JEWISH IDENTITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA

What does it mean to be Jewish? This ancient question has become a pressing civil rights controversy. Despite a recent resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents on American college campuses, the U.S. Department of Education’s powerful Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has been unable to protect Jewish students. This failure has been a problem not of execution but of conceptualization. The OCR has been unable to address anti-Jewish harassment because it lacks a coherent conception of either Jewish identity or anti-Jewish hatred. Given jurisdiction over race and national origin but not religion, federal agents have had to determine whether Jewish Americans constitute a race or national origin group. They have been unable to do so. This has led to enforcement paralysis, as well as explosive internal confrontations and recriminations within the federal government. This book examines the legal and policy issues behind the ambiguity involved with civil rights protections for Jewish students. Written by a former senior government official, this book reveals the extent of this problem and presents a workable legal solution.

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For my sweet Stephanie, partner in all I do, and for my beloved Shoshana, in the hope that she will never know the problems described here.
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