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The Youngest Gen Z Democrat Running for Congress Loves Israel and He's Not Jewish

By Thomas Witkop

Israel is winning the war against Hamas, but losing the war of ideas. This war of ideas is fought from the echo chambers of TikTok to the halls of the Ivy Leagues, and the victor could decide the fate of Israel. It's a conflict defined by a generational divide that can be summed up by a finding from a recent Harvard-Harris poll: 51% of Americans aged 18-24 favor a one state solution in which Israel would be "ended and given to Hamas and the Palestinians."

I was utterly appalled upon hearing this, but not surprised. As a 25 year old, I'm keenly aware how my generation has evolved on the topic of Israel. I've seen the rampant circulation of propaganda through social media. I understand the atmosphere on college campuses that produces throngs of protesters chanting 'From the river to the sea.'

These things scare me, but what's truly terrifying is what will happen when my generation becomes leaders. We haven't felt the downstream effects of this generational divide because members of Gen-Z are not yet leaders. What if the attitudes of my generation don't change? What if, in 30 years, 51% of Congress favors a one-state solution in which Israel will be ended and given to Hamas?

Above all, we need young leaders who will help reshape Gen Z's opinions on Israel. These opinions are freshly formed and open to change, but we must act now. My name is Thomas Witkop and I am the youngest Congressional nominee in the country. I'm a member of Gen-Z, and I know I must use my voice to ensure my generation upholds our beautiful friendship with Israel.

Congressman Ritchie Torres has started to reach out to young people about this critical issue and he is inspiring to me, but we need more people like him. I am using my campaign to help open the minds of young progressives who've been brainwashed by antisemitism.

When elected, I will support legislation that addresses the root causes of antisemitism among young people. Social media is the worst offender. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are built for virality, such that nuance is lost in favor of the sensational. The algorithms favor content showing the war in Gaza because the shock-value drives engagement. These posts are often captioned with propaganda and spread by Hamas and Iran. Now, imagine a young person with no nuanced understanding of Israel and Palestine, who consumes this propaganda daily. It is no wonder that young people are being radicalized en masse. These platforms must be better regulated to prevent the mass weaponization of terrorist propaganda.

Next, I believe we must address the shocking rise of antisemitism on college campuses. These campuses are where the leaders of future generations are educated, yet many have been overrun by antisemitism. My policy advisor is a Jewish student at a prestigious university who told me how he saw his classmates march through campus while chanting to 'globalize the intifada'. He expressed a deep sense of sadness and betrayal for being made to feel unsafe for the simple fact of being Jewish.

College administrators think it's intelligent and sensitive to say what qualifies as hate speech "depends on the context," but there is no context that justifies calling for the genocide of Jews. That's why I'm a strong supporter of the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which mandates the Department of Education use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. This definition classifies calling for the destruction of the Jewish state as antisemitism.

However, this act is not enough by itself, so I believe it's time to take a deeper look at the state of higher education. Why are students so prone to groupthink and propaganda? It is evident that many college students today lack basic critical thinking skills. Critical thinking is a balanced and thoughtful approach that promotes freedom of thought and a diversity of viewpoints. It's an antidote to groupthink and a necessary skill in developing nuanced perspectives on topics such as the Israel-Hamas war. *It does not result in antisemitism or any other form of bigotry.* It's clear that we must reassess higher education to ensure that we never again see the rise of antisemitism on college campuses.

On November 5th, I may become the youngest member in Congress, where I will use my platform to show young Americans a path forward that embraces Israel. It's up to us to change the future of the Democratic Party and continue standing by Israel.