Faculty at Chicago's DePaul University condemn professor's anti-democratic, militarist comments on Middle East

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At DePaul University in Chicago, students held a protest on May 1 against philosophy professor Jason D. Hill over a recent article he wrote for the *Federalist*, "The Moral Case for Israel Annexing the West Bank—and Beyond." The same day, DePaul faculty voted on a resolution condemning the anti-democratic and violently militaristic content of Hill's article.

Hill is the author of *Civil Disobedience and the Politics of Identity*: *When We Should Not Get Along*, *Beyond Blood Identities: Posthumanity in the Twenty-First Century* and *We Have Overcome: An Immigrant's Letter to the American People*, and makes regular appearances on right-wing media programs including Fox News.

In the *Federalist* piece, Hill claims that Israel is morally justified in annexing the West Bank in its entirety, and that the Palestinians, as culturally inferior people, should be stripped of their political rights. He goes on to assert the US should support Israel in carrying out massive military violence.

In response to these statements, DePaul students called for the university to formally censure Hill, to commit him to racial sensitivity training and to issue "an immediate public apology addressing Arab, Palestinian, Muslim and other marginalized students who should feel safe on campus and able to freely register for classes."

A student petition circulated last month also objected to Hill's criticism of the Trump administration for not extending the travel ban that targets majority Muslim countries, to include Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In his recent essay, Hill argues that Israel was far too kind to the Palestinians in the Six-Day War of 1967, saying it was a mistake not to organize mass deportations of Arabs to Jordan from the territory Israel sought to control.

At its May 1 meeting, the DePaul Faculty Council voted 21–10 to support a resolution that condemned Hill's article. The resolution reproached Hill for not attending to historical and contemporary facts about Israeli-Palestinian relations, promoting racism and rejecting the dignity of other religions and cultures, as contrary to the DePaul mission. The resolution that passed was a modified version of an earlier and more strongly worded document that repudiated Hill's article as an abuse of his academic freedom in "advocat[ing] for war crimes and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."

Faculty Council President Scott Paeth noted this vote was not the formal censure of the professor that students demanded, but rather condemned the content of Hill's statements in the *Federalist* .

Paeth said of the vote, "It's intended to express our support for the principle of academic freedom, generally speaking, and particularly in the case of Jason Hill. On the other hand, it is intended to express our condemnation of the content of what was written in that article."

"We needed to do these two things: say, 'yes he has a right to say this, no we don't agree with it.' And we wanted to express our solidarity with the student perspective recognizing the fact this is a complex issue and that they justifiably felt personally attacked," Paeth said.

Hill promotes a perverse viewpoint he terms "moral cosmopolitanism," which stakes out a position against anyone adopting a national, cultural, racial, ethnic or other traditional group identity in favor of a conception of individual identity based on right-wing ideologue Ayn Rand's rancid, anti-social and anti-communist outlook.

Hill wrote in the *Federalist*:

"Not all cultures are indeed equal. Some are abysmally

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inferior and regressive based on their comprehensive philosophy and fundamental principles—or lack thereof—that guide or fail to protect the inalienable rights of their citizens.

"Given the voting patterns of Palestinians—towards Islamicism and terrorist organizations for the most part—that openly advocate and work for Israeli and Jewish destruction and annihilation, a strong argument can and ought to be made to strip Palestinians of their right to vote—period."

The US, he went on, must supply "Israel even more military capabilities," and fund "Israel's military defense in any manner Israel deems necessary for its survival and unrivaled military status in the Middle East...

"Should a regional conflict between Israel and her Arab neighbors emerge, Israel will need to demonstrate extraordinary, excessive, and unprecedented military might in a manner that can act as a deterrent and, if necessary, to irrevocably destroy her offensive enemies."

In an article last year published in the *Hill*, he took aim at liberal immigration policies and rejected the rule of law governing immigration. Hill asserted the American intelligence community should be the ultimate authority controlling who may enter the US: "The idea of open borders presupposes that immigration is a human right or constitutional mandate, but actually it is a privilege granted by a host country. That privilege, when dispensed, is based on several criteria that ought to be left to the discretion of our national intelligence community."

Hill has also shared social media posts from virulently anti-Muslim figures, including the far-right conspiracy theorist Laura Loomer. Loomer has since been banned from Twitter for hate speech.

Despite the majority support for a resolution condemning Hill's article, the DePaul University administration has a record of pushing left-wing critics of Israeli policy out of its faculty.

Norman Finkelstein, an author and prominent critic of Zionism and Israeli policy, resigned from DePaul University in the fall of 2007, after he was denied tenure despite majority faculty support for him. He subsequently had his final classes canceled and was locked out of his office.

His resignation came after an extensive campaign of vilification in which the professor and author was portrayed as anti-Semitic and unprofessional. Finkelstein is a respected scholar and author of several books, including *The Holocaust Industry* and *Beyond Chutzpah*, examinations of the exploitation of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism to advance interests that have nothing to do with the victims of the Nazi genocide or the social equality of Jews.

Other Illinois universities have been active in attempting to suppress anti-war and anti-Zionist views among faculty. In the summer of 2014, Steven Salaita, newly hired at the University of Illinois–Champaign Urbana, had his offer of a tenured position as a scholar of Native American history rescinded because of his social media statements sharply critical of Israel's brutal war against the Palestinians.

To try to force colleges and universities to accept extreme right political propaganda on campus, President Donald Trump has signed an executive order declaring access to federal grant funds will depend on a school's "support of free speech," by which the Trump administration means the views of the far right.

Within class society, every restriction of democratic rights ultimately leads to attacks on the working class and its rights. As the Julian Assange case demonstrates, the attack on free speech today centrally involves the attempt by the ruling elites internationally to suppress opposition to social inequality, poverty and war. The right to free speech must be defended in schools and workplaces as the democratic right to oppose the status quo.

Hill's bellicose, anti-democratic and openly racist statements are a open appeal to the far right to intensify its attacks on the working class, not only in the Middle East but around the world.

Students and faculty are right to oppose Hill's politics, but the serious danger posed by ever more open advocacy of far-right politics must be met with an equally serious, political and theoretically guided response.

Students at DePaul, in Chicago and around the world should join and build the IYSSE, the youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI, in order to wage a political and ideological struggle against far-right reaction and war—which are the product of capitalism. This struggle unites workers and youth across borders in the fight for socialism.

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