Anti-Semitism in the 20th Century and Discrimination Today: A Case with Albert Einstein

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December 12th, 2020

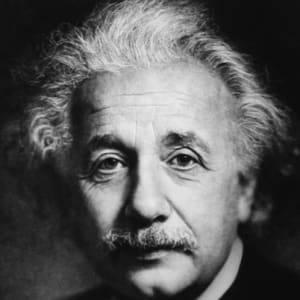
**Introduction**

*Anti-Semitism* is defined as the discrimination of Jews as a racial or religious group. This term is modern, but the concept goes as far back as biblical times. Jews were depicted as History.com Editors (2019) states “Hostility against Jews may date back nearly as far as Jewish history.” After the crucifixion of Jesus, anti-Semitism rose throughout much of Europe. These hostilities continued throughout the middle ages and into modern times.

The 20th century had one of history’s worst cases of mass discrimination. This discrimination eventually turned into the systematic extermination of the Jew. This crime against humanity was called The Final Solution which was committed by the Nazi party. The Nazi’s created extermination camps where they murdered millions of people that the state deemed not Aryan descent. The main target demographic was people of Jewish descent.

This extermination was not immediate, it was after years of increasing discriminatory laws that first barred Jews from Government positions, revoked citizenship, designated ghettos, and finally the deportation to concentration and extermination camps. Many Jewish people saw the writing on the wall and were quick to escape Germany before it was too late. One of those to escape is arguably the most famous mathematician of the 20th century, Albert Einstein.

**Albert Einstein**



Albert Einstein was born on March 14, 1879 in Ulm, Württemberg, Germany. Growing up, Einstein’s family was Secular Jewish. According to Biography.com Editors (2020) “His father, Hermann Einstein, was a salesman and engineer who, with his brother, founded Elektrotechnische Fabrik J. Einstein & Cie, a Munich-based company that mass-produced electrical equipment.” Einstein had speech challenges growing up but had deep inquisitiveness and learned to play the violin, which “would stay with him into his later years.” Biography.com Editors (2020).

Biography.com Editors (2020). Albert Einstein

During Einstein’s teens, he published a paper titled “*The Investigation of the State of Aether in Magnetic Fields.*” Biography.com Editors (2020). Einstein’s father moved to Italy after his company lost a contract. This left Einstein needing to stay with a relative at a boarding house. With fear of military service, Einstein left school to join his family in Italy. After some time, Einstein gained admission to the *Swiss Federal Institute of Technology.* He was required to complete his pre-university education. He completed the education at Aarau, Switzerland.

Once Einstein completed graduating from University, he found himself in hard times trying to find academic work. During this time, he found work at a Swiss patent office in 1902. This time is when Einstein published his work thus founding Relativity. In 1905 “Einstein had four papers published in the *Annalen der Physik*, one of the best-known physics journals of the era.” Biography.com Editors (2020). A common myth one may have heard at some point was that Einstein had gained all his mathematical knowledge during his time at this patent office, but as we have read, that is simply not true. From a young age Einstein had a knack for mathematics.

IGH (n.d.). Einstein's workplace on the Speichergasse

During the development of his General Theory, Einstein had always stated that the universe was a fixed static entity but was directly contradicted in his later years. This was due to him hating quantum mechanics, which says the universe is random, there is no concrete way to define the universe. The *Theory of General Relativity* is what Einstein is the most known for. His theory allowed more accurate predictions of planetary orbits than Newtons theory. It also gave a more expansive explanation of gravity. The most famous equation was . This equation states that energy is equal to mass times light squared. Biography.com Editors (2020) states it the best “This equation suggested that tiny particles of matter could be converted into huge amounts of energy, a discovery that heralded atomic power.”

In 1923, Einstein returned to Germany, at this time anti-Semitic policies would slowly start to be added. Einstein’s work was labeled “Jewish physics” by the Nazi party. In 1933 after Hitler rose to power, Einstein renounced his German citizenship. Now Einstein is essentially living in exile, he is a citizen of no country.

**Living in Exile**

No longer a citizen, Einstein is forced to flee Germany. Einstein had chosen to flee to Belgium. He later went to London to sway political agendas towards helping Jewish persons. While first visiting London, Einstein listened to a speech by Oliver Locker-Lampson. His speech was proposing a bill “to promote and extend opportunities of citizenship for Jews resident outside the British empire.” HistoryExtra (2020). Lampson would later aid Einstein by housing him in a holiday hut.

Once Einstein returned to Belgium, he was soon targeted by extremists for assassination. This targeting was brought on by two acts of Einstein. The first was “he had publicly repudiated his militant faith in pacifism by calling for European rearmament against the German threat.” HistoryExtra (2020). The second being that he publicly endorsed a communist-compiled boo called *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror.* Since the Nazi party is a fascist government, they fall on the complete opposite side of the political spectrum. They essentially regarded communism as their mortal enemy.

Belgian police protected Einstein day and night. After some time, a Jewish philosopher and friend of Einstein was murdered by the same people targeting him. Once news broke out, Einstein had already packed his bags and fled to London. At this time Lampson aided Einstein Until he went to the United States. According to Biography.com (2020). “Einstein took on a position at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, New Jersey.” In 1933.

**Living in America**

In 1935, Einstein was given permanent residency in the United States. Five years after this he was given citizenship. In 1939 Einstein and Leo Szilard wrote to Roosevelt explaining the possibility of the Nazi’s creating a nuclear weapon. This is what initially let the United States to start the Manhattan Project. Einstein himself did not take part in the project however due to his pacifist and socialist nature. Since he had socialist affiliations Biography.com (2020). states “Einstein was also the recipient of much scrutiny and major distrust from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.”

By this time, the Nazi oppression and discrimination of Jews has reached an all-time high and by 1941 the Holocaust has started. A recount from an American Vice Consul of the time states the horror of the Nazi occupation of Poland. One such event is “On December 26, 1939, in the small town of Warsaw near Warsaw approximately 150 Poles were mowed down with machine guns in reprisal for the murder of two German soldiers in a brawl with two notorious bandits.” Chylinski (1941. p. 9). The Gestapo was in full swing at this time and Einstein would have most likely met a terrible fate if he had not fled Germany years prior.

Following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Einstein and Leo Szilard founded the *Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists.* In the later part of the 1940s he joined the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.* He joined this organization due the parallels he drew between Jews in Germany and African Americans in the United States.

Einstein’s later years saw him most retreat from all spotlight to work on his unified theory. A theory which would tie all existing functions of the universe together into one single theory. On April 18th, 1955, Einstein passed away at the Princeton Medical Center. The cause of death was due to an abdominal aortic aneurysm. After his death, his brain was removed for preservation. Since his death, his theory of relativity was proven in every aspect that has been tested. One of the most recent was in 2019 when the event horizons telescope unveiled the first ever image of a black hole. Grossman (2020) states:

The theory not only describes the way matter warps spacetime, but it also predicts the very existence of black holes, including the size of the shadow cast by a black hole on the bright disk of material that swirls around some of the dense objects. That iconic image, of the supermassive black hole at the center of the galaxy M87 about 55 million light-years away, showed that the shadow closely matched general relativity’s predictions of its size (SN: 4/10/19). In other words, Einstein was right — again.



Since we even got an image, that means Relativity is correct with our current understanding of physics. What was unthinkable during Einstein’s time was now accomplished. Several years prior another thought impossible achievement, detecting gravitational waves was also accomplished.

Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration. First image of a black hole.

**Conclusion**

Thankfully, the world has been moving towards peace as full-scale conflicts have drastically decreased. That is not to say that discrimination has decreased. Einstein compared the discrimination of African Americans in the United States to the treatment of Jews in Germany during the 1930s. During that time segregation was still huge and would be until 1964 when all segregation was abolished with the passing of the Civil Rights Act.

During the start of this year after an African American by the name of Georgy Floyd was killed, protests erupted across the United States. Racism towards African Americans reached a boiling point, along with it being an election year, there was a massive fire and plenty of fuel for it. A term coined systematic racism was made known. This term essentially describes how current policies and politics systematically target African Americans.

I would argue that not all discriminatory policies can be identified easily if it is not immediately apparent. Some policies could have been made on data that did not take in account of racial demographics. You could potentially argue that the policy was discriminatory however it would not be known unless you take a closer look. On the other side, most blatant racist policies have long since been abolished when the Civil Rights Act was passed.

Another form of discrimination would be at the southern border of the United States. Illegal immigration has been a problem for a long time, but treatment of illegal immigrants has ramped up with the Trump Administration. You can draw a comparison of Nazi concentrations camps to the concentration camps of Illegal immigrants in Texas. Serwer (2019) recounts the awful conditions of these camps. An important difference here is that the Nazis set up death camps with the sole purpose of extermination. The concentration camps while much worse than the Texan counterparts, are inherently no different. Along with these camps, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) ramped up their deportation. There are many cases of fathers and mothers being separated from their children and deported back into Mexico.

On the other side of the world, China has been relocating hundreds of thousands of Muslim Uighurs to concentration camps in the northwestern part of the country. This is what the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is calling “re-education centers”. Wood (2019) wrote an article detailing the abysmal and blatant religious discrimination that the CCP is displaying towards these people. On two sides of the world, we can see racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination. Discrimination still exists throughout much of the world. Some forms of discrimination have decreased while others have increased. I do not think there will ever be a time when discrimination is extinct, but it could continually decrease as time goes on.

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