has been targeted by anti-Semitic language before, but these attacks stood out, she said, for their "volume and the imagery. It also seemed coordinated – they would come in waves and 50 percent of the time I couldn't identify the source."

IMPACT

A landmark 2014 Pew Research Center study shows that only five percent of people who are harassed online report the problem to law enforcement. Many more – a combined 31 percent – withdraw, either by changing their username, deleting their account, bowing out of an online forum, or simply not attending certain offline events. When people stop talking because they're afraid, that's evidence of a chilling effect.

But for a lot of people, including journalists, quitting social media simply isn't an option – and the Pew data reflects that. Forty-seven percent of those who are harassed online stood their ground and confronted their tormenter online. Forty-four percent blocked the person responsible, and 22 percent reported the person to the website or online service hosting the exchange.

Half of the journalists we interviewed decided not to report the harassing tweets, some because they believed people should have a right to say whatever they want, and others because they weren't confident Twitter would do anything to address the issue. Across the board, the criticisms of Twitter were consistent: The company doesn't do enough to enforce its terms of service.

Jonathan Weisman told us, "I think suspending or deleting [attackers'] accounts is pointless, because they just come back on under a different name. Twitter has to decide if they are going to stand by their terms of service or not. If they decide tomorrow, 'Look, we don't have the capacity to monitor all of this, and we want it to be a free exchange of ideas,' – then fine, we would know what it was. But they want to have it both ways – the halo of having terms of service, but not enforcing them. Or enforcing them only sporadically."

Some of the journalists, including Weisman, stepped away from Twitter, at least for a while, while others stuck with the platform, hoping for a respite even as they braced for more abuse.

While this particular report did not test whether there was a chilling effect on journalists, it does show that targeted anti-Semitic on Twitter undoubtedly raised the cost of entry into (and staying in) the marketplace of ideas for journalists, particularly Jewish journalists.

WHITE SUPREMACISTS ENCOURAGE ONLINE HARASSMENT OF JEWISH JOURNALISTS

While much of the online harassment of journalists is at the hands of anonymous trolls, there are known individuals and websites in the white supremacist world that have played a role in encouraging these attacks. These people and websites represent a sampling of the people and sites engaged in this activity, and have been on ADL's radar for some time.

Two of the neo-Nazis responsible for some of the attacks on Jewish journalists are Andrew Anglin, founder of the extremely popular white supremacist website The Daily Stormer and Lee Rogers of Infostormer (formerly The Daily Slave). While both Anglin and Rogers are banned from Twitter, they have encouraged their followers to Tweet anti-Semitic language and memes at Jewish journalists, including Julia Ioffe and Jonathan Weisman.

Ioffe wrote a profile of Donald Trump's wife, Melania, for the May 2016 issue of GQ. Anglin and Rogers (self-identified Trump supporters) felt the piece was unflattering. Anglin wrote to his supporters on April 28, "Please go ahead and send her a tweet and let her know what you think of her dirty kike trickery. Make sure to identify her as a Jew working against White interests, or send her the picture with the Jude star from the top of the article." Anglin provided Ioffe's Twitter address and the anti-Semitic picture he mentioned. Rogers followed a similar path a few days later, telling his supporters, "I would encourage a continued trolling effort against this evil Jewish bitch." He then provided Ioffe's Twitter address.

The situation with Jonathan Weisman was somewhat different. After Weisman tweeted out an article by Robert Kagan on the emergence of fascism in the United States and Donald Trump, he was bombarded by anti-Semitic Tweets and memes. Anglin attacked Weisman on May 25, 2016, for publicizing the hateful tweets directed at him. But Anglin went much further. Writing about Weisman and Ioffe, "You've all provoked us. You've been doing it for decades—and centuries even—and we've finally had enough. Challenge has been accepted."

A couple of day later, Anglin, echoed by "Marcus Cicero" on Infostormer, urged supporters to Tweet anti-Semitic questions at Weisman, including, "Why do Jews demand that White Christians go fight and die in wars for them?"

White supremacist Andrew Auernheimer, an associate of Anglin and an Internet hacker also known as "Weev," also tweeted at Weisman, "Get used to it you fucking kike. You people will be made to pay for the violence and fraud you've committed against us."

Weisman was one of the first journalists, in the *New York Times,* to publicize another form of harassment – the use of the echo symbol (multiple parentheses) around names to identify that person as Jewish in an article. In his May 26, 2016 article, Weisman noted that some of the anti-Semitic tweets included his name in parentheses. He asked one of the tweeters why, and that person responded, "It's a dog whistle, fool. Belling the cat for my fellow goyim."

A few days later, two journalists at *Mic* traced the origins of this anti-Semitic typographical symbol to a 2014 podcast "The Daily Shoah" on The Right Stuff (TRS), a racist and anti-Semitic website. The podcast used an echo sound effect when someone on the podcast mentioned a Jewish name. According to TRS, "all Jewish surnames echo throughout history. The echoes repeat the sad tale as they communicate the emotional lessons of our great white sins, imploring us to Never Forget the 6 GoRillion." Other anti-Semites translated the audio echo into a typographical symbol used primarily on social media sites, including Twitter.

TRS was also behind the "Coincidence Detector" app, a Google Chrome plugin (removed on June 2, 2016 by Google) whose purpose was, according to Mic, "compiling and exposing the identities of Jews and others who are perceived as 'anti-white.'" According to the creators of the app, it "can help you detect total coincidences about who has been involved in certain political movements and political empires." It was, of course, referring to Jews. Users of the app would then put the echo around a Jewish name.

The publicity generated by the echo symbol resulted in a more widespread, defiant counter-use of the echo, as thousands of Twitter users, including Jewish journalists, changed their Twitter screen names to echo themselves.

TWEETS

Of the 19,253 Tweets sent to 800 journalists, 79 percent were text only, while 12 percent contained links and 8 percent contained images.

A (small) sampling of anti-Semitic tweets sent to journalists:

George London
@GrgeLondon

@julieroginsky Keep scribbling KIKE! Americans are taking the country back from the Israel First scum. INTO THE OVEN

7/8/16, 7:40 PM

●●●●○ T-Mobile 📶 6:13 AM

Tweet

Uncle Backup
@UncleBp

Empress #MelaniaTrump Attacked by Filthy Russian Kike Julia Ioffe in GQ! dailystormer.com/empress-melani...

4/28/16, 4:43 AM

Reply to Uncle Backup

Home   Notifications   Moments   Messages   Me

Uncle Backup @UncleBp · 4h
#Jews #Jew #DailyStormer #Ovens #RuskiJewski Get out of the oven, hoe!
dailystormer.com/greasy-yid-юли ...

Julia Ioffe

MEMES

A few of the most frequently employed memes in the anti-Semitic online (Twitter) harassment of journalists:

Dana Schwartz (Observer)
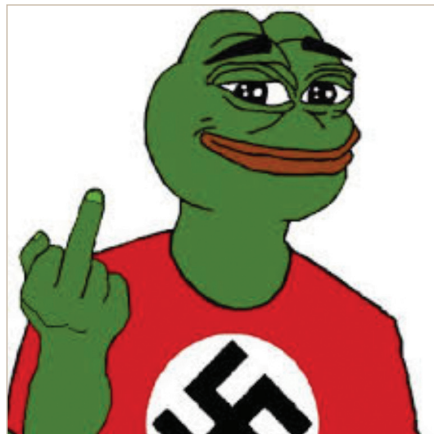*This meme is repeated with various journalists pictured inside the gas chamber.*

Circus Maximus
@CircusMaximus14

Don't trigger Mr Trump (((Roser
It might cause him to fire up the

AmeriKKKanHistoryX™
@KingAntiochus

@bethanyshondark Shalom Bethany!

good for 6 million operations GUARANTEED — ADOLPH'S OVEN SERVICES — GAS OVEN SPECIALIST — call 0800 final solution

AmeriKKKanHistoryX™ @KingAn... 1h
@bethanyshondark Disgusting, filthy, and treacherous Jewess gets a ☠💧☠💧☠🔫

John Avery @LampshadesRus · Jun 16
@achorowitz @TheRickWilson @tahiramirza1 Oy gevalt how they persecute me

LET'S FACE IT! A WORLD WITHOUT AND ...WOULD BE LIKE A WORLD WITHOUT AND

Bethany Mandel