

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, January 10, 2022

Toronto Educator Suing Israel Advocacy Group, B'nai Brith, for Defamation

Javier Davila, a Student Equity Program Advisor and award-winning social justice educator with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) who was [vilified in the *Toronto Sun* last Spring](#) after [providing anti-oppression resources on Palestine through an opt-in mailing list at the TDSB](#), has launched a defamation lawsuit against the pro-Israel advocacy group, B'nai Brith Canada and its CEO, Michael Mostyn.

"I've been the target of a malicious smear campaign for doing my job as an anti-oppression educator," said Davila. "Providing resources that centre the erased, devalued and marginalized voices of Palestinians is an important part of that job. B'nai Brith and its CEO need to be held to account."

The equity educator was placed on suspension and under investigation by the TDSB after being "repeatedly attacked by a *Toronto Sun* columnist" with persistent calls from B'nai Brith to have him fired. B'nai Brith labelled the mailouts "antisemitic propaganda" and made dozens of statements about Davila, including, "extremists have attempted to abuse their positions within the education system to spread hateful propaganda" and "[There is no doubt that Mr. Davila promoted materials written by and glorifying terrorists.](#)" Davila took to [Medium to offer context to the opt-in mailouts and linked directly to them.](#)

The school board was bombarded with petition after petition in support of Davila, including one signed by 5000 community members and sponsored by national unions, including CUPW, CUPE, CFS and Independent Jewish Voices (IJV). Ultimately, an extensive investigation vindicated Davila and he was reinstated to the TDSB without discipline.

Despite Davila's reinstatement, B'nai Brith continued to smear Davila using the terms "Jew hatred," "glorification of violence," and "openly pro-terrorism." B'nai Brith further announced a self-declared "campaign for consequences" against Davila and filed a formal complaint with the Ontario College of Teachers demanding another investigation and the revocation of his teaching license.

Prominent author and activist Desmond Cole also became the target of false accusations of antisemitism after a talk on equity commissioned by the TDSB in which he stated his support for Davila and called out anti-Palestinian racism at the board. Following this, hundreds of TDSB students at Marc Garneau CI staged a historic walkout in protest of anti-Palestinian racism at the school board and in support of both Davila and Cole. These students made [nine concrete demands.](#)

Davila was again vindicated in December 2021, after a report by the TDSB's independent Integrity Commissioner, found that a tweet made by Trustee Alexandra Lulka Rotman, which seemed to mirror the language used by B'nai Brith, "fundamentally mischaracterized" Davila's educational, anti-oppressive mailouts on Palestine as 'antisemitic and justifying terrorism and suicide bombings,' and thus, violated the TDSB's anti-discrimination policies by perpetuating harmful stereotypes that engaged in anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia. The report recommended the trustee's censure.

"The Independent Investigator concluded that the [Trustee's] Twitter Statement fundamentally mischaracterized [Davila's] materials which were intended to, and do for the most part: (1) center the

voices of marginalized Palestinians (particularly those of Palestinian children) as well as Muslims more broadly, and (2) assist educators in understanding and discussing the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and human rights in a manner that provides thoughtful guidance on how one might critique the Israeli government and army without perpetuating anti-Semitism” ([Integrity Commissioner’s Report, p. 30](#)).

“This has been one of the most difficult things I’ve had to endure in my life,” said Davila. “As a teen, I was kicked out of my home and shunned by my family and community for being queer. Resilience, resistance, healing, and a dedication to justice are in my bones,” continues Davila. “I’ve tried to live a life and build relationships that are centred in love, interdependence, and the recognition that no one is disposable. But society views Palestinians as disposable. And that needs to change.”

“But no one should ever have to suffer such harmful attacks to their dignity, reputation, livelihood, and well-being for taking a stand for human rights...for wanting to create a world in which all people, including Palestinians, are seen as indisposable and fully human.”

A [GoFundMe](#) has been set up by supporters of Davila for legal fees. A statement of claim under the Libel and Slander Act was filed with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice on January 6, 2021, court file number: CV-22-00674773-0000.

Davila is being represented by lawyers Dimitri Lascaris and Stephen Ellis.

For more information contact Stephen Ellis at 647 869 7651