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Antisemitism without Quotas at the University of Minnesota in the 1930s and 1940s: Anticommunist Politics, the Surveillance of Jewish Students, and American Antisemitism

Riv-Ellen Prell¹

In May 1941, Foster M. Coffin, Director of Cornell University's Student Union, wrote to G. R. Higgins, his counterpart at the University of Minnesota, on a matter he asked to be kept "just between us": the "big problem" of Jewish boys and girls. He sought advice about managing the use of Cornell's student union by Jewish students in the six weeks of summer session, when the building became what he described as "a Jew picnic." Although the enrollment of "Hebrews" was the same in the summer as over the rest of the school-year—about fifteen percent of the student body—he estimated that "one-hundred percent" of people using the union during the summer were "Jewish boys and girls." They used the union, he wrote, like a "country club" and travelled "in packs as is their curious custom." Coffin could not identify any "specific sin" committed by these students, but complained they "do get in our hair," and worried that they brought "unregistered" friends into the union. At Minnesota, he asked Higgins, "Do you frisk them at the gate" for their credentials?²

1. Research for this paper was conducted, in part, for the 2017 exhibition at the University of Minnesota entitled *A Campus Divided: Progressives, Anticommunists, Racism, and Antisemitism at the University of Minnesota 1930–1942*. Sarah Atwood and I served as co-curators of that exhibition. Some of the research was carried out by assistants under my direction, by Atwood, and subsequently by Patrick Wilz. In 2017, I curated the digital exhibition: *Acampusdivided.umn.edu*. The College of Liberal Arts and the Center for Jewish Studies of the University of Minnesota provided funding for the research. I am grateful to the following colleagues who read earlier versions of this paper: Mara Benjamin, Lila Corwin Berman, Jon Butler, Gary Cohen, Sara Evans, Steven S. Foldes, Eric Goldstein, Amy Kaminsky, Ari Kelman, Elaine Tyler May, Tony Michels, Deborah Dash Moore, Jonathan Pollack, Britt Tevis, and Barbara Welke. I appreciated the comments from colleagues who heard an earlier version of this paper at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 2020.

2. Foster Coffin to G.R. Higgins, 1941, Coffman Memorial Union Files in the possession of Mark Soderstrom (digital copy in the possession of the author). Ironically, Cornell University was considered one of the schools most open to the admission of Jews after the introduction of admission quotas. Marcia Graham Synnott, "Anti-

Higgins responded to Coffin's "cry from the wilderness" about Cornell's Jewish problem with the "deepest sympathy and understanding," though he noted that Minnesota's "problem" with Jewish students occurred during the academic year, not the summer. A new student union that had opened only the year before had helped. "We still have the same Jewish use of the building," Higgins observed, "but fortunately their person is diluted with a tremendous amount of non-Jewish students." "One cannot admit any specific sin that they commit," he noted, but "in general they are objectionable."³ Neither director could identify a single, specific complaint about the Jewish students' *behavior*. Instead, it was their very presence that troubled the directors.

The "problem" posed by Jewish students was that they threatened to take over and intrude upon university spaces that were designated for those imagined to belong there. Jewish students did not belong because they traveled in packs and acted as though they were at a "Jew picnic." They exhibited a sense of entitlement that troubled the administrators. Perhaps most disturbing to these men was not knowing how to detect Jewish students' wrongdoing. In their deceptive sameness to other students, Jews might even bring more like themselves, and take over a student union.⁴

The University of Minnesota's discrimination against Jews demonstrates the ways in which racism and antisemitism reinforced one another. Exclusion from student unions, sororities, student government, and teaching opportunities were all part of the system that marginalized and harmed students who were deemed different and inferior, even though they were allowed to pursue undergraduate degrees. Moreover, the surveillance of Jewish student activists by anticommunist administrators reveals that there was no simple separation between town and gown, social and economic antisemitism, or national, state, and university politics.

In the same year that Coffin and Higgins bemoaned the burdensome presence of Jews in their student unions, another "cry from the wilderness" was sounded by the soon-to-retire University of Minnesota Dean of Student Affairs Edward E. Nicholson. He directed his cry of outrage

Semitism and American Universities: Did Quotas Follow the Jews?," in *Anti-Semitism in American History*, ed. David A. Gerber (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 240.

3. G.R. Higgins to Foster Coffin, 1941, Coffman Memorial Union Files.

4. On the history of student unions, see, Danielle M. DeSawal and Bruce A. Jacobs, eds., *A 100 Year Perspective on the College Union* (2013), https://education.indiana.edu/students/graduates/program-specific/higher-education-and-student-affairs/docs/2013%20Special%20Edition%20College%20Union%20Book%20_Entire%20Text_With_Cover.pdf.

to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, to whom he sent the name of Esther Leah Medalie, an honors student and the first woman on the editorial board of the *Minnesota Daily*, because she led the anti-fascist American Student Union at the University.⁵ Medalie, a student from Minnesota's Iron Range, was Jewish, a fact lost on no one interested in the politics of leftwing students. Dean Nicholson repeatedly passed names to Hoover of students and faculty he had under surveillance for their political activism. He also sent their names to a close ally, Republican operative and former member of Congress, Ray P. Chase, who developed this information into political propaganda that falsely claimed that the University of Minnesota was a hotbed of communism. Although the activists held a range of views on issues such as entering another war in Europe and support for labor unions, Nicholson smeared them all with the same thick, red brush. The Jewish students were identified as "Jew radicals," or simply "Jewish," by Chase for his files. No other Minnesota student activists were identified by religion or ethnicity.⁶

Jews unsettled the nation for much of the first half of the twentieth century, on and off campus. They were viewed by some as social interlopers, knocking on the doors of institutions that often did not want them. They were severely limited from attending many private colleges and universities, including the most elite ones, and excluded from professional educations, jobs, housing, and memberships in civic and social organizations. They were variously labeled capitalists, communists, and global conspirators by those who attacked them. At the University of Minnesota, Jews were similarly viewed as threats who, beneath the veneer of sameness with Gentile students, carried out subversive activities, not only politically, but by their very existence. Why else exclude them from many parts of campus life? Like Jews, immigrants and their children, Blacks, Latinx, and Asians all provoked the anxieties of many white, native-born, and wealthy men and women.

The University of Minnesota, one of the nation's largest public land-grant universities, imposed no quotas on the admission of Black or Jewish students to undergraduate education.⁷ As higher education

5. FBI Report. Courtesy of Robert Cohen. The document may be accessed at <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/text/fbi-report-on-american-students-union/>

6. Folders "Correspondence and miscellaneous undated," and "Communism and Radicalism," box 38, *Radicalism in the University of Minnesota*, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

7. For a discussion of quotas in higher education against Jewish students, see, Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005); Dan A. Oren, *Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); James Axtell, *The Making of Princeton University: From Woodrow Wilson to the Present*

expanded dramatically from 1900 to the 1930s, it welcomed all qualified students.⁸ University president Lotus D. Coffman was a national advocate for democratizing education. Seeking to make the university more inclusive of students from farm and laboring families who might lack traditional qualifications,⁹ he created a General College that would admit any Minnesota student with a high school diploma and provide unique courses for those who found traditional classes challenging. But despite President Coffman's commitment to "educate for democracy," he avidly embraced discrimination against Jews and Blacks in other spheres of campus life.¹⁰ Outside the narrow world of the classroom, University administrators and leaders aimed to block social interaction among students. They certainly did nothing to address the lack of opportunities that awaited minority students beyond the campus. Jewish students at the University of Minnesota were advised under the sham of vocational guidance, for instance, not to pursue "a dream of teaching" in the public schools or a career in dental hygiene, because no Jew would be hired.¹¹ The opportunities for Black students were far more limited.

The study of racist and antisemitic quotas has provided one important avenue to understand how higher education enforced the closed borders of the nation against those who were not white, Protestant, or native-born. Private colleges, particularly in the Ivy League, became ideological bastions of racial hierarchy, defined not only by who was excluded but by the ideas about eugenics that were taught there.¹²

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 127–139. On antisemitism at a public university, see, Jonathan Z.S. Pollack, "Jewish Problems: Eastern and Western Jewish Identities in Conflict at the University of Wisconsin, 1919–1941," *American Jewish History* 89, no. 2 (2001): 161–80; Jonathan Z.S. Pollack, *Wisconsin, the Home of the Jew: 150 Years of Jewish Life at the University of Wisconsin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2019).

8. Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to WWII* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

9. Harold Weschler, *The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977), 241, 243.

10. Lotus D. Coffman, "The Junior College of the University," in the Minutes of the Board of Admission 1931–1933, 120–122, folder Minutes of Board of Admission 1931–1933, box 4, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives. On Coffman's enforcement of social segregation, see, "Report of the Task Force on Building Names and Institutional History" (2019), 20–35, university-history.dl.umn.edu.

11. J.M. Edmunds, E.D. Hallman, and F.S. Beers, *Manual of Suggestions for the Use of Faculty Counselors*, folder: Minutes, Board of Admission 1931–1933, box 4, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archive; Renee Rappoport Testimony to JCRC on Dental Hygiene, box 16, folder: General Discrimination, Jewish Community Relations Council, Minnesota Historical Society.

12. On the relationship between immigration quotas and university admissions quotas, see, Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half Opened-Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale and Princeton 1900–1970* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 14.

Public universities often admitted students deemed qualified regardless of race or ethnicity, but this democratic experiment in public education hid in plain sight a persistent and demeaning racial hierarchy. University of Minnesota administrators, for example, refused to admit Black students to taxpayer-funded on-campus housing until well into the 1940s; until the early 1950s, the university officially approved boardinghouse owners who denied rooms to Blacks or Jews. Until the 1960s, university administrators also supported barring Blacks and Jews from student activities, including social fraternities and sororities.¹³ Moreover, administrators subjected politically active Jewish students to surveillance, viewing them as dangerous outsiders responsible for infecting other students with subversive ideas.

In contrast to almost all other Big Ten universities, the University of Minnesota was built in the state's major cities—Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The University was part of the life of the cities, and their leaders and citizens looked to it to educate their children, to serve the economy, and to represent the nation's values. Minnesota taxpayers voiced opinions about the institution, as did their elected officials who allocated funds for the University. The politics of these urban centers became an important part of campus life. Student activists participated in both the Republican and Farmer-Labor parties. Minnesota's governors came to speak on campus about political issues. For decades, students and faculty were scrutinized by legislators and citizens for their political beliefs, and even their loyalty to the nation.

The Twin Cities had the state's largest Black and Jewish populations. Many students, including Blacks and Jews, lived at home and commuted to campus. Campus politics and state politics for both Jews and Blacks thus intersected. Discrimination in jobs, occupations, and leisure activities in the larger community was reflected in the life of the campus.

The antisemitic culture on campus mirrored that of the larger political milieu. The University of Minnesota's leaders paid close attention to the presence of Black and Jewish students on campus because these administrators, like others throughout the nation, feared that their numbers might grow too large. They also were concerned about both groups' demands for racial equality, and about Jews' seeming penchant for "un-American" political activism. Some of these anxieties helped to drive the partnership between the university's Dean Nicholson and Republican activist Chase. They linked together Jewish and Black activists,

13. Tim Brady, "A Difference in Tone," *Minnesota Magazine*, January - February 2007, <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/163494>. See also, Marianne R. Sanua, *Going Greek: Jewish College Fraternities in the United States, 1894-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003); Shira Kohn, "Turning German Jews into Jewish Greeks: Philanthropy and Acculturation in the Jewish Greek System's Student Refugee Program, 1936-1940," *American Jewish History* 102, no.4 (2018): 511-36.

the worldwide Communist movement, and Minnesota's Farmer -Labor party, in an antisemitic whisper campaign suggesting Jewish communists "controlled" the governor. This propaganda helped produce a Republican victory in the volatile 1938 Minnesota gubernatorial election.

Close attention to the University of Minnesota in the 1930s offers an opportunity to analyze the ways that antisemitism is inextricably and structurally linked to the national racial hierarchy. As Jonathan Judaken argues in his review of scholarly approaches to the concept of antisemitism, prejudice does not necessarily lead to discrimination, nor are stereotypes of Jews or Judaism necessarily internalized by those who express them. He explains that "discrimination necessitates behavioral, social, or legal means of enforcing certain practices." He quotes Richard Levy's claim that what is new about modern racial antisemitism is that it has been institutionalized through, for example, "political parties, voluntary organizations, and publishing ventures."¹⁴ In the 1930s, economic, political, social, and even religious boundaries were drawn around Jewish students and their families to separate them from others. They had no recourse to laws that entitled them to live in boarding houses or fraternities and sororities. They had no legal rights to jobs in government, to downtown office space, or to civic club membership.¹⁵ There were many means at the ready for administrators and other students to exclude them from on- and off-campus experiences enjoyed by others. Indeed, the "Iron Curtain" that journalist Carey McWilliams argued Minneapolis business leaders erected to deny Jews economic opportunities is an example of the social and behavioral means by which antisemitism was institutionalized. The threats and attacks from the pro-Nazi and Christian nationalist groups who were a part of political life in the area were other examples.

This analysis of antisemitism at the University of Minnesota in the 1930s is an intervention into renewed scholarly debates concerning whether antisemitism has been a constant in American history, and whether America is "exceptional" for its lack of a legally sanctioned antisemitism.¹⁶ While Judaken focuses on the *mechanisms* that launched

14. Jonathan Judaken, "Introduction: Rethinking Anti-Semitism," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (2018): 1128, 1133. For an argument that in the late nineteenth century many Americans held dissonant about Jews, see, John Higham, "Ideological Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age," in *Send These to Me*, Revised Edition, ed. John Higham (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984), 101.

15. Despite state laws banning discrimination, restrictive covenants in housing flourished for the first half of the twentieth century. See, "Report of the Task Force on Building Names and Institutional History," 2-13.

16. Tony Michels, "Is America Different?: A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (2010): 212; David Koffman, Hasia Diner, Eric Goldstein, Jonathan Sarna, Beth Wenger, "Roundtable on Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 19, no. 3 (2020): 473-505; Britt Tevis, "'Jews Not Admitted': Anti-Semitism,

modern antisemitism, this case study reveals how political structures and social norms created the day-to-day *practices* that excluded Jews from full participation in society. In turn, those practices reinforced the social norms on which discrimination against Jews depended. This study of higher education, which bound together town and gown, stereotypes and political surveillance, and enforced norms of exclusion on- and off-campus, examines the practices and mechanisms of antisemitism. It suggests that antisemitism was harmful in the United States, and particularly in the Upper Midwest, and significantly shaped the lives of American Jews. That specificity, both temporal and geographic, is critical to understanding structural inequality built on an interlocking system of discrimination directed at those viewed as racial minorities

INTERWAR JEWISH LIFE IN THE TWIN CITIES AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Minneapolis was often cited as a “notoriously antisemitic city,” in part because it differed dramatically from St. Paul, its sister city across the Mississippi River. Minneapolis was the more Protestant of the cities and its affluent business class was descended from northeastern men and women who moved to Minneapolis after the Civil War to seek economic opportunities in railroads, flour milling, and lumber.¹⁷ Other citizens were more likely to be descendants of German and Scandinavian immigrants. St. Paul was far more economically and ethnically diverse, and more Catholic than Protestant. Jews of German descent first moved to St. Paul. Eastern European Jews arrived in Minneapolis beginning in the 1880s and joined a smaller, established group of Jews of German descent there. In 1927, approximately 25,000 Jews lived in the Twin Cities, about 3.7 percent of their combined population.¹⁸

By the end of World War I, public and private employment, housing, civic, political, and social life were all rigidly stacked against Jewish participation, despite a 1919 law that banned religious discrimination

Civil Rights, and Public Accommodation Laws, *Journal of American History* 107, no. 4 (2021): 847–70. forthcoming in the *Journal of American History*, typescript, 1, 14–17. On social and economic limitations on even “emancipated” American Jews in the 1930s, see also, David Sorkin, “Is American Jewry Exceptional? Comparing Jewish Emancipation in Europe and America,” *American Jewish History* 95, no. 3 (2010): 175–200.

17. Laura Weber, “Gentiles Preferred: Minneapolis Jews and Employment,” *Minnesota History* 52, no. 5 (1991): 167–82; Michael Gerald Rapp, “An Historical Overview of Anti-Semitism in Minnesota, 1920–1960: With Particular Emphasis on Minneapolis and St. Paul” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1977), 41–3; Hyman Berman and Linda Mack Schloff, *Jews in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002).

18. *American Jewish Yearbook* 29 (1927–1928), 244–45, accessed, July 28, 2020, http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1927_1928_7_Statistics.pdf.

in housing.¹⁹ When Jews opened offices as lawyers in the 1920s, for example, quotas were placed on the number of downtown offices that were available to them to rent. Jewish realtors could not join the city's organization of realtors.²⁰ Carey McWilliams argued in 1946 that an "iron curtain separated Jews from Non-Jews in Minneapolis." He noted that Jewish men could not join Minneapolis civic groups, even when they were welcomed to St. Paul chapters of the same organizations.²¹ Commentators on Jewish life in Minneapolis particularly noted that Jews could not join the Automobile Club because membership provided access to a private club.²² The small group that controlled Minneapolis's powerful industries drew an exclusive circle that was entirely closed to Jews, whether Eastern European immigrants or more affluent professionals.²³ In Minneapolis, Jews had no choice but to work around the limits set by that elite, largely in an economic sector of independent businesses and limited professional opportunities. They developed what was essentially a parallel life to white Christians.²⁴ Like American Jews elsewhere in the 1930s, they began to build defense organizations to combat the increasingly virulent attacks on them, and the region's ever-growing popularity of Christian nationalist and pro-Nazi organizations.

Jews attended and graduated from the University of Minnesota, founded as a territorial university in 1851, and as a land grant institution under the 1862 Morrill Act, before the turn of the twentieth century.²⁵

19. Kirsten Delegard and Penny Petersen, "Notes from the Archives: 'The Manly Art of Self-Defense': Emanuel Cohen and the Battle against Anti-Semitism in Minneapolis," <https://www.mappingprejudice.org/stories/emanuel-cohen-nfa/index.html>.

20. Weber, "Gentiles Preferred," 170.

21. Carey McWilliams, "Minneapolis: The Curious Twin," *Common Ground*, Autumn 1946, 61, accessed March 7, 2020, <https://www.unz.com/print/CommonGround-1946q3>. See also, Charles I. Cooper, "The Jews of Minneapolis and Their Christian Neighbors," *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (1946): 31–18. For a critique of McWilliams that fails to account for the power of these elites, see, Higham, *Send These to Me*, 143–4. See also Judith Kramer and Seymour Leventman, *Children of the Gilded Ghetto: A Candid Closeup of Three Generations of American Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

22. Berman and Schloff, *Jews in Minnesota*, 48.

23. Kramer and Leventman, *Children of the Gilded Ghetto*.

24. Racism against Blacks was more extreme and violent than antisemitism, despite the passage of civil rights bills in 1885 and thereafter. William Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865–1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xiii.

25. For a timeline of the university's history, see University of Minnesota, "Land Grant History," accessed December 1, 2019, <http://landgrant150.umn.edu/background.html>. By the 1930s, students were admitted based on high school graduation courses and class ranking, or by achievement testing. They applied to specific colleges within the University of Minnesota, such as Engineering or Liberal Arts and Science. Lotus D.

Their numbers grew, however, in step with European Jews' immigration to Minnesota. The University estimated that by the end of the 1920s, 500 Jewish students were enrolled in its undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. Their numbers continued to increase.

From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, Jewish students became part of campus life. They formed their own organizations, principally chapters of the Menorah Society and the women's literary society, Scroll and Key, which were created because Jews were excluded from similar student groups. Male Jewish students had no choice but to join a parallel system of pre-professional clubs, since Jews were not admitted to clubs that catered to pre-law, medicine, pharmacy, and other such students. All national social fraternities and sororities excluded Jews, so Jews formed their own chapters at the University of Minnesota. Jewish students reported antisemitism in dormitories, student government, and other parts of campus life in the 1930s.²⁶ However, they also participated in some campus-wide student activities, such as literary and humor magazines, as well as athletics.²⁷

Antisemitism was as much a feature of campus life as it was more broadly in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and one that became more obvious following World War I. Moses Barron, a member of the Medical School faculty and a leader of the Jewish community, noted a shift in attitudes toward Jews on the campus. He explained that there were newly imposed limits on how many "Jewish boys" were admitted to medical school. Similarly, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, affiliated with the University in this era, began to link its acceptance of Jewish medical residents to the percentage of the state's population that was Jewish. Barron seemed puzzled by the transformations, which he experienced as sudden.²⁸

Jewish women students encountered difficulties in securing housing at the University of Minnesota. Apparently, University of Minnesota housing authorities viewed a boarding house as less desirable if "too many" Jewish young women were residents. Householders worried that

Coffman, "The Junior College of the University," in the Minutes of the Board of Admission 1931-1933, 120-2, folder: "Minutes of Board of Admission 1931-1933," box 4, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives.

26. See, Dean Edward Nicholson to Benjamin R. Naumoff, January 27, 1933, folder: "Jewish holidays," box 8, Dean of Student Affairs, University of Minnesota Archives. Account of Malcolm Willey, meeting with Jewish students, Folder "Dormitory, Compulsory Residence, May 17-December 28, 1934," box 12, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives; Andrew Toner, email to author, July 31, 2019.

27. Brady, "A Difference in Tone," 40-1, <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/163494>.

28. Brady, "A difference in Tone," 41. For a discussion of World War I's effect on social antisemitism, see Higham, *Send These to Me*, 198.

no non-Jewish students would be willing to live with Jewish students.²⁹ Until well into the 1950s, University-approved boarding houses were allowed to bar “Negro” and Jewish students, and in the 1940s, Nisei, foreign, and disabled students could also be barred. Administrators consistently argued that integrating housing would damage the university economically by alienating white and non-Jewish students.³⁰

Much like their parents, Jewish students learned to live within a world of diminishing opportunity in 1920s and ’30s Minnesota. Some responded by protesting economic and social inequality, if not antisemitism.³¹ That activism would shape many of their lives at the University of Minnesota.

THE ERA OF STUDENT ACTIVISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA: A NEW FOCUS ON BLACK AND JEWISH STUDENTS

In the 1930s, American campuses, including the University of Minnesota, became centers of political resistance to rightwing politics and economic inequality. Robert Cohen has demonstrated that the student movement of that period has been too long overlooked as a significant political force. It constituted a diverse coalition that included communists, socialists, liberals, pacifists, and Trotskyists. These groups, to varying degrees, opposed war, identified with the working class, fought for racial and ethnic equality, included women and minorities as activists and leaders, supported students’ rights, and sought progressive social change.³²

Jews played an important role in the student movement, which began in New York City. A significant number of those Jewish students grew up in the left wing of the immigrant community and attended public universities. As Cohen notes, this movement gave young Jews unprecedented access to organizations that involved both Jews and non-Jews, and, unlike other student organizations, provided them opportunities for national leadership. Indeed, many colleges and university administrators blamed Jewish students for fomenting student activism on their campuses,

29. J. J. Bohlander to R. M. West, folder: “Jews 1923–1939,” box 16, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives.

30. “Restrictive Preference by Area,” folder: “History of Student Housing,” box 7, Dean of Student Affairs, University of Minnesota Archives; folder: “History student Housing bureau, 1954,” box 7, Dean of Student Affairs, University of Minnesota Archives.

31. On Jewish employment, see Laura Weber, “*Gentiles Preferred*,” 167–182; Rapp, *Historical Overview*, 41–3.

32. Robert Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929–1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

despite the relatively small number of Jews that actually attended some of these schools.³³ At the University of Minnesota, Jewish undergraduates played significant roles in student activism despite constituting a tiny percentage of the student body.

Student activism at the University of Minnesota was at its most dynamic from 1934 to 1941, the national heyday of student radicalism in the interwar years. Activists engaged in intense debate about the challenges facing the nation and their own lives—including the Depression, labor struggles, the rise of fascism, war, and racial inequality. They keenly felt the loss of young lives during World War I and feared their generation would face the possibility of another twenty million deaths. University of Minnesota students created one of the most robust campus antiwar campaigns in the country, including a successful struggle to end mandatory military drills for all male students.³⁴

In the early years of student antiwar activity, a group of young men formed a “fraternity” they called the Jacobins. Their members were at the center of the anti-drill activism, held most editorial positions on the *Minnesota Daily*, had a strong presence in student government, and identified with the state’s powerful and progressive Farmer-Labor Party. What set the Jacobins apart was not only their leadership and exceptional academic achievement, but that they were the only on-campus group that included both Jews and non-Jews. They challenged campus norms, not simply because they had no “house” as did other fraternities, but also because they rejected the authority of University administrators and flouted social norms. They sought to inspire other students to challenge the deans and president of the University.³⁵ In time, as at other campuses, student concerns came to include their own rights as students, particularly regarding political activism.

On the other side, University of Minnesota President Lotus Coffman and Dean of Student Affairs Edward Nicholson, as well as their staff, worked assiduously to contain and suppress that activism through a variety of methods. The school’s leadership feared that accusations that faculty and students were political extremists would harm the university’s status as a public university. The senior administrators, who were all white Midwestern Protestants, cultivated a public image of reason and

33. Cohen, *When the Old Left Was Young*, 267–8.

34. See, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/essay/student-movements-on-campus/>. For a similar situation at Michigan State University, see, Kirsten Fermaglich, “The Social Problems Club Riot of 1935: A Window into Antiradicalism and Antisemitism at Michigan State College,” *Michigan Historical Review* 30, no.1 (2004): 95–115.

35. Terry Fisher, “Revolutionists for Peace,” *The Ivory Tower*, November 16, 1959, 5, 10.

moderation. But their correspondence often reveals the opposite. Dean Nicholson was driven by near obsession with what he termed “law and order,” which he saw as contradictory to virtually any form of protest or challenge to authority, whether by union members or student activists, on or off campus. Dean Nicholson also aggressively sought to limit the influence of the Farmer-Labor Party, particularly in the legislature that controlled the appointment of the regents who oversaw the University.³⁶

Beginning in 1936, Dean Nicholson, with the support of the president, the Board of Regents, and the University Senate Committee on Student Affairs, which Nicholson led, curtailed open student political debate. He took control over what information or mail could be placed in student mailboxes and on campus bulletin boards, and even had first-class mail and other forms of communication either thrown away or returned to senders if he believed they were “political.”³⁷ Ultimately, students concluded that it was Edward Nicholson alone who would determine what was “propaganda” and what were legitimate ideas for debate. He insisted that all outside speakers be approved by him or President Coffman, although that proved difficult to enforce.³⁸

The staff of the *Minnesota Daily*, the largest student newspaper in the nation, fought his attempts at censorship and control over staffing. The dean censored editorials advocating antiwar activism and demanding student representation on university committees. As head of the Student Publication Board, Nicholson also exerted considerable influence, along with other administrators, over the choice of the *Minnesota Daily*'s editor.³⁹

As leader of the University Senate Committee on Student Affairs, he determined what leftist organizations would be allowed to form chapters at the University. He grilled students interested in forming chapters of

36. See, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/how-leaders-of-the-university-of-minnesota-used-and-abused-power/>.

37. “Poster Restriction Rules Announced by Senate Group,” *Minnesota Daily*, January 30, 1936, 1,6; “The Senate Committee Solves the Propaganda Problem,” *Minnesota Daily*, January 31, 1936, 2; Edward Nicholson to J.C. Poucher, folder: “Post Office Boxes, 1918–1944,” box 12, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives.

38. “The Senate Committee,” 2; Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (1946; reissue, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 65–7. Nicholson sought to centralize control over visiting campus speakers as early as 1932. Edward Nicholson to Lotus Coffman, November 18, 1933, folder: “President, 1925–1935,” box 12, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives.

39. Eric Sevareid recounts being denied the editorship of the *Minnesota Daily* through the machinations of President Coffman, Dean Nicholson and others. Sevareid, *Not So Wild*, 65–7.

the National Student League, Social Problems Club, Minnesota Student Alliance, and several others about their political beliefs and those of their friends.⁴⁰ Nicholson's own memos, written first for his personal files and then sent to members of the Board of Regents and others, consistently focused on the organizations to be excluded from campus because of their political orientation. Nicholson was unshakable in his belief that all campus activism was incited by "outsiders," which was far from the truth. He claimed, without evidence, that even the Black student struggle for "equal privileges in the dormitories" was initiated by white members of leftwing organizations.⁴¹

Between 1931 and 1938, student activists also mobilized against the University's decision to segregate student housing. During the very years he advocated for broadening access to education as the best means to achieve democracy, President Coffman instituted a policy of segregated housing on campus with the support of the Board of Regents. Despite its ironclad enforcement by Coffman, Nicholson, Dean of Women Anne Blitz, and Comptroller William Middlebrook, the University insisted that residential segregation was not a "policy" so that it could avoid making a public statement of support for discrimination. In 1935, the University's student government convened the All University Council on Negro Discrimination to address segregated housing. Its report, authored by Black student Arnold Walker and Jewish students Howard Kahn and Robert Loevinger, called on President Coffman to allow one "Negro student" to live in the men's dormitory, Pioneer Hall.⁴² President Coffman and the Board of Regents rejected the request.⁴³

40. Abstracts of Senate Committee on Student Affairs meetings, University of Minnesota 1935-1936, folder: "October 1-24, 1936," box 42, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

41. Edward Nicholson to Fred P. Snyder, "Radical Organizations," June 3, 1940, older "Correspondence, Misc. 1913-1941," box 4, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives. Nicholson wrote his first memo on "Radical Organizations" in 1935: folder "Political and Social Action Groups, 1935," box 12, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives. For students' memories of their activism, see, Seva-reid, *Not So Wild*, 59-69; Rosalind Matusaw Belmont interview, Twentieth Century Radicalism in Minnesota Oral History Project, 1972-1989, Minnesota Historical Society; Fisher, "Revolutionists," 5, 10.

42. "Memorandum to Minnesota Local 44 of American Federation of Teachers," 1937, folder 6, "1937," box 1, Benjamin Lippincott Papers University of Minnesota Archives.

43. Lotus Coffman to All University Council on Integrated Housing c/o Theodore Christianson, August 1, 1935, folder 16, box 1, Dean of Women, University of Minnesota Archives.

Student agitation continued. In 1937, Black students formed the Negro Student Council.⁴⁴ In a remarkable account for the student literary magazine of what “Negro” students experienced and suffered on the campus, undergraduate Charlotte Crump also wrote about the power of creating an independent organization rather than simply joining the leftwing American Student Union, which had invited them to participate.⁴⁵ The Negro Student Council created the “Interracial Committee” to address inequality. At the invitation of the American Federation of Teachers, Local 4, the Committee provided a report on segregation that outlined every instance of discrimination against Black students in housing. This committee included Jewish students Joseph Toner from the Progressive Party and Diane Glantz from the Student Alliance and Interracial Committee. The committee was headed by Black student Walter Grissom. Martha Wright, who chaired the Negro Student Council, was also a member.⁴⁶ All campus activists challenged the authority of University administrators, but Jewish and Black students were particularly visible because their numbers in the student body were small.

THE POWER OF MONITORING JEWISH AND BLACK STUDENTS

Administrators attacked activism in ways that were sometimes invisible to the activists, including surveillance of students and special scrutiny of Jewish and Black students as “problems” to be solved. Attacks on student activism at Minnesota mirrored the continued national efforts to marginalize minority students and women, and to repress dissent. For example, President Coffman monitored enrollments of Black and Jewish students. Coffman received this information from student health and student housing staff. Senior administrators asked Dr. Ruth Boynton, the head of Student Health Services, to provide the number of Jewish and Black students who received freshman physicals over a three-year period, beginning in 1933. Freshman physicals, which were required, were an easy way to track students’ identities, and Dr. Boynton documented the number of incoming Jews and Blacks in absolute terms and as a percentage of the freshman population. She reported that from 1933

44. See, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/essay/segregated-student-housing/>.

45. Charlotte Crump, “This Free North,” *Literary Review*, Winter Quarter, 1937, Folder 16; “Negro,” box 1, Dean of Women, University of Minnesota Archives. See, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/text/this-free-north-in-university-literary-magazine/>.

46. For the report, see, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/text/warren-grissom-report-on-housing/>.

to 1935, freshman enrollment of “Negro” males increased from five to nine, and of “Negro” women from six to eleven. Black freshmen were never more than 0.3 percent of the freshman class. Jewish freshman men’s enrollment increased from 159 to 174. Jewish freshman women’s enrollment increased from 80 to 94. Jewish students hovered between 6.5 and seven percent of the freshman class.⁴⁷

In 1935 and 1936, at a highpoint of antiwar activism and the beginning of Black agitation for equality on the campus, administrators also collected data on Black and Jewish out-of-state students, which Coffman then turned over to the University Senate’s Administrative Committee. In the president’s mind there seems to have been a connection between out-of-state students, especially Jews from New York, and radicalism.⁴⁸ In a memo labeled “racial distribution” he called attention to “the large increase” in out-of-state minority students. Nine Black students from out of state enrolled in 1935, and forty in 1936. Sixty out-of-state Jewish students enrolled in 1935 and 132 in 1936. The memo took special care to note that “approximately 125 of the 136 (Jewish) students hailed from New York.” But if Coffman saw these New York Jewish students as the source of activism, he disregarded the fact that most of the activist leaders were from Minnesota, something he would have known from the dean of student affairs.⁴⁹

“Racial distribution” was on the minds of directors of student unions as well. In 1939, the head of the student union at Minnesota, G.R. Higgins, received a confidential letter from Indiana University’s student union director, J.E. Patrick. The letter included the results of a survey of directors of student unions on “colored and Jewish students in 36 universities from across the United States,” imploring him to keep “confidential the source of the survey.” Not only did these directors track Black and Jewish students, but also provided information about housing, eating facilities, and “social accommodations” for Black students. The University of Minnesota interested them because it was one of only six institutions whose African American enrollment exceeded one percent (Minnesota reached 1.07 percent) of the student body.⁵⁰ Why the student

47. Dr. Ruth Boynton to Mr. West, folder: “Jews 1923–1939,” box 16, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives.

48. Minutes, Out of State Students, Board of Admissions 1935–1936, 1937–1938, box 4, Office of the President, University of Minnesota Archives.

49. “University of Minnesota Senate Report on Out-of-State Students to President Coffman,” folder: “Students, October 26, 1936,” box 40, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

50. Coffman Memorial Union Files, May 1939. It is unclear where Higgins’s information concerning the number of Jewish and Negro students in 1939 came from.

union directors tracked both Jewish and Black students is not apparent. Neither group appeared to be considered “normal” students in campus life. Both groups were treated as “different,” but Black students raised far greater anxieties related to any form of social mixing, which was central to the mission of student unions.

The use of quotas and other means to suppress the numbers of Jewish and Black students at Ivy League colleges is well known.⁵¹ But public universities used similar methods to exclude Jewish students in the 1920s, 1930s, and beyond. Jewish taxpayers were thus expected to underwrite the exclusion of their own children. For example, in the late 1920s, Rutgers University and its women’s college, New Jersey College for Women, added multiple criteria for admission beyond merit explicitly to exclude Jewish students. Administrators of the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin excluded out-of-state students explicitly to control political activism on their campuses in the 1930s and the 1960s. Michigan interviewed all out-of-state applicants and noted their religious backgrounds on the evaluation sheets. In this way, Jewish students were identified and were rejected in far greater proportion than students from other religious groups. The Wisconsin state legislature dramatically lowered the number of students who could be admitted from outside the state to exclude northeastern Jews.⁵²

Efforts at the University of Minnesota to quantify the Black and Jewish presence on campus also reveals administrators’ overlapping anxieties about these two groups. Fearing social mixing between Blacks and whites, the administration kept Black students out of taxpayer-funded housing. They did not bar Jewish students from on-campus living but monitored them for their political activism. Both groups were tracked, in addition, simply because they were minorities and thus presumed to be unwanted outsiders.

The number-keeping of administrators loudly echoed the politics of immigration restriction and containment of those defined as “different” and thus dangerous to the nation. Anxieties about Jewish students—their presence in the student union, their percentage of the student body, and their activism—resonated with many stereotypes of Jews circulating after World War I. They sought entry into institutions of white Christian life,

51. Karabal, *The Chosen*, 23–119.

52. Michael Greenberg and Seymour Zenchelsky, “Private Bias and Public Responsibility: Anti-Semitism at Rutgers in the 1920s and 1930s,” *History of Education Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1993): 295–313, 316–8; Pollack, *Wisconsin, the Home of the Jew*; Andrei S. Markovitz and Kenneth Garner, *The Boundaries of Pluralism: The World of the University of Michigan’s Jewish Students from 1897 to 1945* (Ann Arbor: Maize Books, 2020), 195.

whether they were social sororities and fraternities or student unions. They were too numerous for the campus. They were communists and radicals, subverting the nation. These antisemitic stereotypes prompted the drawing of an ever-widening circle of limitations that constrained Jewish student life, even while they were “welcomed” to study for an undergraduate degree.

REACHING THROUGH AND BEYOND THE CAMPUS TO ATTACK LEFTWING ACTIVISTS AND JEWS

Efforts to control campus activists in the mid- to late 1930s reached well beyond campus. Both anxieties about and support for students spread to the Twin Cities and the entire state. Indeed, Republicans and conservatives expressed great concern about the university and its leftwing students, drawing in part on antisemitism in their fight against progressivism.

The most important bridge between on- and off-campus politics and monitoring of leftists was Dean Edward Nicholson. More than any other figure on the University of Minnesota campus, he embodied the intersection between Minneapolis politics and University political repression. He was aggressively involved in conservative, anti-labor politics that paralleled his on-campus efforts to curb student activism. He eagerly pursued a role in the Citizens Alliance, and its later incarnation as the Allied Industries, an association of Minneapolis employers that was founded in 1903 to suppress labor unions. The organization was one of a complex of groups that were devoted to initiating and supporting public policies that protected business interests. They worked with the largest banks, which denied loans to businesses that were willing to employ unionized workers, and every business that affiliated with the group was required to take a pledge to refuse to cooperate with unions. The Citizens Alliance and Allied Industries had strong allies in law enforcement, the National Guard, the courts, and the Republican Party.⁵³

Dean Nicholson's partner in building bridges between conservative politics on and off campus was Ray P. Chase. Chase was a former state auditor, member of Congress, and unsuccessful candidate for governor. Having lost his seat in the House in 1934, Chase was no longer holding or seeking office at the height of student activism. Instead, in 1936 he opened the Ray P. Chase Institute in Chicago, with offices in Minneapolis and Washington, D.C. Chase called his “non-political” initiative, “Keep America American,” the slogan of the eugenicist, anti-immigration

53. William Millikan, *A Union against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and the Fight against Labor, 1903–1947* (St. Paul: Minneapolis Historical Society, 2001), 30, 42, 58, 210, 211.

American Coalition of Patriotic Civic and Fraternal Societies. Chase's "voluntary committee" was devoted to "safeguarding American ideals" by protecting them from "alien isms and subversive activities," and "misuse of public funds."⁵⁴ He promised to provide "information" at no cost that would help political campaigns, businesses, and institutions, including the University of Minnesota, defeat "enemies."⁵⁵ He relied on conservative funders, whose names he concealed. Chase repeatedly associated Jews with subversion and "alien isms" in his private papers and political propaganda.

In order to "Keep America American," Chase relied on distortion, partial truths, and outright slander. He constantly sought information about government programs, University of Minnesota faculty members and students, and individuals in politics and other walks of life to attempt to discredit men and women whose views he attacked. He corresponded with people of influence and power. By 1938, he also corresponded with some of the region and nation's most notorious Christian nationalists and American Nazis. He consistently requested information from them and made vague promises of what he might offer to them. He was, for example, in contact with William Dudley Pelley of the Silver Shirts, Harry A. Jung, of the American Nazi party, and Reverend Luke Rader, a Nazi sympathizer and rabid antisemite, who introduced Chase to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.⁵⁶

Chase worked closely with Dean Nicholson to realize their shared political agenda. Opponents of the Farmer-Labor Party and unions, they both sought to purge people they considered communists from public life. Their correspondence reveals that they had a long-established political relationship prior to 1936.⁵⁷ The student activists who aligned with

54. Ray P. Chase, Keep America American, ca.1937, folder: "Undated," box 41, Minnesota Historical Society.

55. The Existing Situation, flyer, to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, folder: "Miscellaneous," box 41, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

56. December, 1940, folder: Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers, box 44, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society. On Jung, see, Regina Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States 1919-1943* (Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000), 35. On the Protocols, see, Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2001), 81-4, 108-51; Steven Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

57. Ray Chase to Edward Nicholson, Minnesota Historical Society, folder: "December, 1936," box 40, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

Farmer-Labor were caught in their crosshairs and Jewish students were of particular interest to them.⁵⁸

In the 1930s, Minnesota's political parties consisted of a strongly pro-business, anti-labor, and anti-communist Republican Party; the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, one of the nation's most successful progressive third parties; and a much smaller Democratic Party. The Farmer-Labor Party, which was formed in 1920 by a coalition of farmers emerging from the Non-Partisan League, populists, and organized labor groups from the Twin Cities, enjoyed unprecedented political success for most of the 1930s. The Farmer-Labor Party supported unions, banking reform, unemployment relief, and protection against farm foreclosures. A succession of Farmer-Laborites served as governor from 1931 through 1938.⁵⁹ The tide turned against Farmer-Labor by the end of the 1930s as the nation was climbing out of its economic crisis, and the party lost much of its appeal and power.

Until the rise of the Farmer-Labor Party, Jews had been largely closed out of positions of influence in government and politics. Few Jews even played leadership roles in the labor movement. Jews were, however, part of the administrations of Farmer-Labor governors Floyd Olsen and Elmer Benson. They were also a significant presence in the party itself. For example, Abe Harris, who was Jewish, edited the party's newspaper, the *Leader*. Olsen had strong ties to Jewish friends with whom he had grown up in Minneapolis.⁶⁰

As Jews became more visible in Minnesota politics through their leadership roles in the party and their appointment to positions in government, antisemites attacked them as communists who wielded inordinate power by manipulating the governors. The connections between Farmer-Labor, its Jewish members, and Jewish student activists were fodder for Chase and Nicholson's political campaigns. Indeed, ignoring the national student movement and students' own concerns, Dean Nich-

58. On Dean Nicholson's political activity outside of campus, see, Millikan, *A Union*, 329–30, 452, n.17. See also, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/essay/student-movements-on-campus/>. The website includes Nicholson's correspondence regarding his and Ray Chase's efforts to influence University of Minnesota Board of Regents members.

59. Richard M. Velely, *Radicalism in the States: The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party and the American Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

60. Robert Latz, *Jews in Minnesota Politics* (Minneapolis: Nordin Press, 2007), 156–157; Weber, "Gentiles Preferred," 167–168, 171; Hyman Berman, "Political Antisemitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression," *Jewish Social Studies* 38, nos. 3/4 (1976): 249; "His Glib Yiddish Once Passed Nordic Governor of Minnesota as Avrom Yitzcock Greenberg," JTA, August 6, 1933, <https://www.jta.org/1933/08/06/archive/his-glib-yiddish-once-passed-nordic-governor-of-minnesota-as-avrom-yitzcock-greenberg>.

olson consistently charged that “the very liberal state administration” fostered student activism.⁶¹

It was true that many student activists at the University of Minnesota in the mid-1930s strongly supported the Farmer-Labor Party. They shared with Governor Olsen both a commitment to progressive politics and to keeping the United States out of war, a view that most of those students would repudiate by the end of the decade. These students supported Minneapolis union struggles, including the historic 1934 Teamsters’ strike that paralyzed the city and revealed the strength of organized labor.⁶² Student activists did not confine their concerns to campus matters, but organized around local, national, and global issues.

Nor did university administrators hesitate to politicize the institution’s relationship to its students. As a public university, the University of Minnesota was inevitably caught up in state politics. Members of its Board of Regents were nominated by the governor and elected by the state legislature. Politics in the 1930s therefore crossed any simple boundaries between the campus and the state and cities. Political alliances between the governor and progressive students were important to both. However, it was the largely secret political relationship between Chase and Nicholson that defined the use and abuse of power. They created an antisemitic crusade against Jewish student activists that reverberated in statewide politics. In their hostility toward the Farmer-Labor Party, they sought not only to punish leftist Jewish student activists, but to shape the leadership of the University of Minnesota as well.

POLITICAL SURVEILLANCE IN MINNESOTA

Chase and Nicholson together created a system to spy on students, to keep tabs on faculty members they viewed as “dangerous,” and to use this information against them with no regard for their rights. The resulting information was conveyed to Ray Chase, either directly or through other parties. Both Chase and Nicholson also sent student names and information to the FBI. At least one FBI file lists Edward Nicholson as an important contact even beyond his retirement.⁶³ FBI files on University of Minnesota students in the 1930s contain passages that match campus

61. Edward Nicholson to Fred P. Snyder, June 3, 1940, folder: “Correspondence and misc. 1913–1941,” box 4, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives.

62. Severeid, *Not So Wild*, 57, 61–2; Rosalind Matusaw Belmont Interview.

63. FBI File of Dr. Lester Breslow, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://documents.theblackvault.com/documents/fbifiles/historical/lesterbreslow.pdf>.

surveillance reports.⁶⁴ Information gathering on students took place at the height of the antiwar activism of the mid-1930s, and then near the end of the decade. Only then were students finally allowed to organize a socialist club, among other groups.

The network of spies created by Ray Chase and Edward Nicholson at the University of Minnesota was consistent with both local and national politics of the 1930s. As early as 1919, the Bureau of Investigation spent much of its time investigating radical activities. J. Edgar Hoover built on this legacy when he took over the agency's leadership in 1924. The FBI grew dramatically during the New Deal with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's support, including his secret authorization of Hoover's pursuit of communists beginning in 1936. As Richard Polenberg suggests, the project "dearest to Hoover's heart" was the development of a "master file as comprehensive as he could make it" of leftwing organizations and individuals.⁶⁵

Closer to home, the Citizens Alliance and Allied Industries similarly depended on an extensive system of informers, spies, and infiltrators. The Citizens Alliance created the Special Services in 1929 under the leadership of Lloyd M. MacAloon. He focused his surveillance on "radicals and trade unionists," and the Communist Party. The organization employed "investigators" who infiltrated every labor union in the city, even joining the ranks of union leadership. These spies provided information about union membership, finances, and organizing plans, all invaluable to the anti-union members of the Citizens Alliance. MacAloon also kept copious files on "progressive thinkers": college professors, lawyers, and anyone who might be viewed as "liberal," or who might question business. His files contained basic information and personal histories of individuals and detailed their links to others with similar views.⁶⁶

The Citizens Alliance was not unique as a private and extralegal volunteer network of spies. In both Great Britain and the United States, wealthy businessmen and former spies created extensive systems of surveillance, focusing in the United States on union activism in particular. But the work of these independent networks of spies did not stop with unions. One California group, for example, ultimately recruited spies to

64. FBI File of Robert Loevinger, in author's possession, provided by Robert's son, Rabbi Neal Joseph Loevinger.

65. Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012); Richard Polenberg, *Fighting Faiths: The Abrams Case, the Supreme Court, and Free Speech* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 167.

66. William Millkan, *A Union Against Unions*, 224.

infiltrate student groups, women peace activists, the Young Men's and Women's Christian Association, and many others.⁶⁷

Spying took a different turn when the Minnesota Jewish community became fearful of Christian nationalists and fascist paramilitary groups. In 1936, the community's newly formed defense organization, the Anti-Defamation Council, began "mapping" the Silver Shirts, the most prominent such group in the area. They also used undercover informants, local journalists, and members of the Jewish community to investigate the infrastructure and membership of the Silver Shirts. Others joined a church with an outspoken antisemitic minister. All told, the organization amassed hundreds of names of people who disparaged Jews or were suspected of Nazi sympathies.⁶⁸ The Jewish community tapped volunteer spies for self-protection at a moment of extreme vulnerability. They appear never to have used the information collected.

By contrast, in 1934 the Citizens Alliance formed a Law and Order League, in which Edward Nicholson played a key role. Assisting MacAloon's Special Services unit, the League devoted two-thirds of its budget to intelligence gathering. This surveillance work was focused on the Farmer-Labor Party, "socially minded and progressive movements," and others termed "enemies of society."⁶⁹ The League kept this information ready to be used in character assassination in political campaigns or accusations of disloyalty. Nicholson thus helped create networks of spies on two fronts: at the University of Minnesota and across the state of Minnesota.

STUDENT SURVEILLANCE AND POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM

Ray Chase employed information about students and faculty to advance his and Nicholson's efforts to defeat liberal politicians, to provide police agencies with names of "enemies," and to advance the cause of right-wing politics by singling out Jewish activists. Chase used the information he amassed to impugn the "Americanism" of Farmer-Labor leaders, party members, and student radicals. He often linked the Jewishness of students to their politics, which is why he requested, for instance, further

67. Kathryn Olmsted, "British and American Anticommunism between the Word Wars," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 1 (2018): 90, 99.

68. Sarah Atwood, "'This Is Not Complete': Minnesota's Jewish Resistance to the Silver Legion of America, 1936-1940," *Minnesota History* 66, no. 4 (2018-2019): 143-4. On similar activity in Los Angeles, see, Steven J. Ross, *Hitler in Los Angeles: How Jews Foiled Nazi Plots against Hollywood and Los Angeles* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishers, 2017), 95.

69. Millikan, *Union against Unions*, 224, 328.

information on the “nationalities” of those attending a 1939 Marxist Club meeting. Chase sought information about those who were “not American,” a phrase commonly understood then to describe Jews and immigrants and their children.⁷⁰

All of the University employees collecting information about leftwing students, with one exception, were associated with Nicholson in his capacity as dean of student affairs. Nicholson himself sent faculty and student names directly to Chase in 1941. In an attached letter, Nicholson suggested that Chase add the names to “his list.”⁷¹ Only Nicholson seems to have provided names of faculty to Chase, though the same faculty members were also accused of disloyalty by members of the state legislature.⁷²

Indeed, some documents in Chase’s files are nearly identical to others in Nicholson’s dean of student affairs’ records. Chase, for example, had copies of unsigned histories of radicalism at the University of Minnesota that were nearly identical to similar documents in Dean Nicholson’s files.⁷³ An anonymous 1935 surveillance report in Chase’s papers about a meeting of the Social Problems Club, a left-wing student organization, is incorporated into Nicholson’s memo on “Radical Organizations at the University of Minnesota.” The only difference is that the version sent to Chase includes a “call for caution, so as not to compromise our informant.”⁷⁴ Nicholson had close ties to what an FBI agent referred to as “ROTC men,” and the only person other than Nicholson who communicated directly with Chase was Lieutenant Colonel Adam A. Potts, head of ROTC on campus, who also recruited students to spy on political clubs.⁷⁵

Chase’s files also included abstracts of meetings of the University Senate Committee on Student Affairs that were conducted by Dean Nicholson concerning students who sought permission to organize chapters of

70. Ray Chase to Lieutenant Colonel A.E. Potts, May 3, 1939, folder: “March-June, 1939,” box 43, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

71. Edward Nicholson to Ray P. Chase, April 9, 1941, folder: “January-May 1941,” box 44, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

72. “Senator Claims Documentary Proof of Communist Activity among Members of U Faculty,” *Minnesota Daily*, March 12, 1937, 1, 4, <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/text/senator-claims-documentary-proof-of-communist-activity-among-members-of-u-faculty/>.

73. Radicalism in the University, folders: “Correspondence and miscellaneous undated”; “Communism and Radicalism,” box 38, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

74. Confidential Report on Social Problems Club, folder: “Correspondence and Miscellaneous, January, 1936,” box 40, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

75. FBI File of Lester Breslow.

student groups, as well as lists of speakers brought to campus by the Student Forum, overseen by Dean Nicholson. Chase used them to allege communist infiltration and misuse of state funds at the University.⁷⁶ The two men also exchanged at least ten letters. Chase regularly requested information, such as the amount of the honorarium paid to poet Langston Hughes for his 1936 lecture on campus, or documents, such as a radio speech by a “radical student,” or copies of the *Minnesota Daily*.⁷⁷

One unsigned document in Chase’s files is titled “Notes on Radicalism at the University of Minnesota.” Marked “confidential,” it profiled six student activists from 1934 to 1937.⁷⁸ It also listed radical organizations on the campus. Chase profiled a relatively small number of campus leaders, identifying four of them as “Jews” and thus exaggerating the extent of Jewish involvement in the leadership of these movements. Lester Breslow, for example, was labeled a “Communist leader and agitator.” His father was described as a “druggist across the street from the N.W. Hospital. Russian Jew.” Robert Loevinger, “son of Judge Gus L. of St. Paul,” was described as a “Communist agitator and Marxist” who “controlled U Forum 1936–1937. Jew.” Sherman Dryer was described as “Jew. Communist, Agitator and publicist.” Among Chase’s other accusations—likely inaccurate—about Dryer was that he “dictated editorial policy of the *Daily* without any official connection therewith.” He listed Joe Toner as “Jew. Editorial director of *Daily*. Carried out work of Sherman Dryer.”

The descriptions of the Jewish students contrasted strongly with those on the two non-Jewish men on the list, both prominent leaders in the anti-ROTC campaign. Richard Scammon is listed as “the son of Dean Scammon,” and described simply as a “principle [sic] agitator, a spokesman, and promoter in all so-called liberal movements.” Arnold (Eric) Severeid is identified as a “radical writer for the *U Daily* and Anti-ROTC,” and as an antifascist who wrote articles exposing the

76. *Forum Schedule: University of Minnesota, 1935*, folder “1935,” box 40, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

77. Ray P. Chase to Edward Nicholson, January 13, 1937, folder “1937,” box 41, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society; Ray P. Chase to Edward Nicholson, March 18, 1938, folder: “March-April, 1938,” box 42, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society. Hy Berman, “Political Antisemitism in Minnesota,” makes many specific charges concerning collaboration between Chase and Nicholson that are not borne out by the evidence. Accordingly, this article makes no use of Berman’s claims about the University of Minnesota.

78. Notes on Radicalism at the University of Minnesota, folder: “Correspondence and Miscellaneous, Radicalism, undated,” box 38, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

city's fascist groups in the *Minneapolis Journal*.⁷⁹ In contrast to the Jewish students, the non-Jews on the list do not "dictate," "carry out," "control" or "dominate." Severeid is described as a "procommunist," the others as communists. In every way, Jewish students are portrayed as more dangerous. Lester Breslow, already a physician, is even held under suspicion for serving in the United States Public Health Service in 1938!

Chase makes no mention of Scammon's or Severeid's religious affiliations because "Jew" was not a religious category for Chase; it was a racial marker of difference. The Jewishness of the other student leaders was worthy of mention because it excluded them from being part of keeping "America American." Jew was a category of "otherness," which was why Chase asked his informer who spied on meetings of leftwing students to collect the "nationality" of those who attended, and their home addresses. Like President Coffman, who tracked "Negro" and Jewish students as groups apart from the student mainstream, Chase and Nicholson tracked Jewish activists apart from others in order to emphasize the danger they posed. Chase, it is worth recalling, derived the name of his organization, Keep America American, from the eugenicist, anti-immigration American Coalition. The phrase, however, was also used by anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant groups, and by the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, that a decade previously was led by "the architect of the system of racial immigration quotas." Jews were one of the most important targets of their policies, and Chase clearly saw in those Jewish students and their parents, racially undesirable men and women whose "radicalism" and racial distinctiveness were closely aligned.⁸⁰

Ray Chase and Edward Nicholson operated in a milieu that not only associated Jews with communism and political radicalism, but blamed Jews for the very existence of radicalism. While administrators at the University of Minnesota monitored Black enrollments, neither Chase nor Nicholson viewed their activism as a threat because they did not perceive Black students to be involved in leftwing work. Indeed, Nicholson and Chase attributed Black activism to the leadership of white and Jewish radicals, a misapprehension that explains the absence of Black students from their lists. Denying Black students' agency in their own political struggle was simply one more form of the rampant racism at the University of Minnesota.⁸¹

79. Severeid, *Not So Wild a Dream*, 71.

80. Yoni Appelbaum, "The Trouble with Keeping America 'American,'" *The Atlantic*, December 18, 2011, downloaded November 30, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/12/the-trouble-with-keeping-america-american/249960/>.

81. Radical Student Organizations, folder: "Political and Social Action Groups 1935," box 12, Dean of Students University of Minnesota Archives. See, also, Charlotte Crump, "This Free North."

Political activism and Jewishness became the warp and woof of Chase's Keep America American campaign and his attacks on the University of Minnesota and the Farmer-Labor Party. Chase claimed that the University of Minnesota was infiltrated by radicals, anticipating that the University of Minnesota might hire him to assist in purging them from campus.⁸² That he was not hired for this task did not deter him from his efforts. In an era of fervent anticommunism, amid suspicion of the University of Minnesota's students and faculty by some Minnesota legislators and citizens, little space existed between a political "town" and a larger public "gown."

ANTISEMITISM AND THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN THE 1938 MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S RACE

Ray Chase's and Edward Nicholson's joint political surveillance of the University of Minnesota played a role in the 1938 gubernatorial race between Republican Harold Stassen and Farmer-Laborite Governor Elmer Benson. The campaign was the first openly antisemitic one in Minnesota's history. During the campaign, Benson was regularly accused of being a communist, which was systematically linked to the accusation that he was controlled by Jewish advisors. Stassen had the support of Republican moderates and business interests, but also Christian nationalists, Nazi sympathizers, and rabid anticommunists. The mood of the country and the state had shifted. Stassen won decisively and the election marked the end of Farmer-Labor domination of most state-wide political offices.

Ray Chase promoted the unprecedented antisemitic whisper campaign against Benson. He circulated a self-published, professionally produced, sixty-two-page hardcover booklet in the month before the 1938 election. He titled it *Are They Communists or Catspaws?: A Redbaiting Pamphlet*.⁸³ Governor Benson, Chase charged, was simply the tool of Jewish communists in his inner circle. Chase did not use the word "Jew" explicitly, employing coded accusations and images to maintain the appearance of offering facts in the service of a mainstream political party. Chase estimated that he distributed 13,000 copies of his docu-

82. The Existing Situation, folder: "Undated, 1937," box 41, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

83. Ray P. Chase, *Are They Communists or Catspaws?: A Redbaiting Pamphlet* (1938), <http://acampusdivided.umn.edu/index.php/text/are-they-communists-or-catspaws-a-red-baiting-pamphlet/>.

ment by mid-October to every legislative candidate and all conservative Christian clergy.⁸⁴

Are They Communists or Catspaws? combined Chase's campaign against so-called government waste with his antisemitic and anticommunist campaign on campus. The pamphlet featured four Jewish men, who were identified as communists who controlled the governor. In fact, two of them played only minor roles in Benson's organization, and two had been vigorous opponents of communist infiltration of the Farmer-Labor Party.⁸⁵ Chase excluded from his pamphlet the most significant people in the Benson administration, perhaps because they were not Jews. Chase's claim that he presented "facts" in this publication was immediately disputed by the Farmer-Labor Party. *Are They Communists or Catspaws?* included, for example, photographs doctored to remove people who were in the original image to make it appear that two men were sharing a conspiratorial conversation, and airbrushed to include Benson at a communist event.⁸⁶

In *Are They Communists or Catspaws?*, Ray Chase also attacked the University of Minnesota for alleged communist infiltration and misuse of state monies for invited distinguished guests. For example, Chase attacked Sherman Dryer, a sometime speech writer for Benson, for his University of Minnesota activism, leveling charges that were inaccurate, but identical to those in Chase's surveillance files. Chase also devoted several pages to the poet Langston Hughes, who had been a convocation speaker at the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1935. He reproduced poems by Hughes that he deemed anti-Christian, and attacked him for his leftwing politics, suggesting that the University promoted these ideas. Nicholson provided Chase with the information about the honorarium paid to Hughes, which was included in the pamphlet.⁸⁷

Ray Chase's dirty tricks and accusations were avidly embraced by some of those 13,000 conservative ministers in Minnesota, several of whom made common cause with extremist political figures, who were especially popular in the Midwest and Minnesota.⁸⁸ Chase also forged

84. For the lists of recipients of *Are They Communists or Catspaws*, see, folder: "Undated 1938," box 42, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

85. Chase's research made use of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Steven J. Keillor, *Hjalmar Petersen of Minnesota: The Politics of Provincial Independence* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society 1987), 155–7, 163–4.

86. Byrl Whitney, *Forgery! Frame up! Republican Plot Exposed* (Minneapolis: Benson for Governor All Party Volunteer Committee (1938).

87. Ray P. Chase to Edward Nicholson, folder "March-April, 1938," box 42, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society; Chase, *Communists*, 27–9.

88. Writing in 1945, Albert Gordon noted how important the First Baptist Church of W.A. Riley was to the dissemination of antisemitism and anticommunism from his

direct relationships with several pro-Nazi groups, some of which were committed to Christian nationalism, and others to fascism and anti-semitism cloaked in Christian images.⁸⁹ Minnesota provided dedicated followers for high profile groups like the deeply antisemitic Silver Legion, founded in 1934, and its University of Minnesota campus group, "The Swastikas," along with Father Coughlin's Christian Front, who claimed to be defending the country against Jews and communists and whose members called themselves "Coughlin's brownshirts."⁹⁰

The Silver Legion and its political wing, the Christian Party, which targeted the area, appealed to a variety of Twin Cities citizens, which included some major businessmen, such as George Belden, founder of the Citizens Alliance.⁹¹ The Christian Party, both locally and nationally, took great interest in the Minnesota governor's race in 1938, and Pelley dispatched his second-in-command, Roy Zachary, to Minnesota three months prior to the election. Zachary hoped to recruit 3,000 to 5,000 new members in Minnesota to assist the work of the Silver Legion and Christian Party. Their members organized and distributed leaflets in support of Stassen. Their newspaper advised the following: "If you don't want Jewish Communism with resulting violence, blood-shed and civil war (and of course, nobody does) get out at once and help defeat Elmer Benson and his criminal cohorts—with ballots. If it can't be done with ballots now, there must be bullets later."⁹²

Ray Chase, among others, distributed antisemitic and anticommunist attacks on Elmer Benson and the Farmer-Labor Party. Without the surveillance and information provided by Edward Nicholson and others on the campus of the University of Minnesota about students and faculty, Chase would have found it impossible to inject his distorted views of Jewish activists and campus life into the 1938 election.

pulpit in advance of the 1938 election. *Jews in Transition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1945), 50. Joseph Fronzack notes the ways fascism targeted labor in Minneapolis in 1934, creating an "unstable bond of popular radicalism and high capital." "The Fascist Game: Transnational Political Transmission and the Genesis of the US Modern Right," *Journal of American History* 105, no. 3 (2018): 571–8.

89. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1989), 112.

90. Bradley W. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018), 54, 86; Atwood, "This is Not Complete," 146.

91. Atwood, "This is Not Complete," 142–55.

92. Atwood, "This is Not Complete," 92.

THE MECHANISMS OF ANTISEMITISM AND RACE

A number of threads of antisemitism were woven through events in the 1930s at the University of Minnesota. The machinations of a Republican operative and his Keep America American campaign, which was partially directed at the University, bound town and gown together tightly. Anxiety ran through the minds of student union directors, who were horrified at the mere presence of Jewish students in their buildings. Antisemitism was at work in administrators' constant monitoring of the numbers of Jewish students, just as racism informed worry if Black enrollments rose above a certain percentage. Some antisemitic threads wound around the work of the dean of student affairs, who surveilled student activists, directed students to spy on leftwing organizations, and then shared his findings with Ray Chase. Even without enrollment quotas at the University of Minnesota, the University's widespread antisemitism limited students' opportunities for professional training and participation in social activities. Ultimately, those threads choked Minnesota's 1938 gubernatorial election, and demonstrated the appeal and strength of pro-Nazi Christian nationalists who had a presence on the campus. They finally extended to the nation as FBI agents created files on Jewish student activists and monitored them for decades. If those threads stood out as a unique pattern against a backdrop of Minneapolis, a notoriously antisemitic city, it was because they took shapes that were variations on a long-established pattern.

The focus of this analysis on mechanisms of antisemitism—the day-to-day practices that emerge from institutional and state power—affords a historically and geographically specific understanding of its dynamics. What it suggests is that previous efforts by scholars as diverse as John Higham and Shulamit Volkov to offer historically contingent analyses of antisemitism, especially in the American context, have missed some of its most crucial aspects.⁹³ First, in offering typologies of antisemitism as social, political, cultural, or economic, they fail to see the ways in which all of these types interlock, and limit understanding of how structures operate and translate into practices. As the case of the University of Minnesota in the 1930s demonstrates, “social antisemitism” worked

93. John Higham, “Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (1957): 559–78; Higham, *Send These to Me*, 115; Shulamit Volkov, “Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 51–62. For challenges to Higham, see, Naomi Cohen, “Antisemitism in the Gilded Age: The Jewish View,” *Jewish Social Studies* 41, nos. 3/4 (1979): 187–210; Britt Tevis, “Jews Not Admitted,” 866–7.

together with political and economic discrimination to marginalize and punish Minnesota's Jewish students and citizens. Practices at the University of Minnesota intersected and interacted with those of more widely reported Christian nationalist organizations. What might be treated as the "inconveniences" of social antisemitism were not only integral to denying Jews economic opportunities but reiterated the rigid racialized hierarchy of the state and nation.

There is also the question of "harm." Scholars have rightly argued that, comparatively, American racism had far worse consequences for Black Americans than antisemitism did for Jews.⁹⁴ Yet, Jews suffered real harm at various times in the United States. Residential covenants, educational admissions quotas, and exclusion from many occupations and work opportunities all affected Jews substantially. Indeed, the legality of many of these measures was upheld by courts.⁹⁵ Research on the 1930s continues to reveal the influence of Christian nationalism in the Midwest, its embrace of Nazism, and its ideological focus on Jews.⁹⁶

The system that rendered Jews as non-normative was not easily separable from other forms of discrimination, regardless of their degrees of intensity. Thinking about antisemitism at the University of Minnesota in the 1930s requires thinking about racism there as well.

Anti-Black racism in Minneapolis and St. Paul has been pervasive throughout the state's history, affecting housing, education, employment, and leisure. Progressive legislation protecting Black rights for equal access to a variety of accommodations was rarely enforced, particularly during this period.⁹⁷ Policies on campus reflected that racism. Although there were no admissions quotas for Blacks, when the University closed taxpayer-funded housing for Black students in the 1930s, or tolerated discrimination in private student boarding houses well past World War II, it reinforced the state's deeply entrenched structural racism. Moreover,

94. On "relative harm," see, Koffman et al., "Roundtable on Antisemitism."

95. See, Tevis, "Jews Not Admitted," 847–8, 868–9; Michels, "Is America Different," 212; Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

96. For an overview, see, Sarah Churchwell, "American Fascism: It Has Happened Here," *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 2020, accessed July 27, 2020, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/06/22/american-fascism-it-has-happened-here/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NYP%20Daily%20A%20questionable%20salute&utm_content=NYP%20Daily%20A%20questionable%20salute+CID_a8008fa5cb9f4c51025fd8db91f275a8&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_term=American%20Fascism%20It%20Has%20Happened%20Here. See, also Hart, *Hitler's American Friends*; Ross, *Hitler in Los Angeles*.

97. David V. Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002).

Blacks, like Jews, faced barriers to membership in social fraternities and some campus activities, and to their choice of occupations. However, the differences in scale and degree were tremendous. Jews had work and housing opportunities that were completely unavailable to Black Minnesotans.

Yet Jews and Blacks were *not* similarly surveilled by Dean of Student Affairs Nicholson or Republican operative Chase. These men treated Jewish activists like masterminds of communist plotting while they barely mentioned Black student activism. The issue of Black students' rights to on- or off-campus student housing was of great concern to Dean Nicholson. But he blamed the Black-led campaign to integrate housing on white students, including Jewish ones. Ray Chase heartily agreed.⁹⁸

Part of the explanation lies in the way Jews and Jewishness constituted ambiguous social and racial categories in the first third of the twentieth century. Jews' growing presence in America's cities, particularly New York, made them highly visible in debates about racial and national identity. Because religion, race, and place of origin were closely entangled in the racial ideologies of the time, Jews occupied an ambiguous position.⁹⁹ Jews could not be fit neatly in the racial binary.

Another key to understanding why the University surveilled Jews more closely than Blacks lies in Ray Chase's obsession with "Jew-communists." To Chase, Jews were "foreign," whether or not they were born in the United States, and foreignness was closely associated with communism, political radicalism, and activism, whether in opposition to opposing war or in favor of integrated housing. In contrast, Chase and Nicholson ignored Black activism throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In doing so, they refused to recognize that Blacks could exercise agency or leadership, even on their own behalf.¹⁰⁰

Jewish students at the University of Minnesota were racialized in several different and contradictory ways in the 1930s and 1940s, and each reveals the work of antisemitism. Antisemitic practices, whether

98. Edward Nicholson to Fred P. Snyder, Radical Activities, June 3, 1940, folder: "Correspondence, Misc. 1913-1941," box 4, Dean of Students, University of Minnesota Archives.

99. See, Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright, 2017); Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*.

100. One Black student does appear in a spy report on the Social Problems Club. A graduate student is identified as a "graduate Student (Negro)." The infiltrator notes that he had bragged about teaching communism to children in the class he taught at the Phyllis Wheatley House, a settlement house in a Black area of Minneapolis. See, folder "correspondence and miscellaneous, January-July 1935," box 40, Ray P. Chase, Minnesota Historical Society.

they reflected stereotypes of Jewish vulgarity or subversiveness, marginalized Jews even while recognizing them as white in some respects. Jewish difference was thus ambiguous. Racism offered no such ambiguity. The racist constraints on Blacks in Minnesota closed or compromised almost every path.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, the social and political antisemitism that students in public universities throughout the United States experienced in the 1930s demonstrates that higher education played a crucial role in maintaining and reproducing it in the larger political milieu. The political structures of the nation and much of higher education reinforced one another, and harmed students in the process. President Lotus Coffman and Dean Edward Nicholson claimed to believe in the democratization of higher education, but their vision for it replicated and reinforced the nation's racism and antisemitism.

101. Goldstein, *Price of Whiteness*, chapters 2 and 5.