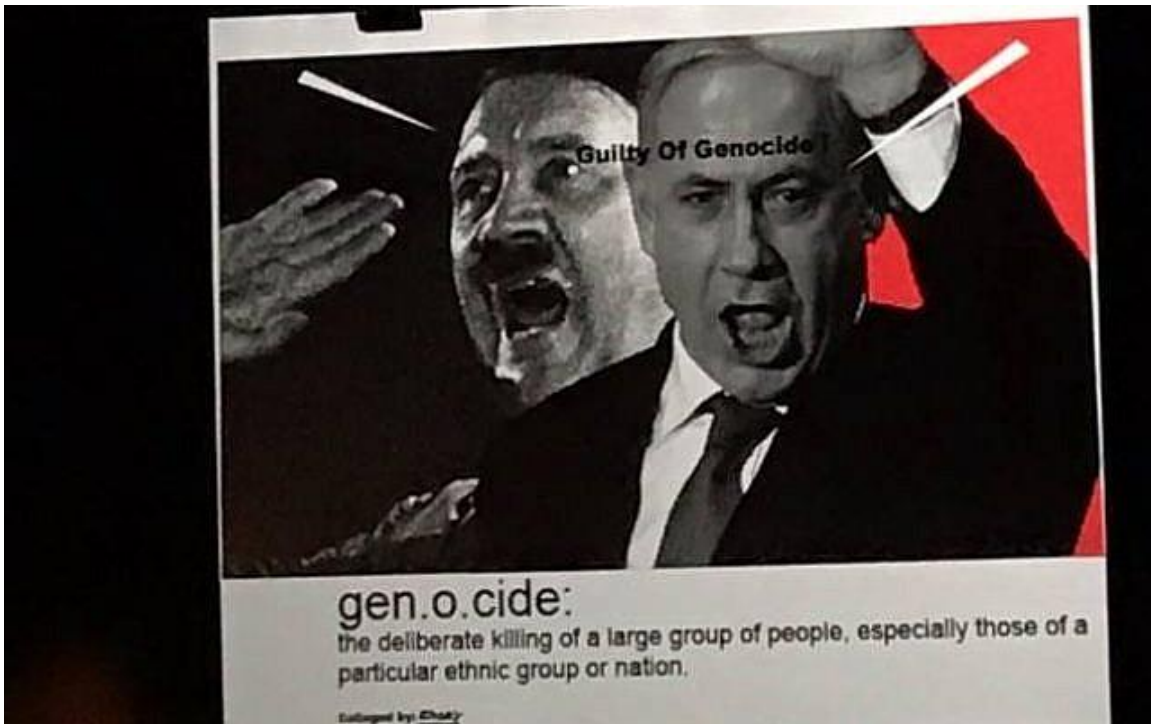
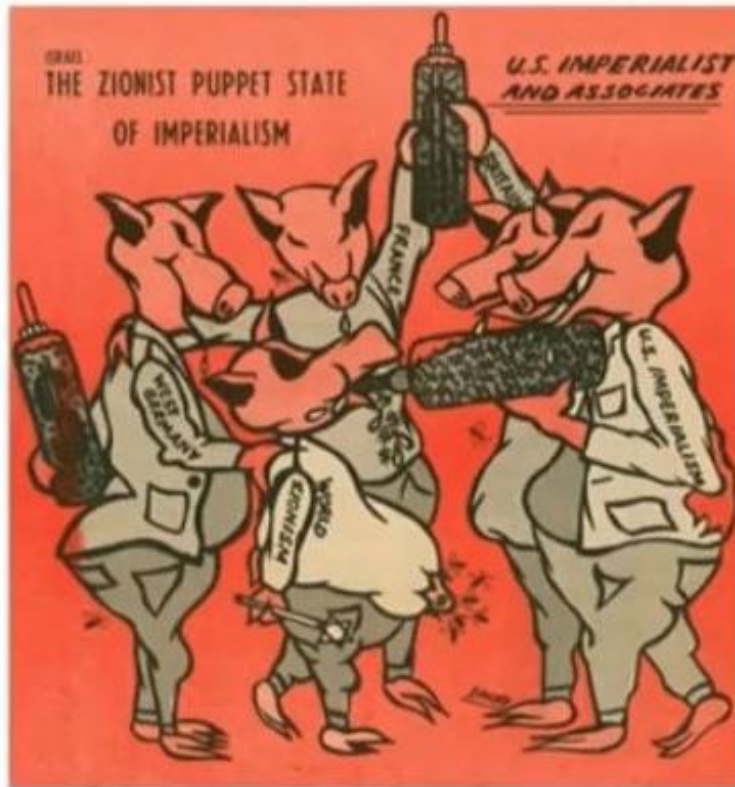


On October 4, 2018, I experienced an incident of anti-Semitism in a required class for all art students at the University of Michigan. As a requirement to graduate from University of Michigan's art school, all students must attend the Penny W. Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series, every Thursday night for 8 semesters to pass the course and receive credit. The series takes place at the Michigan Theatre and hosts guest speakers on a variety of topics to give the students a broad perspective of disciplines art majors can pursue. The speaker that evening was Emory Douglas and his topic was about designing social justice and concentrated on his work with the Black Panther party. He brought anti-Semitism into his lecture by comparing the Prime Minister of Israel to Adolf Hitler and writing "Guilty of Genocide" across the two men's foreheads.



In addition to this image, he also projected an image of pigs drinking from money water bottles with the front pig holding a Jewish conspiracy wand. This image read "The Zionist Puppet State of Imperialism". These images, associating Jews with money and power, come straight from the books of Hitler and Goebbels.



I felt threatened as one of the few Jewish students in the room filled with 1200 students who had no background to understand how marginalizing these images were to me. When I brought attention to this issue, the University spokesman Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs Rick Fitzgerald defended the lecture as provocative art. Fitzgerald said “Douglas covered a wide array of subject matter within the overarching context of his work, which looks at the oppression of people across the globe by governmental powers,” and added that his presentation included a video and nearly 200 slides with images of his work. When I met with University of Michigan President Mark Schlissel, he told me to be more tolerant of images that I found offensive. He rationalized that the point of his art was to disturb viewers and he had successfully accomplished his goal.

I led a group of students to meet with the Penny Stamps School of Art and Design Dean Gunalan Nadarajan. We showed the Dean the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism example 10 which states that “Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of Nazis” constitutes anti-Semitism. Dean Nadarajan admitted to me that he had not previously been aware of this definition of anti-Semitism and that it would be helpful to have a definition to avoid this from happening in the future. We asked that the University consider adopting this definition into the University’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative. Unfortunately, Dean Nadarajan never followed up

with us and instead deferred to the University President. President Schlissel would not admit that it was in fact anti-Semitism, and rather argued that it could be debated whether it was or was not. If the IHRA definition were included in staff training and University policy, both would know immediately that this lecture by Emory Douglas was in fact anti-Semitic. The University refused to adopt any sort of definition, claiming that it would be unfair to represent the Jewish community over other communities. When I brought up the idea to have an initiative that included a definition for all the “isms”, I was met with disapproval.

I see anti-Semitism creeping into college classrooms time and time again. Jewish students are beginning to feel vulnerable and hesitant to speak up without the protection they need from their Universities to recognize this issue.