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Jewish Federation Draws Leaders to View 'October 8'

- [By Harry Glazer](#)
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East Brunswick Mayor Brad Cohen speaks at the film screening.

American Jews are regularly reminded that the foes of Israel here are well funded, well organized, and not at all inhibited in expressing their violent hostility to the Jewish state and its supporters in this country. Making sure American public leaders understand this reality must be a high priority.

The Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey in South River, an organization with the extensive contacts and the credibility to mobilize decision makers, invited dozens of elected officials, education administrators and faith leaders to view a private screening of the film “October 8” on Thursday night, June 12.



Jewish Federation Executive Director Susan Antman speaks at the film screening.

The film, by executive producer Debra Messing, offers a broad view of the explosion of antisemitism on college campuses, social media and on the streets of America after the attacks of Oct. 7. It features comments from a broad roster of widely recognized experts and influencers, such as Israeli media personality Noa Tishbi; University of California-Santa Barbara student leader Tessa Veksler; Columbia University professor Shai Davidai; Rabbi David Wolpe; journalist/author Bari Weiss; ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt; Secure Community Network Director Michael Masters; author Douglass Murray; Rep. Ritchie Torres; former special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism

Deborah Lipstadt; Harvard University Jewish student leader Shabbos Kestenbaum; and others.

The film covers a great deal of territory in its one hour and 45 minute run time, from the devastation of the attacks on Oct. 7, to the shockingly fast mobilization of counterprotests against Israel on college campuses, to the toxic hatred of Israel, Zionists and Jews by the protesters; from the organization and reach of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapters across the country; to the initial efforts of Hamas in 1993 to mobilize students and co-opt U.S. political discourse to defame Israel in the U.S. and undermine democracy; from how funding from the Muslim Brotherhood flows to Hamas and also to SJP chapters; to BDS votes on college campuses; from U.S. Congressional hearings on antisemitism on college campuses; to the impact of DEI and intersectionality on isolating Jews; the symbols used by SJP to vilify Israel; and much more.



SJP group highlighted in “October 8” film.

Two small snippets of the film resonated deeply. Rep. Ritchie Torres quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who decried “the appalling silence of good people” and commented about his unwavering support for Israel that “no issue inspires more hatred and death threats.” One of the academic experts interviewed noted that for every video on TikTok supporting Israel, there are 54 videos supporting Hamas’ false narrative.

“Federation brought the movie ‘October 8’ to community leaders because the film shows that the explosion of antisemitism on college campuses, social media and the streets of America beginning the day after the Oct. 7 terrorist attack is not organic, nor is it a concern just for Israel and the Jews,” said Dr. Stacy Gallin, director of the Center to Combat Antisemitism and Reinforce Multicultural Acceptance (CARMA), an initiative of Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ. “The movie uncovers a lengthy, well-orchestrated campaign of propaganda and disinformation by extremist groups and foreign adversaries to not just delegitimize Israel, but also to undermine American society and democracy. This is the reason why Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ founded CARMA Center to Combat Antisemitism and Reinforce Multicultural Acceptance, to support K-12 students and educators in recognizing propaganda, misinformation and disinformation, questioning sources, and delving below headlines to fill the gaps in knowledge.”



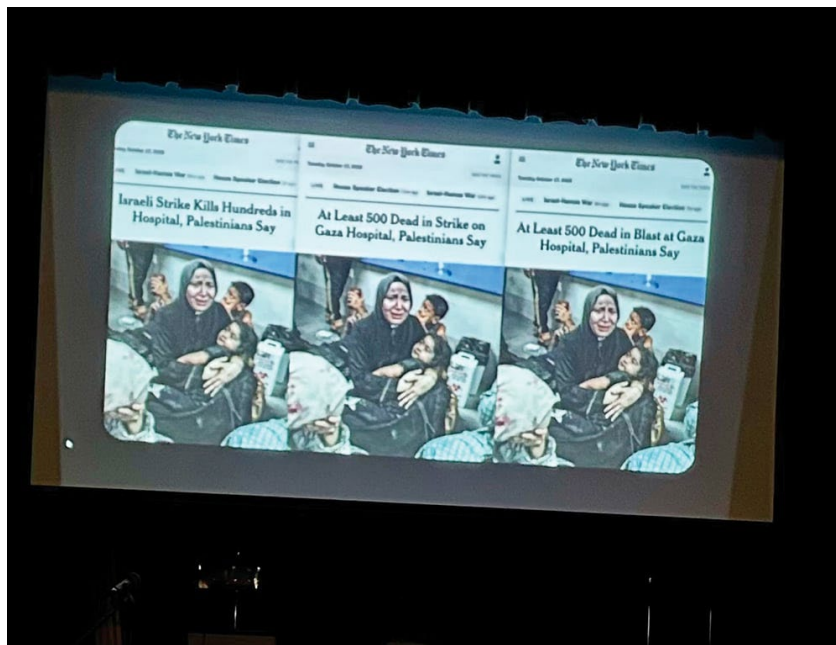
Footage of college presidents testifying before Congress in “October 8” film.

Speaking to the gathering before the film started, East Brunswick Mayor Brad Cohen shared that in his meetings with Jewish leaders, he has heard the same two issues come up. One is a growing apprehension about security, whether people should modify how they dress, and how safe they are in their homes.

He noted that rabbis in Teaneck are getting gun permits and shuls are going on lockdown. The other concern is in the area of education, about the indoctrination of youth, “Miseducation that’s been very, very well orchestrated,” which he asserted can be seen now in elementary schools and in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Susan Antman, executive director of Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ, told the audience: “Tonight’s film matters far beyond the Jewish community.” She said that “our enemies seek to undermine American democracy and American society” and she thanked everyone present for being there and bearing witness.

Reactions from two elected officials in attendance indicated that viewing the film had a profound impact.



Graphic illustrating how the New York Times shifted headlines on an incident in Gaza war in “October 8” film.

“I watched much of the ‘October 8’ film in stunned silence,” said Elsie Foster, mayor of Highland Park. “I’ve known since the winter of 2023 that Jews in the U.S. and in our area have faced some very nasty and uncompromising opponents. But I never realized that the crowds on college campuses that

want to erase Israel are so widespread, menacing and dehumanizing to Jews. What I've seen in this film makes me more sympathetic to the security concerns and the apprehensions that I see in my local Jewish community."

"We must never forget Oct. 7," said New Jersey State Senator Patrick Diegnan, Jr. (18th District). "Antisemitism can never be ignored. We must make it clear to all, especially our children, that hatred will not be excused or tolerated in the United States of America."