Excerpts from Public Statements by Newton Residents on Fear of Retaliation by School Officials

By PENS member
4/12/16

Note: Most of these comments were made prior to the unlawful retaliation taken by School Committee Chair Matthew Hills against a minor child in October, 2013.

At almost every School Committee I attended, at least one person spoke about the fear parents had of bringing concerns regarding anti-Israel bias, to teachers or administrators.

I stopped attending School Committee meetings in early 2014, so there are likely to be other statements about intimidation by school officials not included here.

School Committee Meetings

School Committee Meeting 10/24/11
Judith G. - I was afraid to point out problems like this [regarding anti-Israel material] in the past. Maybe I shouldn't have been so afraid. I'm glad someone spoke up.

School Committee Meeting 6/11/12
Helga L. (grew up in pre-WWII Germany) - People are afraid to come up and speak, especially people with kids. It's just like Germany was. They're afraid of retribution on their children from the school.

School Committee Meeting 5/14/12
Eugenia B. - I was shocked to hear about this, that propaganda from one side was presented to students. I am from the former Soviet Union and knows how propaganda, ideology, and indoctrination work. This reminds me of the Soviet Union where they taught no facts or half facts to support their ideology...

School Committee Meeting 2/10/14
Richard S. - You can't just give children truth and lies and expect them to figure it out for themselves. (Longer discourse regarding East Germany, etc). I implore you to think very carefully about the kind of materials you're teaching kids in Newton, because there aren't very many safe havens for people in the world today, and Newton is supposed to be a safe city.

Alex K. - I grew up in the Soviet Union but lived most of my life here. When we were fed the propaganda and told that all the problems in the world and all the bad things were caused by the United States and Israel, and unfortunately I see some similarities in this great country and the great city of Newton; I am a resident, my son graduated from Newton North High School and received an excellent education, but I remember one moment during September 11th, or actually a few months after September 11th, one of the teachers in his history class asked 'who are the terrorists'? so my son said 'the people on the planes, the people who managed to get the planes into the buildings and killed the people, and he said 'Well maybe

the Americans are the terrorists because we are bombing Somalia'; I was really upset - not just upset, I was outraged, and I said to my son 'I want to go to the school and talk to the principal or the history department and my son said 'please, do not do this, because he was afraid.

I was afraid to speak in the Soviet Union, although I did speak, because for that I could go to prison, or my parents could go to prison, but it's not normal for a child of 15 years old is afraid that his father, or he himself, would go talk to a teacher, who is a history teacher, so the same thing I see happening now, probably worse...

Judith G. - ...my children were going through it [the Newton Public Schools], some of the things that were going on in schools, and I would get all fired up because it just wasn't right. There were different opinions they were getting from the teachers that they knew wasn't right because they were informed and paid close attention. They wouldn't let me come out and say anything because they were embarrassed, because it would effect their grade, for any number of reasons. So now I'm taking the opportunity because my children - I can no longer ruin their lives, because they're on their own now.

Community Forum held April 7, 2016

Monica (alias) - I have not encountered sexism or racism [she is Hispanic] in Newton, but I have encountered antisemitism.

Two friends with children in Newton high schools showed me the horrible anti-Israel materials they used in class. As a result, my children do not attend Newton public schools.

My friends told me that they are afraid to speak up about their concerns for fear of retaliation by teachers or administrators.

When I tell other Newton residents about my cousin who was killed in a terror attack, saving others while sacrificing his own life, I am told I am anti-Islam and a racist. Why can't I tell my family history truthfully - that we were victims? This is antisemitism.

I have Jewish and Christian friends who had to hide their support for Israel at work on a college campus for fear they would lose their jobs.

I put a sign that said "I support Darfur" on my lawn without concern, yet am afraid to put a sign saying "I support Israel" for fear of making enemies or worse.

A hateful curriculum leads to chants such as "you killed Jesus" at the basketball game and the antisemitic graffiti in the schools. There are people with evil motives who are revising the curriculum to be anti-Israel and antisemitic. We need to stop the antisemitism now.