

UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM: AN OFFERING TO OUR MOVEMENT

A Resource from Jews For Racial & Economic Justice



Muslims form a protective circle around Jews praying at a synagogue in Oslo, Norway, 2015.

This project was conceived in conversation between Aurora Levins Morales and Dove Kent, and grew from a series of teaching calls about the impact of antisemitism on JFREJ's organizing work. Aurora joined JFREJ for two years as a Poet and Elder-in-Residence, contributed in substantial ways to shaping our vision, and wrote much of the initial draft of this paper. The work then passed into other hands, but Aurora both planted and watered the seeds.

"Taking on anti-Jewish oppression is the act of building a Left not confined to reaction, but propelled by a deeper vision of a world we would actually want to live in."
— ***The Past Didn't Go Anywhere*, April Rosenblum, 2007**

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This paper was authored by a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, intergenerational team including Black, Mizrahi and white Ashkenazi Jews, with editorial review and support by Jews with ethnic and national identities from many countries including Puerto Rico, India, Iraq, Syria, as well as non-Jewish allies from many racial and ethnic backgrounds. The team also includes significant class and gender diversity. Many of us live in New York City, however, there is geographic diversity as well.

INTRODUCTION

Antisemitism
is real. It is
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movements for
social justice.

Since the presidential campaign and election of Donald Trump, we have witnessed a surge of blatant, anti-Jewish expression in broad daylight — neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville, swastikas spray-painted on playgrounds, hate speech hurled at Jews in public, cemeteries desecrated, and bomb threats targeting Jewish congregations and community centers. Donald Trump appointed a white nationalist anti-Semite as his chief strategist in the White House, and even after his departure, others sharing his ideology remain in the administration, reflecting the views of the President himself. White supremacists have gathered in Washington, D.C. to praise Trump, using Nazi language and symbols as they celebrate his election. Anti-Jewish hate speech abounds on social media, particularly directed at Jewish journalists, while white supremacist commentators have appeared on CNN, asking whether Jews are actually human.

It's understandable that many of us on the left — including many Jews — are deeply confused about how to assess and understand antisemitism as a phenomenon. How does the targeting of Jews fit into the matrix of oppressions alongside those that we are more familiar with, such as anti-Black racism or Islamophobia? How should we understand and contextualize the threat?

Jewish history is complex and the contemporary relationship of many Jews to power and whiteness can be confusing, but the premise of this paper is simple: Antisemitism is real. It is antithetical to collective liberation; it hurts Jews and it also undermines, weakens and derails all of our movements for social justice.

Even though the threats that we face now did not originate on Election Day, this is a new moment of escalated danger for Jews, for all the communities we belong to, and for all the communities that we care about. In light of this new moment, we offer this paper. [Antisemitism and false theories of Jewish power are in the DNA of the “alt-right” white nationalist movement](#) in all of its various flavors, offshoots and precursors. Whether you are Jewish or not, there is no defeating the right without also attacking antisemitism. And there is no getting free without ending antisemitism.

This paper is an offering from a team assembled by Jews For Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ). It reflects the values, analysis and best knowledge of the authors. It is intended to be a useful resource to our partners and allies in the movement left, especially non-Jewish (gentile) organizations and individuals. It is only a brief introduction to Jews, the Jewish context, antisemitism, and collective liberation; it is not an exhaustive or academic examination of any subject. In the interest of brevity and clarity, this paper contains simplifications and omissions of which we are aware. It is only one resource and one perspective in a complex and ongoing conversation. It is not the last word — or the last word from JFREJ — on this topic. As all of us on the left look more closely at this topic our analysis and knowledge will surely evolve, and we hope you read it generously and curiously with that in mind.

Antisemitism must be eradicated for our collective liberation. Solidarity among Jews and all other groups targeted by oppression will come when we forge the deep, trusting relationships that emerge through shared struggle and a visceral understanding of our mutual interest in defeating the forces of white supremacy and creating a world where all people are free.

*Content Warning:
This document contains graphic imagery and discussion of violence and genocide.*

Where does our collective confusion come from?

Our confusion about antisemitism is understandable. Are today's Jews actually oppressed or are we oppressors? Is criticising Israel antisemitic? Didn't antisemitism end after World War II with the world's outrage at the Nazi Holocaust of the 1930's and 40's? Are all Jews white? Are any Jews white? In a world where our undocumented neighbors are being rounded up and deported, hundreds of thousands of Black people are incarcerated, the police routinely murder People of Color with impunity, and transwomen of Color are hunted by bigots and police alike, is anti-semitism even important? Is it real?

Many on the left (sometimes including Jews ourselves) don't have a clear analysis of what anti-semitism is, how it works, and why it matters. Some do not fully understand how oppressions are mutually reinforcing, and because of that they dismiss anti-Jewish oppression as unimportant or even deny that it really exists. Debates about the nature of anti-Jewish oppression can be dense and sometimes vicious, making it difficult to simply ask questions or know whose perspective to trust.

In recent decades, the political Jewish right and its Christian allies (particularly Christian Zionists) have consistently spoken loudly against what they describe as antisemitism. While it is notable that they have sometimes seemed like the *only* people willing to discuss and call out antisemitism, they have distended the meaning of the term to include any critique of Israel or Israeli government policy (in some cases labeling such criticism "the new antisemitism"). While this is intended to suppress and delegitimize calls for justice in Palestine, it also spills over into other areas of social justice work. Individual activists, whole organizations and even entire movements have been tarred as antisemitic for the entirely legitimate act of criticizing Israeli government policy or the political ideology of Zionism.

In reaction to the manipulations of the right, many on the left haven't wanted to address anti-semitism at all. To the extent that the left recognizes antisemitism, it often constricts the meaning to include only interpersonal, overt, or violent acts against Jews such as hate speech or vandalism. This ignores all of the historical evidence about the structural nature of anti-Jewish oppression. Originating in European Christianity, it incubated in the form of stereotypes about Jews and sporadic acts of small-scale violence, but then ramped-up and entered periods of elevated hysteria where it became institutionalized and sometimes extremely lethal.

But this is itself confusing, highlighting the wild extremes of Ashkenazi Jewish experience in the past century. In the 1930s and '40s, the Nazi Holocaust in Germany decimated Europe's Jewish population but today American Jews are broadly secure and successful. For most of our history Jews have been small, vulnerable minorities in the societies in which we've lived, but in just the past few decades some Jews settled in and took control of Palestine and created Israel — an ethno-nationalist "Jewish State" complete with nuclear weapons. So what is it? Are Jews precarious and oppressed or safe and powerful? How should we think about ourselves, and how should others see us? And in this moment do we focus on the scary, [striking similarities between social conditions in pre-war Germany and the United States today](#) or on the many, many differences? It remains an open question whether the Holocaust was simply the latest, "greatest" outbreak of endless and ongoing cycles of antisemitism, or a last act that shifted the tide and marked a fundamental change in the world that forever ended the type of widespread institutional anti-semitism and state violence against Jews that we saw in Europe for centuries. We may not have a definitive answer for decades or even centuries to come. However, the authors of this paper see the possibility that this dangerous pattern of blaming Jews for difficult societal problems could emerge again today.

The stakes are too high to allow our collective confusion to persist as an impediment to effective organizing and action. As Jews committed to social justice, we believe that everyone working to resist the intensified oppression activated by the Trump administration needs clarity about anti-Jewish ideology. As Jews, we need friends who have our backs, and as a whole movement we need to be able to see through the ways that both real antisemitism and false accusations of antisemitism are used to divide and derail us. We offer this intersectional analysis as a resource to strengthen our united movements as we all face the escalation of attacks from the right.

Why is an understanding of antisemitism important?

It should be concerning to everyone that this insidious and complex oppression is so marginally addressed by the movement left. Throughout history, an effect of antisemitism has been to distract and divide powerful movements for justice and equity, preserving oppressive systems and benefitting ruling elites.

JEWISH DIVERSITY



A poor Jewish family of Aleppo, Syria in the early 20th Century. (Library of Congress)



Black Jewish Leaders at the Jews of Color National Convening in 2016. (Photo: Desmond Reich)

For centuries the targeting and scapegoating of Jews — either by individuals or societal systems — has had the effect of confusing non-Jews (and sometimes Jews as well) about the true nature of systemic oppression. This redirects them toward ineffective or self-destructive resistance strategies, ultimately breaking down the social fabric of our movements. Examples include the [anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia](#), the anti-Jewish campaigns led by [Henry Ford](#)^{1,2} and [Father Coughlin](#) in the U.S. in the 1930s, the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota in 1938³, the death of [civil rights unionism in the 1940s](#)⁴ and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Schools Crisis of the 1960s. It only takes a quick glance at the [conflicts over the Vision For Black Lives platform](#) in 2016 or the [March For Racial Justice](#) in the summer of 2017 to see that a lack of clarity about antisemitism, from both non-Jews and Jews, is hurting our movements right now.

One devastating impact of oppression is the way it leads us to believe that our interests and our communities are at odds or in competition. In order to successfully fight the rise of fascism in

- 1 Smith, David Norman. “The Social Construction of Enemies: Jews and the Representation of Evil.” *Sociological Theory*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1996, pp. 203–240. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3045387
- 2 Woeste, Victoria Saker. “Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929.” *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 3, 2004, pp. 877–905. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/3662859
- 3 Berman, Hyman. “Political Antisemitism in Minnesota during the Great Depression.” *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3/4, 1976, pp. 247–264. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4466937
- 4 Korstad, Robert R., *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth-Century South*, UNC Press, 2003

the United States, we need to overcome this lie whenever it arises. To do so includes understanding the particular role that anti-Jewish sentiment plays in breaking up resistance movements. Jews and non-Jews have always had a mutual interest in each other's liberation as we face the intimidating machinery of white supremacy, imperialism, and capitalism. To dismantle the entire deadly machine it is crucial that we address antisemitism — a dangerous, often hidden lever in the machine's mechanism.

Who are Jews?

A central way that antisemitism thrives is through myths and stereotypes about Jews. These stereotypes benefit from a lack of clarity about who Jews actually are and ignorance about the demographics of our community.

Judaism is one of the three so-called “Abrahamic” religions, along with Christianity and Islam, which trace their roots to the biblical patriarch Abraham. Judaism predates both Christianity



Zauod-el-Mara, Jewish Quarter, Alexandria, Egypt 1898.



Bollywood star and Baghdadi Indian Jew [Nadira](#)

and Islam, but over time has been overtaken by both of them in numbers of adherents throughout the world.

Between 722 and 73 BCE, Jewish population centers in the Middle East began to fragment due to invasion and military conflict, and Jews were scattered throughout the region. From 63 CE until 70–73 CE, the Romans occupied Judea, which led to an uprising, a crackdown, and the final expulsion of Jews from their homeland in what is now Israel/Palestine. Many Jews remained in the Middle East and North Africa, while many others migrated throughout the world in what is known as the “Jewish diaspora,” with some settling in what is modern-day Europe and other parts of the world.^{5,6,7,8}

Today, Jews are a tiny percentage of the U.S. population; there are 5.3 million Jews — approximately 2.2% of the total population of the country.⁹ Among those five million U.S. Jews are people of every race, gender, and economic status. There are Jews in every state of the U.S., with

5 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-diaspora>

6 <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-diaspora/>

7 Sheffer, Gabriel Gabi. “Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora’s Current Situation.” *Israel Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–35. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30245752

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_diaspora

9 Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 2013, retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/chapter-1-population-estimates/>

the largest absolute populations in New York, California, and Florida¹⁰ and the most per capita in New York, New Jersey and Washington D.C.¹¹

JEWISH DIVERSITY



Two Jews from Kaifeng, China, c. 1902.



Black Jewish Civil Rights supporter and entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Ethiopian Jews Protest in Jerusalem, 2012.

Jews are a racially and ethnically diverse community. Some Jewish ethnic groups include Eastern and Western European and Russian (Ashkenazi); Middle Eastern, North African, Central Asian, and Balkan (Mizrahi); Ethiopian and Ugandan (African); and Spanish and Portuguese (Sephardi).¹² There are mixed-race Jews whose ancestors include many kinds of non-European peoples, and both white people and People of Color who have chosen (or whose parents,

grandparents or ancestors have chosen) to become Jews through conversion. Somewhere between 11% and 20% of Jews in the United States are People of Color (depending on the methodology used and whom you consider to be “of Color”).^{13,14} There are also significant, ethnically diverse Jewish communities all over the world. Jews live in 70% of the world’s nations. From the ancient community of Chinese Jews in Kaifeng^{15,16} to the B’nai, Cochini and Baghdadi Jews of India and the many Jewish enclaves of Latin America, Jews come from every part of the world, and look every kinda way.¹⁷

TIP: CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Don’t make assumptions or generalize about Jews — that Person of Color next to you might be Jewish. Acknowledge the race and class diversity of the Jewish community, and ways in which Black and Arab Jews are particularly targeted, as well as the ways that poor and working-class Jews are rendered invisible.

Jews have been in the U.S. since the colonial period, though much of what we associate with Jewish life and culture in the United States arrived with the large wave of Ashkenazi Jews emigrating from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1921.¹⁸ In 1921, and again in 1924, motivated by antisemitism as well as racism toward Asians and other forms of xenophobia, congress passed

10 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-in-the-united-states-by-state>

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Jews#Significant_Jewish_population_centers

12 Hahn Tapper, Aaron J. *Judaisms - A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*, University of California Press, 2016

13 <http://ajpp.brandeis.edu/>

14 http://www.bechollashon.org/population/north_america/na_color.php

15 http://www.sino-judaic.org/index.php?page=kaifeng_jews_history

16 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/china-virtual-jewish-history-tour>

17 Hahn Tapper, Aaron J., *Judaisms - A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*, University of California Press, 2016

18 <http://americanjewisharchives.org/education/timeline.php>

laws restricting the immigration of Jews and other groups to the U.S. based on a national origins quota, similar in spirit to Trump's "Muslim Ban" today.¹⁹

Jews are perhaps best described as suffering from "definitional instability" when it comes to race. According to Sander Gilman, "The general consensus of the ethnological literature of the late nineteenth century was that the Jews were 'black' or, at least swarthy. This view had a long history in European science."²⁰ In the United States, Jews were certainly *not* Black, but were not considered to be quite white either. This distinction was further entrenched by the advent of "scientific" racism.²¹ Jews faced some legal barriers before and after the American Revolution, and were later subjected to immigration restrictions and discrimination via housing covenants as well as quotas and bans at educational institutions.²² However, these oppressions were nothing like those faced by African-Americans, Native Americans and many other immigrant groups. Like the Irish and Italians, light-skinned Jews of European descent once faced pervasive, racialized bigotry. Today they primarily identify as white and are read as white, benefit from white privilege, and participate in upholding the system of white supremacy. However, this whiteness is contextual and conditional. While white supremacy may have embraced Jews of European descent in the last century, white supremacists have never considered any Jews to be white, as was abundantly clear watching the neo-Nazi rallies in Charlottesville, VA in the summer of 2017. As we will explore shortly, antisemitic beliefs predate modern white supremacy ideology. But white supremacy has since been incorporated into antisemitism, creating a shifting, slippery mixture of religious intolerance, mythology and racism. This means that Jews can sometimes be racialized as white, but antisemitism persists, and white Jews can still be considered "other" because of religious difference and cultural stereotypes. As a community, we have the critical job of agitating many of our people around white privilege while also taking very seriously the impact that antisemitism has on us. We don't see that work as contradictory.

In the U.S. today, white Ashkenazi Jews sometimes assert that they are not white because they are oppressed by other white people. Race is inherently fluid, nuanced and irrational and there is much to learn by [probing and interrogating how Jews of European descent are racialized](#) today. However, the authors believe that white Jews do experience white access and privilege, and that their claims arise from conflating the workings of antisemitism with the workings of racism, specifically anti-Black racism. What these white Jews are really saying is that they are not *Christian* white people. But being targeted by one oppression doesn't negate being privileged by, complicit in, or acting as a perpetrator of another. White Ashkenazi Jewish racialization could change in the future, but in the here and now, such claims undermine the work of Jews of Color including Mizrahim to challenge white supremacy within Jewish communities.

Meanwhile, like all other People of Color, Jews of Color are the targets of racism and white supremacy, while as Jews they are also targeted by antisemitism. They simultaneously experience racist marginalization, microaggressions and outright hostility (and often disbelief in their very existence) from white Jews, non-Jewish People of Color, and from U.S. society as a whole.

SCIENTIFIC RACISM



"The Jewish Type." Eugenic pseudoscience justifying racism and antisemitism.

Meanwhile, like all other People of Color, Jews of Color are the targets of racism and white supremacy, while as Jews they are also targeted by antisemitism.

19 The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 limited immigration in a given year to 3% of the total number of immigrants from any given country recorded in 1910; this affected not only Jews but a wide range of Eastern and Southern Europeans, among other nationalities. The Immigration Act of 1924 tightened it 2% of the number recorded in 1890 and entirely excluded Asian immigrants. See: <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>

20 Gilman, Sander L, *Are Jews White?, Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, 229–237, Routledge, 2000

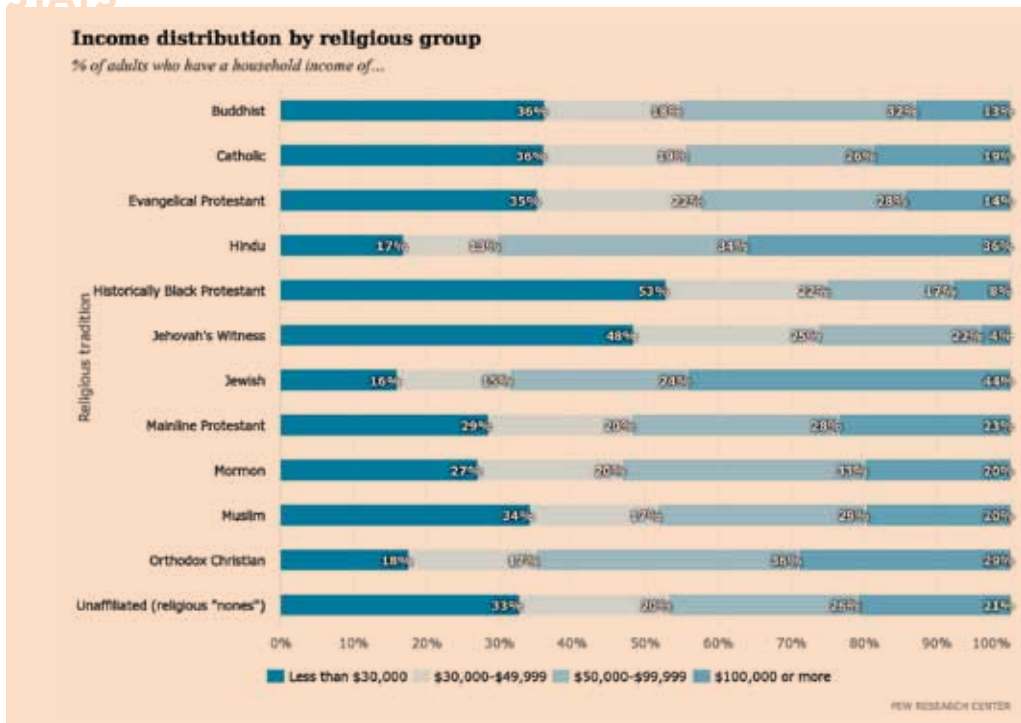
21 Brodtkin, Karen, *How Jews Became White Folks And What That Says About Race In America*, Rutgers University Press, 1998

22 Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism*, ch. 2 and p. 374, 2004

The false perception that all Jews are white permeates even the Jewish community and distorts the way we see and treat each other, creating a complex colorism. A dark-skinned Mizrahi Jew may not have their Jewish identity questioned by Ashkenazi Jews but they will still experience the type of bigotry that is directed at Arab people, anyone perceived to be Muslim, and at new and undocumented immigrants. Meanwhile, even a light-skinned Black, Latino, or East Asian Jew would rarely be perceived as Jewish by *anyone* because of our collective misperceptions about where Jews come from and what they look like. Regardless of skin color, all Mizrahi Jews experience the cultural erasure of non-European history and tradition in our Jewish institutions, in addition to the deep rooted anti-Arab racism that permeates those institutions and our society as a whole. At the same time, Ashkenazi Jews of Color benefit from the normalization of Ashkenazi culture within the Jewish community. But because of racism they often don't have access to the institutional power that tends to come with cultural dominance. Amidst all the complexities of how different Jews are racialized, it is Black Jews, at the end of day, who face the most virulent forms of racism and anti-Blackness within Jewish institutions and in American society. It must be a core principle throughout our movements — and throughout the Jewish community — that we create space for each other's divergent experiences at the same time that we remain clear on who among us faces the greatest threats to safety.

There is also great class diversity among Jews. The very wealthiest individuals on the planet are predominantly Christian according to nonpartisan wealth research firm New World Wealth. In 2015, their study found that more than half of the world's millionaires identified as Christian and that there are more Hindu and Muslim millionaires than Jewish ones. Of the 13.1 million people in the world who are millionaires, 56.2% were Christians, while 6.5% were Muslims, 3.9% are Hindu and 1.7% are Jewish. Jews make up 11.6% of the world's billionaires — higher than Jews' percentile in the world's population, but a small fraction of the total.²³ Contrary to conspiracy theories about Jews — and conspiracy theories about economic dominance in general — no single group controls the planet's wealth.

STATS



While Jews do not control huge amounts of wealth, it is true that in the U.S. Jews earn more income than most other religious and ethnic groups. This advantage does not, however, add up to some huge disparity for Jews as a whole. Some 25% of Jews in the U.S. report household incomes over \$150,000, while 8% of the general population reports the same household incomes.²⁴ However, Jewish adults make up a very small percentage of the U.S. population, only 5.3 million out of 318 million (2.2%). That means that the vast majority of high income people in the U.S. are non-Jews. Also, these figures look only at income. They don't measure assets, especially those passed down through multiple generations. Since the majority of U.S. Jews were poor and working-class immigrants only a few generations ago, looking at inher-

23 In 2013, Forbes Israel counted 165 Jewish billionaires in the world (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/worlds-jewish-billionaires-worth-combined-812-billion/>). The total Forbes count of world billionaires that year was 1426. 11.6% is thus an accurate figure for 2013.

24 Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," 2013, retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/income-distribution/>

ited wealth would likely reveal an even greater concentration of resources in the hands of elite, white, non-Jewish families.²⁵

Many people incorrectly believe that there are no poor Jews or that the only poor Jews are the Charedi or ultra-Orthodox (Jews who reject secular culture, and are often identified in New York City by their black hats and/or wigs). According to a study by the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, 45% of all children in Jewish households in New York now live below or near the poverty line and the Jewish poverty rate is 26.4% — only slightly lower than the general population (30.8%). The same report found that Jewish poverty is rising fast. The number of poor Jews increased by 22% between 1991 and 2011.²⁶ Despite widespread Jewish poverty, the experiences of poor and working-class Jewish communities are erased by false characterizations of Jews as uniformly wealthy. JFREJ is committed to tackling this myth inside our own community and we believe that if we fully understand the racial, ethnic, and class diversity of the Jewish community we will be better positioned to organize against the resurgent right.

In short, our community is extremely diverse. It includes rich Jews and poor Jews, white Jews and Jewish People of Color. It is important to be clear that there are many Jews with race and class privilege. But it is also important to be clear that, as anti-racist writer and activist Scot Nakagawa reminds us, “Privilege is not the same as power, and privilege is not a bulwark against white nationalism and other fascistic movements for those who are targeted, because privilege is conditional and hinges on [who] is in power. It is important to address antisemitism as a lever of white supremacy and anti-democratic power arrangements and movements.”

“Privilege is not the same as power...”
- Scot Nakagawa

PART II - WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM?

What is antisemitism?

Originating in European Christianity, antisemitism is the form of ideological oppression that targets Jews. In Europe and the United States, it has functioned to protect the prevailing economic system and the almost exclusively Christian ruling class by diverting blame for hardship onto Jews. Like all oppressions, it has deep historical roots and uses exploitation, marginalization, discrimination and violence as its tools. Like all oppressions, the ideology contains elements of dehumanization and degradation via lies and stereotypes about Jews, as well as a mythology. The myth changes and adapts to different times and places, but fundamentally it says that Jews are to blame for society’s problems.

Since the emergence of Christianity as Europe’s dominant religious, political and cultural force, Jews and Muslims have been targeted for violence — often extreme violence — isolated from the rest of society, and periodically purged from jobs, towns, countries and even continents. Antisemitism began as religious intolerance, but has always been at least partly xenophobic or mysophobic; Jews have been cast as outsiders, pollutants or polluted, such as with 15th–16th Century Spanish *limpeza de sangre* (blood purity) laws.^{27,28,29,30,31} Eventually through the development of

25 Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” 2013 retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/income-distribution/>

26 Steven M. Cohen, Ph.D., Jacob B. Ukeles, Ph.D., Ron Miller, Ph.D., “Jewish Community Study Of New York: 2011 Comprehensive Report,” UJA-Federation of New York, 2011, retrieved from: <http://www.met-council.org/site/DocServer/JCSNY2011ComprehensiveReport.pdf?docID=3161>

27 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Spain/The-Spanish-Inquisition#ref587479>

28 Schäfer, Peter, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World*, Harvard University Press, 2009

29 Schäfer, Peter. “Response to Christine Hayes and Robert Goldenberg.” *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1999, pp. 274–281. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40753240

30 <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0101.xml#firstMatch>

31 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Antisemitism In History: From The Early Church To 1400.” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007170>. Accessed on 10/30/2017

modern, “scientific” racism, many people began to consider Jews a distinct, inferior and troubling race.^{32,33} Because of this process of evolution, sometimes antisemitism today is religious in form, focused on Jews as heretical non-believers, sometimes it is driven by specific myths and stereotypes about Jews, and sometimes it’s racial, rooted in the idea that there is something fixed and inherently, biologically wrong with Jews. Usually it’s a little bit of each.

It is important to say that while Christian dogma was central in the development of antisemitism, and Christian hierarchs were often its agents, many Christians throughout history (both

MEDIEVAL ANTISEMITISM



Medieval Europe:
Jews being burned at the stake.

secular and religious) have been active allies to Jews, taken grave risks or even given their lives defending Jews from antisemitism. Over time, Christian dogma has become less relevant to antisemitic ideology as the oppression has taken on a life and logic of its own. In a review of *A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Antisemitism in America* by Frederic Cople Jaher and *Antisemitism in America* by Leonard Dinnerstein, Professor Till van Rahden writes:

“Racist, eugenicist, anti-communist or economic variations of American antisemitism at times certainly used Christian metaphors. Racist, eugenicist forms of antisemitism were genuinely new in ideological substance. Genes replace race replaced revelation as the driving forces of history. It is very likely that racist antisemitism adopted the familiar guise of Christ to secure its victorious career. . . . True, antisemitism was raised and nurtured by Christian doctrine. It will probably never shed the formative influence of its childhood. At the same time, however, antisemitism has grown up and become an ideology of its own, drawing from other traditions such as racism as well. To analyze and effectively combat antisemitism it is important to carefully distinguish between various types of antisemitism that call for different forms of ‘counter narratives.’”³⁴

Engaging in a pattern of behavior that should feel familiar to anyone listening to today’s right-wing rhetoric about immigration and refugees, [Christian nobility from antiquity on through the Renaissance](#) curried favor with their populations by placing restrictions on economic opportunities for Jews, and sometimes isolating them [physically by confining them to what came to be called ghettos](#).^{35,36} Prohibited from owning land or joining tradesmen’s guilds, Jews were

32 Rao, Mohan. “‘Scientific’ Racism: A Tangled Skein.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 38, no. 8, 2003, pp. 697–699. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4413238

33 Jackson, John P., and Nadine M. Weidman. “The Origins of Scientific Racism.” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 50, 2005, pp. 66–79. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25073379

34 Van Rahden, Till. “American Jewish History.” *American Jewish History*, vol. 83, no. 4, 1995, pp. 507–511. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23885608

35 Cahnman, Werner J. “Socio-Economic Causes of Antisemitism.” *Social Problems*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1957, pp. 21–29. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/798945

36 <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-ghettos-of-europe/>

restricted to jobs that Christians found distasteful or were prohibited by the Church, such as money-lending and tax collecting.³⁷ (There is [recent scholarship](#) that contradicts this sequence of events, and suggests that Jews arrived in the cities of early Europe armed with very high literacy rates for the era, seeking better jobs, which means that antisemitic restrictions on Jews were a form of backlash and protectionism.³⁸) Regardless of the chicken-and-egg nature of this debate, this era saw the genesis of many anti-Jewish myths.³⁹ Laws that funnelled Jews into certain professions such as money lending could only serve to reinforce these stereotypes. (A parallel is the forced illiteracy of enslaved Africans in many Southern states prior to emancipation, which

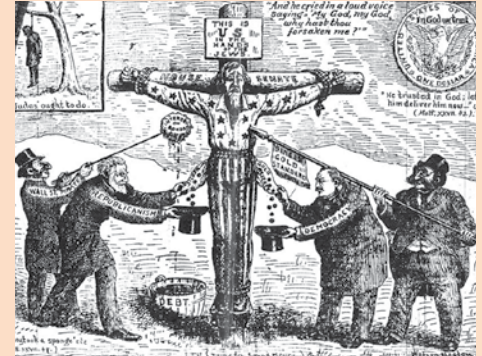
ANTISEMITISM IN THE U.S.



The U.S.: The [lynching](#) of [Leo Frank](#) by a [white mob](#), thirty days before the reformation of the KKK. June, 1915.

None of the said lands, i
or improvements thereon s
resold, conveyed, leased,
any way used, occupied or
person of Negro blood or
of the Semitic race, bloc

The U.S.: Detail of a restrictive housing covenant, barring rental or sale to Jews, Negroes, Armenians, Persians or Syrians.



The U.S.: An antisemitic political cartoon from 1896 depicting Jews crucifying Uncle Sam.

reinscribes the stereotype that Black people are inherently stupid — a painful lie that persists to this day. In both examples, a present-day oppressive stereotype originates in a prior act of oppression.) After centuries of church indoctrination claiming that Jews rejected Jesus, had killed the son of God, and were agents of the devil, it was easy for European Christians to believe that Jews were the cause of their problems. Whether it was [spreading the Black Plague](#) or hoarding a community's wealth, they were an ideal group to scapegoat. This meant that attention and anger was diverted away from the people who levied the taxes and toward the “strange,” “greedy” Jews tasked with collecting them.

Once this mythology was established, it followed Jews throughout Europe, and was exported to the Middle East, North Africa, and the Americas through colonialism and imperial conquest.

Before European colonialism, Jews in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central Asia, and the Balkans, lived as one religious minority among many, sometimes socially restricted or targeted for violence as non-Muslims, but most of the time not singled out for persecution or racialized in the way European Jews were.⁴⁰ In many Islamic empires, Jews (and Christians) were guarded by *dhimmi* status and *millet* laws, which considered non-Muslim religious minorities living under Islamic dominion as second-class, yet protected subjects of the Sultan. Jews maintained relative autonomy over their religious practice, including the freedom to practice their own communal laws of *halakha*, and often paid a tax to the caliphate in order to do so. Over centuries of coexistence in many Islamic territories, there were indeed sporadic attacks, forced conversions and mass killings of Jews. But the same was true for Christians and other non-

37 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Antisemitism In History: The Early Modern Era, 1300–1800.” Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007172>. Accessed on 10/30/2017

38 Botticini, Maristella, and Zvi Eckstein, *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History*, 70-1492. Princeton University Press, 2012. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rv92

39 <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/119/1/229/20497/Maristella-Botticini-and-Zvi-Eckstein-The-Chosen>

40 Hassan, Riaz. “Interrupting a History of Tolerance: Antisemitism and the Arabs.” *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2009, pp. 452–462. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23655209

Erasure of Mizrahi and Sephardi history fuels Islamophobia by spreading an inaccurate story about Jewish experiences outside of Europe.

Muslim minorities. The key distinction is that there was no specifically *anti-Jewish* ideology that bore any resemblance to European antisemitism, and for long stretches of time, Jews lived safely alongside their Muslim neighbors.⁴¹ This history disproves narratives that assert universal persecution as the permanent condition of Jews in the world, rather than describing antisemitism as a historically specific product of European society that can also be interrupted. That's why the histories of Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews throw a beautiful wrench into attempts (by the right and sometimes the left) to manipulate Jewish fear by universalizing Ashkenazi historical trauma. This erasure of Mizrahi and Sephardi history fuels Islamophobia by spreading an inaccurate story about Jewish experiences outside of Europe.

As happened across much of the globe, European Christian colonization changed everything. As it extended into the Middle East and North Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, both Christians and Jews from the region were deliberately granted economic and social privileges that were denied to the much larger Muslim population. For example, during the French occupation of modern-day Algeria, Jews were given the option of applying for French citizenship under the Cremieux Decree of 1870, while Algerian Muslims were not — one of the first and most significant attempts to divide and thereby weaken the relationship between the two religious groups.⁴² British and French colonizers also employed Arab Jews as the representatives of their occupying governments. As elements of European antisemitism mixed with the social tensions of a colonized community, these privileges became deeply resented by the Muslim majority, and in some cases, Jews were targeted for violence in moments of societal stress. Unfortunately this history has been subsumed by a narrative that minimizes the impact of European colonialism and instead paints Muslims as broadly and inherently anti-Jewish.

Antisemitism was something European Christians created and brought to the Middle East within the last 150 years. Before colonization, there may have been discrimination against Jews, even moments of escalated violence. However, there were rarely specific laws — institutional oppressions — that targeted Jews *because they were Jews*.⁴³ According to Riaz Hassan:

“After reviewing the history of Jewish-Muslim relations, [historian Bernard] Lewis concludes that in general Jewish and Muslim theology are far closer to each other than either is to Christianity. Jews have lived under Islamic rule for 14 centuries and in many lands and, while it is difficult to generalise [sic] about their experience, they were never free from discrimination but were rarely subjected to persecution as the case was with Christians.

Most of the characteristic and distinctive features of Christian antisemitism were absent. There were no fears of Jewish conspiracy and domination, no charges of diabolic evil. Jews were not accused of poisoning wells or spreading the plague and the blood libel.”⁴⁴

European antisemitism began to impact the Middle East and North Africa during the Damascus Affair in 1840, in which European colonial powers were deeply involved. It only continued to escalate leading up to, during, and after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, as the position of rooted Jewish communities within Arab and Muslim societies became increasingly and devastatingly precarious.^{45,46} According to the 2006 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, “In the Muslim world, attitudes toward Jews remain starkly negative, including virtually unanimous

41 <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-treatment-of-jews-in-arab-islamic-countries>

42 Abitbol, Michel, and Alan Astro. “The Integration of North African Jews in France.” *Yale French Studies*, no. 85, 1994, pp. 248–261. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2930080

43 Stillman, Norman A. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1991

44 Hassan, Riaz, “Asian Journal of Social Science 37,” Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow and Emeritus Professor in the Department of Sociology, Flinders University., (2009)

45 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-damascus-blood-libel>

46 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-refugees-from-arab-countries>

unfavorable ratings of 98% in Jordan and 97% in Egypt.⁴⁷ However, we must not exceptionalize anti-Jewish attitudes among Muslim people and misread them as an essential, and therefore perennial feature of Islamic theology or society. Like the rest of the globe, the Arab and Muslim world was deeply transformed by European Christian colonization and impacted by white supremacy and the ideology of antisemitism that came with it.

In what ways is antisemitism different than other oppressions such as anti-Black racism?

Many oppressions, such as anti-Black racism in the United States, could be said to require a fixed hierarchy or binary values system. Whites are supreme; Blacks are on the bottom. Men are born to rule; women are meant to be obedient. There are variations and nuances — putting women on pedestals of virtue, etc. — but we understand these to be ultimately in service of the original proposition.

By contrast, antisemitism is often described as “cyclical.” The Jewish experience in Europe has been characterized as cycling between periods of Jewish stability and even success, only to be followed by periods of intense anti-Jewish sentiment and violence. This is directly related to the stereotypes and myths about Jews, which push the idea that Jews are secretly very powerful — that they control the economy of a town, a country or even the world and thus that they are ruining the “true” character of these places. In order for these myths to be plausible and gain purchase, Jews must accumulate at least *some* wealth and standing in society. You can’t say, “Jews are all-powerful,” unless Jews have at least a little bit of power. Rather than keeping Jews perpetually at the bottom, antisemitism often becomes most intense when Jews are afforded a measure of success. But if Jews were truly as collectively powerful as the antisemitic myths say — if they actually controlled the societies in which they lived throughout European history — they would have been able to protect themselves from anti-Jewish violence and bigotry. The truth is that they have historically been small minorities in almost every country they have migrated to, without the ability to control their own destinies, let alone those of the entire nation. When the workers in these countries got angry about their exploitation, the most accessible targets were often Jews, rather than the elite political and economic actors who actually had power over the system and who were almost exclusively Christian. Antisemitism — ever present in European culture — rises and becomes institutionalized; then violence; purges and forced migration; re-settlement. Repeat.

It is important to note that the history of antisemitism does not dictate its future. Antisemitism may have functioned cyclically at many times throughout European history. However, Mizrahi thinkers and others in recent years have been critiquing the use of the term “cyclical” as implying a universality and inevitability of Jewish persecution that doesn’t necessarily apply to them, or accurately describe the phenomenon. It may be that antisemitism has functioned cyclically, particularly in Europe, and signs we are seeing today of increased visible antisemitism hint at this pattern. However, Jews and social justice movements are not served by the perpetual fear engendered by a narrative that says anti-Jewish oppression is inevitable — especially when the right capitalizes on that fear. We seek to explore historical patterns of antisemitism while leaving open the possibility for new and liberatory dynamics to emerge.

At different times and places in history, the amount of success that Jews were allowed has varied, and at any given time many Jews remained poor or working-class. But the result of anti-Jewish oppression has remained consistent: when people’s rage is misdirected toward Jews, larger systems of economic injustice are shielded from scrutiny or even enhanced. European capitalism developed hand-in-hand with antisemitism, and as such the oppression of Jews has been a systemic feature in the functioning of capitalism for centuries.

The history of antisemitism does not dictate its future...We seek to explore historical patterns of antisemitism while leaving open the possibility for new and liberatory dynamics to emerge.

⁴⁷ Pew Research Center, Pew Global Attitudes Project, “The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other,” 2006, <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/pdf/253.pdf>

Throughout Europe and in the U.S., when times are good, antisemitism may seem like nothing more than a set of stereotypes and attitudes about Jews — a nuisance. Even in historical moments when there have been laws limiting our freedom, Jewish communities have often enjoyed relative material stability and safety, and individual Jews have risen in wealth and power. But when times got tough and non-Jewish poor and working-class people got angry about their own oppression, visible, prospering Jews have often been lifted up as the cause of societal problems, and all Jews (wealthy or not) have been blamed. During such times, Jews are attacked in gossip and graffiti, vilified in the media, physically assaulted, collectively punished, pushed out of communities or whole countries, and sometimes killed. Antisemitism that had been simmering below the surface has erupted into institutional exclusion and systemic violence.

Nazi Germany is a clear example of this dynamic, as well as the most extreme act of antisemitic violence in world history. Prior to Hitler's rise to power, Jews were, on the whole, an assimilated and comfortable minority in Germany.⁴⁸ (The same was true in the period leading up to [Dreyfus Affair](#) in France in the 1890s.⁴⁹) However, after World War I, most Germans experienced deep

THE HOLOCAUST



The Holocaust: Austrian Nazis laugh as Jews are forced to clean the pavement in Vienna by hand.



The Holocaust: Jews being executed at a mass grave by the Nazis.

economic hardship from the war and the economic reparations demanded by the victors. As the German economy worsened and sections of the country and its colonies were redistributed to other countries, Germans became outraged at what they saw as injustice against them. Meanwhile, Germany was also experiencing a large wave of Jewish immigration as refugees fled Eastern Europe. Many of these Jews were not only new immigrants, but were associated

with (or accused of being associated with) communist movements in their home countries.⁵⁰ After the worldwide depression began in 1929, this outrage needed an outlet, and Adolf Hitler was able to rise to power, stoking a tide of hatred toward Jews, Romani, queer people and others — those already considered “outsiders” or “pollutants” in popular imagination.⁵¹ Much as Donald Trump weds his appeals to racism and xenophobia with a pro-white working-class, nationalist narrative, Hitler combined his bigotry with populist, pro-working-class policies and intensely pro-German nationalist sentiment. Then as now, it was a potent brew.⁵² In his rise to power, Hitler was able to stoke Germany's collective hatred of Jews and place the blame for Germany's failings on them, which expanded public support for discriminatory policies and practices, and ultimately led to widespread violence, systematic expunging and murders, and the attempted genocide of the Jewish people. The Nazis exterminated 6 million Jews in death camps and mass murders, about 2/3 of the European Jewish population. The global Jewish population is only just now, in 2017, approaching its pre-Holocaust numbers. There were also many non-Jewish victims of Nazism including about 1.8 million Polish people, 250,000–270,000 people with disabilities, 90–220,000 Romani, and 5000–15,000 [queer](#) people.⁵³ As the famous [Martin](#)

48 Hertz, Deborah, *How Jews Became Germans: The History of Conversion and Assimilation in Berlin*. New Haven; London, Yale University Press, 2007. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vktjn

49 Green, Nancy L. “The Dreyfus Affair and Ruling Class Cohesion.” *Science & Society*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1979, pp. 29–50. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/40402147

50 <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/jewish-migration#19141948ExpulsionShoahandthefoundationofIsrael>

51 <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008222>

52 <http://www.newsweek.com/anne-frank-center-trump-germany-world-war-ii-647888>

53 <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008193>

[Niemöller poem](#) makes clear, the scapegoating of one group lays the groundwork for the targeting of the next and the next. The acceptability of antisemitism ultimately leaves every marginalized group vulnerable.

In the words of Aurora Levins Morales:

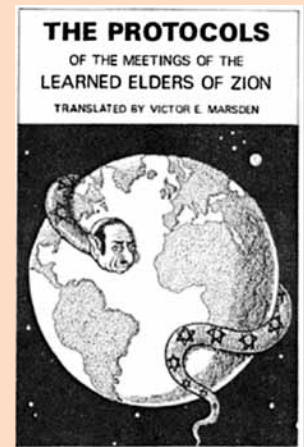
“Racism is like a millstone, a crushing weight that relentlessly presses down on people intended to be a permanent underclass. Its purpose is to press profit from us, right to the edge of extermination and beyond. The oppression of Jews is a conjuring trick, a pressure valve, a shunt that redirects the rage of working people away from the 1%, a hidden mechanism, a set up that works through misdirection, that uses privilege to hide the gears.

Unlike racism, at least some of its targets must be seen to prosper, must be well paid and highly visible. The goal is not to crush us, it’s to have us available for crushing. Christian rulers use us to administer their power, to manage for them, and set us up in the window displays of capitalism for the next time the poor pick up stones to throw. What is hard for the angry multitudes to see is that Jews don’t succeed in spite of our oppression. We are kept insecure by our history of sudden assaults, and some of us, a minority of us, are offered the uncertain bribes of privilege and protection. Privilege for a visible sample of us is the only way to make the whole tricky business work. Then, when the wrath of the most oppressed, whether Russian peasants starving on potatoes or urban US People of Color pressed to the wall, reaches boiling point, there we are: The Tsar’s tax collector, the shopkeeper and the pawnbroker, the landlord and the lawyer, the social worker and the school administrator. And whether it’s a Polish aristocrat watching the torches go by on pogrom or the Episcopalian banker discreetly out of sight while working-class people tell each other that Jews control the economy, the trick works.”

An example of antisemitism and how it plays out in society

An important example of antisemitism at work is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Pogroms (attacks) and legal restrictions on Jews in [Russia](#) and [Eastern Europe](#) were a major driver of [Jewish emigration to the United States](#) in the late 1800s through 1921. The first few years of the 20th century were a time of revolutionary upheaval in Russia. The government crushed a growing revolution in part by blaming Jews for the attempted overthrow of the Tzar (supreme ruler). There was a wave of state-sponsored anti-Jewish violence in which thousands of Jews died or had to flee the country. Building on this momentum, members of the Tzarist secret police created and widely published the [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#), a fabricated story of a Jewish plan for global domination—a nefarious conspiracy to undermine democracy and rule the world—in an attempt to focus blame for the country’s economic woes on Jews, rather than on the Tzarist regime. [Many leaders in the Russian Revolution](#) were Jews, so the fake *Protocols* did double-duty, diverting people’s anger away from the Tzar, and also undermining and destabilizing the revolution against him.^{54,55}

THE PROTOCOLS



Various editions of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

54 <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/protocols-of-the-elders-of-zion/>

55 Schapiro, Leonard. “The Role of the Jews in the Russian Revolutionary Movement.” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 40, no. 94, 1961, pp. 148–167. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4205328

The Protocols highlights some of the dense, coded ideas embedded in antisemitism going all the way back to early European Christianity. For example, “international,” “cosmopolitan,” and “globalist” are slurs associated with Jews. We have recently heard these coded “dog whistles” from Trump administration officials like [Steve Bannon](#) and [Stephen Miller](#) and in [Trump campaign ads](#) that single out Jewish political figures to suggest a mysterious financial conspiracy. The lineage of this rhetoric runs through *The Protocols*, where Jews are depicted as shadowy figures with a lot of money, top-level access, ready to betray the nations of our residence (and our neighbors) in service of an unseen authority. Jews are portrayed as fully dispersed, not always recognizable (a.k.a. “secret”) yet unassimilable, as well as untrustworthy, dirty, and foreign (among other stereotypes). The overall idea is that Jews are a powerful, corrupting influence on otherwise good, pure people — insidious trouble makers with a nefarious agenda at odds with that of the good, “true” citizens of a nation. (It should go without saying that crossing boundaries and borders, being comfortable in multiple cultures, and at home in a metropolis are not negative things. While some Jews are, in fact, international, cosmopolitan, or globally oriented, not all are.)

[The Protocols was published in a Russian newspaper in 1903](#) and was translated and disseminated in Western Europe and the United States in 1920. That year, Henry Ford distributed 500,000 copies of an American version, *The International Jew*.^{56,57} That was also the year it was debunked in New York and London newspapers. Despite that, later in the decade, conservative Catholic priest Father Coughlin also reprinted it in his antisemitic newspaper, ironically titled *Social Justice*.^{58,59} This fake conspiracy theory makes the rounds again and again. It appeared in Tzarist Russia to stave off a revolution; in Nazi Germany to buttress arguments for the Holocaust; and in the United States during the anti-Communist hysteria of the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s. *The Protocols* and derivative works continue to be published around the world.⁶⁰

Capitalism isn't
oppressive
because Jews
are ruining
it; capitalism
is oppressive
because
capitalism is
oppressive.

Examples of these false narratives today

The false association of Jews with money does not preclude a legitimate critique of capital or capitalists — banks, the real estate industry, or other financial actors. But all too often, people fail to separate the two. We see this expressed subtly when people in labor and housing justice coalitions say “my Jewish landlord” (especially if the landlords are visibly observant Jews) or “my Jewish employer.” They may not be explicitly anti-Jewish, but the fact that they mentioned “Jewishness” at all is a sign of how anti-Jewish sentiment is insidiously connected to wealth, greed, and control in the American consciousness. (How many times have you heard someone complain about a Presbyterian landlord or a Lutheran employer?) Jews who are slumlords, bad bosses, and racist bureaucrats aren't that way because they're Jewish. Like people from every ethnic group, they are participating in a system of racialized capitalist exploitation. In order for our movements to build effective anti-racist, working-class-based coalitions and actions, Jews who oppress must be challenged because of their roles in that system, not because of their Jewishness.

The slippage from economic misery to blaming the Jews is an easy one to make, given that these ideas about Jews (dirty, greedy, conspiratorial) pervade Western culture. On the political left we have a strong sense of how capital accumulation and the misdeeds of the wealthy do, in fact, decimate our communities and undermine our global health and wellness. They are indeed oppressive, corrosive forces. But while the 1% gather in places like Davos, TED conferences and

56 Ribuffo, Leo P. “Henry Ford and ‘The International Jew.’” *American Jewish History*, vol. 69, no. 4, 1980, pp. 437–477. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23881872

57 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/henry-ford-invents-a-jewish-conspiracy>

58 Bayor, Ronald H. “Klans, Coughlinites and Aryan Nations: Patterns of American Antisemitism in the Twentieth Century.” *American Jewish History*, vol. 76, no. 2, 1986, pp. 181–196. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23883334

59 <https://www.usmmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005516>

60 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemporary_imprints_of_The_Protocols_of_the_Elders_of_Zion

Burning Man to exchange ideas and business cards, it is not a conspiracy — by Jews or anyone else. All of this is the structural functioning of capitalism in all its racialized, gendered and imperialist dimensions. To put it another way, antisemitism frames the function of capitalism as a problem of human or communal mischief rather than as intrinsic to capitalism itself. Capitalism isn't oppressive because Jews are ruining it; capitalism is oppressive because capitalism is oppressive. The left cannot allow itself to slip into condoning or repeating the same lies that go back to Medieval Europe and get refreshed and re-seeded by propaganda such as *The Protocols* or else we will find ourselves in the same moral fog as the right.

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump occasionally offered legitimate criticisms of the role of offshoring and Wall Street speculation. But his [final campaign ad](#), which featured Jewish financiers (George Soros, Lloyd Blankfein) and Federal Reserve Chairperson Janet Yellen (also

TIP: HOW NOT TO TALK ABOUT JEWISH WEALTH

Don't "compliment" Jews for being wealthy or "good with money." Even if the intention is genuinely well-meaning, perpetuating the stereotype that there is somehow something exceptional or excessive about Jewish wealth only reinforces antisemitism. Myths about Jews and money have caused enormous pain over the centuries and led to the deaths of countless Jews. Very few of us are going to react well to this "compliment." And while in the U.S. there are many middle class or owning class Jews at this moment, many others are poor or working-class. Fixating on "Jewish wealth" erases that fact, along with the lived experience of poor and working-class Jews.

Jewish), [suggests covert antisemitic conspiracy](#) instead of actual economic critique. This is nefarious not only because it leads to violence, such as recent threats against Jewish community centers and other Jewish institutions, but because it provides simplistic and facile answers (Jewish control! Jewish greed!) to a complicated, structural set of problems that are not the fault of any one religious group.

The impact of internalized antisemitism on Jews

Gauging the psychic impact of oppression on a targeted group is, by its nature, imprecise, intuitive and speculative. We look for patterns of behavior, shared experiences and unexpected insights about shared traits. But like attributing a single storm to climate change, it is impossible to know for certain if correlation amounts to causation. In addition, we can only speculate on what we see in the center of the behavioral bell curve — for every few shared experiences of internalized oppression, someone will say, "hang on, that doesn't describe me at all!" This section is an attempt to sketch out some of the patterns of behavior and thought that Jews have observed in themselves. We attribute these patterns to repeated trauma inflicted on this community — trauma which was quite common for Jewish communities throughout Europe, less common for Jews who lived in the Arab and Muslim world. These ideas cannot be objectively verified — the authors can only say that this description of internalized oppression feels right; that it approximates some aspect of our lived experience and our observations about some Jews.

Because the oppression has come in waves, because Jews have often been allowed to flourish between those waves, and because these waves have often broken over our communities when least expected, many Jews live with a kind of simmering fear. It can seem like Jews have nothing to worry about because many of us are financially secure and benefit from white privilege in a country that has protected us from anti-Jewish violence over the last half century. But the reality is that Jews have lived in many countries where it seemed we were safe, where a portion of our people had wealth and privilege, only to have that illusion of safety torn away in oppression and violence. So while the material stability and safety that many Jews in the U.S. have is real and

significant, it is also feels precarious to many of us.^{61,62,63} And if historical patterns go unchallenged, it is possible that our physical safety could once again disappear.

As happens in all communities, a feeling of insecurity drives some of us to align with those in power in an attempt to maintain safety, when in reality this allegiance maintains the toxic status quo. While the overwhelming majority of Jews did not vote for Donald Trump in 2016 (76%), we do see a percentage of the Jewish community aligning with Trump and his racist cronies, even with those who openly espouse antisemitic beliefs, and support them institutionally.^{64,65} These folks are likely driven to support Trump in part because of his extreme support of Israel and his alignment with the politically conservative Orthodox community.^{66,67} But as Jews have seen over and over again throughout history, cozying up to those in power will not ultimately protect most Jewish communities from antisemitism and white supremacy. It is important to note that the presence of high-profile Jewish advisors or Jewish leaders does not exempt the Trump administration or any other institution from antisemitism. Oppression is structural and right-wing alliances can mean strange bedfellows [see: Ben Carson; Omarosa].

It is therefore the work of all Jews to disinvest from racial and economic privileges and to work against white supremacy. And it is the work of non-Jews to stand alongside the Jewish community and demonstrate that we are among friends who won't be fooled by antisemitic myths, so that Jews can access safety without reliance on state power.

The good news is that the patterns of the past do not need to repeat themselves. An overwhelming majority of Jews voted against Trump's election. They might not all be leftist but most find his values repellant. Some progressive Jewish organizations (including JFREJ) are aiming to mobilize this majority to join with the wider movement against the right and to hold accountable right-wing Jewish institutions that do not represent us. We are also moved by the incredible solidarity that non-Jewish left organizations have already shown our community. Together, we can interrupt historical patterns and ultimately win liberation for all of our communities.

It is not anti-Jewish to denounce oppressive acts committed by Jews.

Is criticism of Israel antisemitic?

Criticisms of Israel and Zionism are not inherently or inevitably anti-Jewish. All states, movements and ideologies should be scrutinized, and all forms of injustice denounced. It is not anti-Jewish to denounce oppressive acts committed by Jews. On the contrary, *insisting that a history of oppression exempts Jews — or any other group for that matter — from accountability undermines Jewish liberation and betrays our values.*

Leaders of the Jewish state and the Jewish leaders and institutions that support them worldwide must be held accountable for their oppression of Palestinians and the continued occupation of Palestinian land. However, we must not become confused about the nature, cause, or, sadly, the sheer ordinariness of Israeli state violence and the pain visited upon Palestinians. It does not in any way minimize the suffering of Palestinians to say that their oppression is comparable to many other terrible human rights disasters being committed worldwide by non-Jews. There is nothing about the Jewishness of Israeli leaders that makes their rockets more deadly or their walls more brutal — it is simply militaristic nationalism. Syrians, Ukrainians, Chechens, Afghans — all will recognize this flavor of violence immediately, just as indigenous people in the

61 Firestone Friedman, M. Tirzah, "Transforming Jewish Historical Trauma: Tales of Choice and Redemption," Pacifica Graduate Institute, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015. 10003943

62 Lyons, Gila, "Jewish Trauma May Be Passed Down Through The Generations," The Establishment, June 16, 2016, retrieved from: <https://theestablishment.co/for-jewish-people-trauma-is-passed-down-across-generations-bf9aa503778b>

63 Brown, Cherie. 2011. "Unhealed Terror" Tikkun 26(1), Winter 2011

64 <http://religionnews.com/2017/09/13/most-us-jews-oppose-trump-but-the-orthodox-stick-with-him/>

65 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>

66 <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.752384>

67 <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/211805/trump-sets-up-shop-in-israel>

U.S. and the world over are familiar with the violence of displacement — no Jews required. This is why JFREJ envisions a world without oppression, colonialism, occupation, and displacement, including, of course, here in the United States.

We must criticize Jews who support the oppression of Palestinians on the same terms and by the same standards that we hold for all oppressors the world over — we are enraged because of what they do, not by who they are.

It is also important to understand that for many Jews past and present, Zionism has not been seen as a colonialist project but as the right for Jews to have a physical place of self-determined safety. For many Jews, the State of Israel has felt like the only thing standing between them and another Holocaust. This fear, rooted in very recent historical trauma, is why grounded and valid protests against Israeli government policy or Zionism are sometimes heard by Jews as threats to the safety of the Jewish people as a whole. Actual violence against Jews or other antisemitic acts in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and around the globe only compound these fears and further a tragic dynamic.

The political right in the United States and Israel often trades on this fear and uses false or inflated charges of antisemitism to delegitimize pro-Palestinian activism and undermine attempts to hold Israel accountable for its actions.⁶⁸ While we firmly believe that the right doesn't deserve to have a monopoly on defining antisemitism, we also imagine that if the political left develops a sharper antisemitism analysis and deeper commitment to interrupting it, we will more effectively resist being smeared by the right. And while critiquing Israel and Zionism is not inherently or inevitably anti-Jewish, it *is* possible for Jews and non-Jews alike to attack Zionism or Israel with language that echoes anti-Jewish tropes or exceptionalizes Israeli actions in a way that furthers antisemitism. For example, Jew-hater, Holocaust-denier and Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke has been trying to popularize the term “Zio” (short for Zionist) as a stand-in for Jew — a transparently disingenuous way to attack Jews without being accused of antisemitism.^{69,70,71}

We cannot overlook any injustice when we see it, no matter where it is or who is causing it. As Jews, we are no less responsible for our role in perpetuating oppression anywhere in the world because of our history of persecution; in fact, that history should only further fuel our commitment to justice. But our movements must also continue to cultivate clarity about the role that all oppressions — including antisemitism — play in maintaining the status quo. If we're committed to collective liberation, we can't compromise on who's included in that vision for the world. We need everyone, from New York to Palestine.

Anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim oppression are closely related

Antisemitism and Islamophobia are not only entangled, but deeply rooted in the same systems of white supremacy and Christian hegemony that have also driven ongoing genocide against indigenous people, and bigotry toward non-Christians from other parts of the world.

The history of Spain during the 14th and 15th centuries is one of the most clear examples of this shared past. Before there were modern-day conceptions of race, there were theories about racial inferiority based on religion — the concept of *limpieza de sangre* — specifically based on who was not Christian.⁷² Both Jews and Muslims were racialized in strikingly similar ways under this framework: as separate races than Christians, as biological pollutants, as perpetually suspect

68 Jewish Voice for Peace, *On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice*, Haymarket Books, 2017

69 <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2016/03/whore-you-calling-a-zio/>

70 <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-1.801648>

71 <http://davidduke.com/category/zio-watch/>

72 Kivel, Paul, *Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony*, New Society Publishers, Sep 16, 2013

religious infidels, even after conversion.⁷³ The last Moorish stronghold in Granada fell to the Catholic monarchs in 1492, consolidating what would become Spain under one Christian faith. Both Jews and Muslims were forced to convert or flee, thereby relinquishing all assets to the Church and further concentrating power and wealth among the Christian elite. Most converted. But the church was suspicious of the sincerity of the conversions and so the [Spanish Inquisition](#) began to persecute Jews and Muslims, hunting for false conversions. Concluding that they could not, even with torture, conclusively determine whether those devilish Jews and Muslims

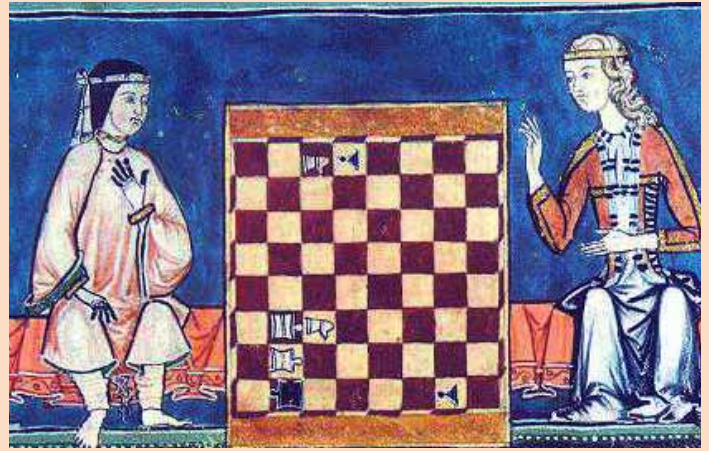
JEW & MUSLIMS



Jewish soldiers in the army of Muhammad IX, Sultan of Granada, 1431.



Jews in Constantinople offering prayers to the Turkish court, 1877.



Muslim and Christian women play chess. *El Libro de los Juegos*, commissioned by Alphonse X of Castile, 13th Century.

During this all-too familiar moment when Muslims are being targeted with state violence and extrajudicial attacks at unprecedented rates, Jews not only have a clear responsibility but also a direct stake in fighting back.

had really converted, they ruled that anyone with even one grandparent who was not Christian lacked *limpieza de sangre*, and Jews were expelled from the country, followed by Muslims. Unsurprisingly, the majority of Sephardi Jews escaping European Christians felt safest settling in the Muslim Ottoman Empire, where Mizrahi Jews had been living for close to three centuries.⁷⁴

It is significant that the Spanish Inquisition was launched by the same Christian rulers, in the same place and the same year that Columbus set sail with the blessings of the Spanish crown to discover “India.” When he and his *conquistadores* “discovered” the “New World,” they referred to indigenous sites of worship as “mosques” and “synagogues,” and ultimately used the same tactics for conversion, torture, and genocide on native peoples that they practiced on Muslims and Jews in Catholic Spain.^{75,76} If we had any questions before about the connections between anti-semitism and Islamophobia, this history makes it all the more clear how closely these systems developed in relationship, how they continue to depend on each other for survival, and how critical it is that we love, protect, and defend each other. During this all-too familiar moment when Muslims are being targeted with state violence and extrajudicial attacks at unprecedented rates, Jews not only have a clear responsibility but also a direct stake in fighting back.

Resistance: an unbroken tradition of solidarity and liberation

It is crucial to say that at every step of the way and at every point in our history, Jews and Jewish communities and institutions have resisted their oppression and the oppression of others. In

73 Shohat, Ella. “Rethinking Jews and Muslims: Quincentennial Reflections.” *Middle East Report*, no. 178, 1992, pp. 25–29. JSTOR

74 Ray, Jonathan. “Iberian Jewry between West and East: Jewish Settlement in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean.” *Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 18, 2009, pp. 44–65. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41163962

75 Cortes, Hernan, “The Dispatches of Hernando Cortes, The Conqueror of Mexico, Addressed to the Emperor Charles V, Written during the Conquest, and Containing a Narrative of Its Events” (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1843), accessed online, mith.umd.edu/eada/html/display.php?docs=cortez_letter2.xml

76 Kenneth Mills, William B. Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *Colonial Latin America: A Documentary History* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 129–30

the face of oppression, Jews have joined revolutionary movements on every continent on which we've lived. European Jews and Arab Jews have been central to leftist movements, which is part of what makes ruling elites fear us. Jews were at the heart of the labor, Socialist, and Communist movements that swept Europe in the late 19th Century and the Middle East and North Africa in the 20th Century.^{77,78} Jews brought their organizing skills, socialist ethos and political analysis with them in their mass migration to the United States in the early 20th century, and were critical to the American labor movement and important to the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement and the gay rights movement. The Mizrahi Black Panthers emerged in the late 1970s in Israel, inspired by the Black Panthers in the U.S. — seeing connections in their lived experiences — to fight institutionalized racism within Israeli society.^{79,80} As leftist Jews today, we are fiercely proud of this lineage of fighting for justice; at JFREJ we honor this legacy by building upon it every day. It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail this history but it inspires everything we do.

PART III - THE CURRENT MOMENT

What is the relationship between antisemitism and white supremacy today?

We must be careful to draw a distinction between white supremacists — including neo-Nazis and white nationalists — and the system of white supremacy (especially as it developed in the United States). Both draw on the same ideological roots, but the former describes — in broad terms — a group of people who are preoccupied with particular aspects of that ideology, and with either maintaining it through violence and the [threat of violence, or overthrowing the current multicultural order in favor of a white ethnostate. The latter is the air we breathe, the water we swim in — the prerequisite soil for American capitalism to flower.](#)

[The assimilation of different groups of European immigrants \(such as the Irish](#) and Italians) into whiteness has been a core component of maintaining and extending white supremacy in this country since its founding.^{81,82} In the U.S., Jews long had privilege in the racial hierarchy over Black people and Native peoples. For example, in the [1705 Virginia Slave Codes](#), Jews and Muslims, though prohibited from having Christian servants, could own Native and African descendent slaves.⁸³ But they were still in a fluid, shifting, non-white category at many times and places during the first 150 years of American history. This clearly changed in the second half of the 20th century as light-skinned Jews got the all-access pass to whiteness, and American institutions relaxed rules and behaviors that excluded Jews. Jews with white skin privilege took advantage of their new freedoms and access, and in the process, accepted and participated in the white supremacy-based racial hierarchy of U.S. society and culture.

Jews of Color have not, of course, had access to the same white privilege. On the one hand, this alienates Jews of Color from white Jews but on the other hand also offers a window into what a powerful, de-assimilated future looks like for all Jews who are committed to a liberatory cross-racial struggle to dismantle white supremacy and live beyond its spiritual prison.

It is white Jews' responsibility to confront the material privileges that they were granted by accepting white supremacy, and to disinvest from the safety and comfort that comes with those privileges. For white Jews, taking real risks, choosing solidarity and seeking safety in relationships with other communities-in-resistance (rather than in the state and cultural institutions

77 Bashkin, Orit, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq*, Stanford University Press, 2012

78 Mendes, Philip, *Jews and the Left: The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance*, Springer, 2014

79 <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2016/5/15/jewish-arabs-and-israels-black-panthers>

80 Chetrit, Sami Shalom. "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2000, pp. 51–65. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2676561

81 Ignatiev, Noel, *How the Irish Became White*, Routledge Classics, 2008

82 Guglielmo, Thomas, "No Color Barrier: Italians, Race, and Power in the United States," *Are Italians White? How Race Is Made in America* Edited by Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, Routledge 2003

83 https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_An_act_concerning_Servants_and_Slaves_1705

It is crucial to say that at every step of the way and at every point in our history, Jews and Jewish communities and institutions have resisted their oppression and the oppression of others.

that uphold white supremacy) is both the price and the visionary opportunity we must seize to end the oppression of all people.

Though they may currently be [thoroughly engaged with white supremacy](#) culture, white Jews are not immune from the antisemitic agendas of white supremacists. In the U.S. today, anti-semitism is central to the ideology of the neo-Nazi and white nationalist movements. As Eric K.

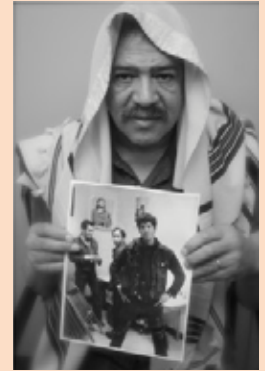
JEWISH RESISTANCE



Jewish activists in a May Day Labor Parade, 1909. Signs read: "Abolish Child Slavery" in English and Yiddish.



Jewish [socialist Labor](#) youth group in Poland, 1932.



Jewish Puerto Rican nationalist, Ghetto Brother and Nuyorican leader Benjy Melendez.

Ward documents in his powerful essay, ["Skin In The Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism,"](#) "At the bedrock of the [white nationalist] movement is an explicit claim that Jews are a race of their own, and that their ostensible position as White folks in the U.S. represents the greatest trick the devil ever played."⁸⁴ As such, antisemitism also interacts with racism in complex ways. For example, Tarso Luis Ramos, Executive Director of [Political Research Associates](#), explains:

"For most avowed white supremacists, the Jews are the heart of the problem. If you believe Black people are less intelligent and even subhuman, how do you account for Black brilliance? If you believe Black people were happier as slaves or under Jim Crow, how do you explain slave rebellions, the Civil Rights Movement, or the Movement for Black Lives? Avowed white supremacists blame Jews and Jewish meddling – patronage, education, organizing – for Black achievement. Behind every Black intellectual, organizer, or celebrity figure the white supremacist sees Jews."⁸⁵

For white Jews in this historical moment, white supremacy is the pea beneath the proverbial mattress. If white Jews seek to simply sweep the [Richard Spencers](#) of the world back under the carpet and leave the system of institutional and cultural white supremacy in place, they will leave Jews of Color behind, cleaving their own community. As long as white Jews remain tacitly invested in white supremacy — though it may benefit them in the short term — they leave in place the ideological roots necessary for the re-emergence of violent antisemitism in the future. And if white Jews remain complicit in white supremacy then like all white people they will be forever compelled to seek safety through separateness and self-interest — poisonous ideas which must be perpetually defended by walls, guns and badges both at home and abroad.

84 Ward, Eric K, "Skin In The Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism," The Public Eye, June 29, 2017, retrieved from <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism/#sthash.QspASGyl.bUQpZ9Sy.dpbs>

85 Political Research Associates is a social justice think tank devoted to supporting movements that are building a more just and inclusive democratic society. www.politicalresearch.org

It is critical to make clear that as long as Jews have been in this country many have struggled against white supremacy and for collective liberation. [Jewish anti-racist activists have backed movements, organized and campaigned, and risked and given their lives fighting racism.](#) Today JFREJ and other Jewish groups organize both white Jews and Jews of Color including Mizrahim to actively work for racial justice. For Jews and non-Jews engaged in this work today, the resurgence of white supremacist groups is a powerful opportunity to find new ways forward and



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. after the [Freedom Summer murders](#) of Jewish Civil Rights activists Goodman and Schwerner along with Chaney.



Mizrahi Black Panthers, in Israel, 1971. (Photo: Micha Bar-Am)



JFREJ Jews of Color and the family of Ramarley Graham lead a march and vigil on the anniversary of Ramarley's murder by the NYPD, 2017. (Photo: Erik McGregor)

forge new relationships born out of mutual interest and deeply shared values. All of us, including and especially Jews of Color, hope to find open hearts, curious minds and welcome hands extended throughout the movement for racial justice so that we can work together for our collective liberation by destroying white supremacy.

Racism and antisemitism collude to undermine movements for justice and liberation

Racism and antisemitism exploit racial and ethnic differences, and promote class anxiety and fear of political persecution. Historically, antisemitism has sown division within the poor and working-classes, preventing the emergence of multi-class, multi-racial and multi-ethnic mass movements.

Fear of political persecution, combined with historical trauma and fear of antisemitic violence played out through McCarthyism in the “Second Red Scare” of the late 1940s–1950s, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republican from Wisconsin whose name is now synonymous with unfounded attacks on individuals or institutions for political gain. On the heels of the Holocaust and the ascension of the Soviet Union, American politicians like McCarthy sought to root out communists and leftist movement activists throughout the country’s institutions – including schools and universities, Hollywood, and labor unions. The witch hunt traded on previously-discussed stereotypes about Jews as foreign, dangerous, and trouble-makers (though it targeted Jews and non-Jews alike). Hundreds of people, many of them Jews, lost their livelihoods as they were fired and “blacklisted” for even the suspicion of being communist. In that way, the Red Scare shredded the social fabric of the communist and radical movements by incentivizing people to betray their comrades, friends, and neighbors.^{86,87}

The parade of Jews who were dragged into congressional hearings and outed in newspapers as communists — culminating in the electric chair execution of the Rosenbergs — only a few years after the Holocaust, left many white Jews frozen with fear and willing to hide their past political

86 <https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/jewish-radicalism-and-red-scare-introductory-essay>

87 Storrs, Landon R. Y., “McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare,” Jul 2015 DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.6, retrieved from <http://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-6>

JEW BEHIND RACE MIXING

"JEWISH LIFE", official organ of the Jewish section of the Communist party, in its June, 1950 issue on page 8, states:

"Our job as Jewish Communists is to take the lead in educating the Jewish masses on the meaning of white supremacy and to enroll the Jewish community in an all-out fight against it. This is paramount in our work in the struggle for negro rights. This is vital to the struggle of the Jewish people for their own security and future."

It has surprised some people to find out that the president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] is NOT a Negro BUT the JEW ARTHUR SPINGARN. It is the Jews who are leading the fight to destroy segregation in Atlanta schools.

The NAACP is sponsoring suits all over the country and in the U. S. Supreme Court to break down Racial Segregation and open up our White schools, restaurants, busses and hotels to negroes. All important Jewish organizations are against Segregation and have petitioned Congress for an anti-White FEPC law.

A Jew, Julius Rosenwald, spent \$30 million financing organizations and writers that promote mongrelization. A race once mongrelized is mongrelized forever.

America must awaken to the Jew attack against White People!

A 1952 flyer, distributed in Atlanta by the Christian Anti-Jewish Party blaming the growing Civil Rights movement on Communist Jews. "A race once mongrelized is mongrelized forever." "America must awaken to the Jew attack against White People!"

activism; they quietly accepted their own assimilation into de-politicized white America as the price of their safety. By destroying the organizations that could facilitate those relationships, McCarthyism also broke ties between radical Jewish and Black organizers who might have been able to preserve alliances between Jewish and Black communities when they began to unravel in the 1960s and 1970s.^{88,89}

Notice that at the exact same time — the 1940s and '50s — that Jewish radicals were being targeted, imprisoned, deported, and even executed by the state, "[white flight](#)" and [Jewish disinvestment](#) from multi-racial urban neighborhoods was occurring at a rapid pace. Communist radicals who were People of Color did not have the ability to assimilate, and suffered more intensely under McCarthyism than Jewish radicals. For whites and "white" Jews (whose racial identity in this period was still situational and fluid) friendships with Black people were often considered a "warning sign" of Communist sympathies. McCarthyism broke ties between Jewish and Black organizers, and within many institutions that fought for racial equity. The solidarity was not entirely broken and now almost all Jews rightly revere the examples of the many Jewish Freedom Riders and, perhaps most famously, of Rabbi Abraham Heschel "praying with his feet" by marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. But at the time Heschel was excoriated by many Jews and Jewish institutions for his participation and commitment to the Civil Rights movement, in part because the community feared backlash from both white supremacists and the government.⁹⁰ This example points to the uneven and complex ways in which Jews face antisemitism and complicity in white supremacy simultaneously, and the ways in which targeting by the right fissures our communities' ties to each other.

One vector of division between Jews and People of Color is that Jews often function as the visible, accessible face of larger systems of exploitation — sometimes referred to as the "middle agent" or "[middleman minority](#)" role. Another is that white Jews are deployed against People of Color, especially poor ones, as a model minority. Both roles hide and enable the mechanics of capitalist exploitation and systemic racism.

Within the narrative imposed by racialized capitalism, white Jews represent a fantasy of power, while People of Color represent a fantasy of subjugation. Both are exploited by capitalism — that is, both produce surplus value for capitalists with their labor — but they are commodified differently, with different emotional wrappers. White Jewish lawyers are paid better than non-Jewish Latinx prison labor but neither are owners of their "means of production." Those differences are not insignificant in the slightest. Who is disposable and the mechanisms and scale of their disability are hugely important.

Racialized capitalism exploits these fantasies, fears, and unmet material needs; there is always another rung on the ladder of privilege, just out of reach, and there is often the threat of severe consequences for an errant step. That dynamic is constantly splitting our communities by offering some of us enough racial privilege to separate us from potential allies. As they became classified as white, a large sector of assimilable Jews in the United States acquired real privileges such as a path into professional roles like teachers, social workers, doctors, or lawyers. They took on roles as intermediaries — middle agents — between large institutions and the people that they service. In big cities, these professionals are often the face of systemic racism and class oppression, delivered through schools, hospitals, government agencies, and financial institutions and service provision non-profits. Neither the professionals in middle agent roles, nor their poor,

88 <https://isreview.org/issue/80/different-kind-teachers-union>

89 Wells, Jennifer, *The Black Freedom Struggle and Civil Rights: Labor Organizing in the Piedmont and Eastern North Carolina Tobacco Industry*, University of South Florida, 2013, retrieved from: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5987&context=etd>

90 <http://jewishcurrents.org/the-black-jewish-connection/>

CASE STUDY: THE OCEAN HILL/BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS CRISIS



In 1968, Black residents of Brownsville, Brooklyn, advocating for racial justice in their community schools, came into direct conflict with Jewish teachers and the heavily Jewish United Federation of Teachers union. The conflict came to be characterized by intense racism and antisemitism.

Since before World War II, the neighborhood of Brownsville had been home to many Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants from Europe. However, by 1968, the population was changing rapidly, with many Jews leaving and many Black people moving in. The neighborhood schools were becoming overcrowded, and the curriculum did not attempt to address the needs of the Black students.

In 1967, Black parents in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville area fought and won a campaign to establish a community-controlled school district that would allow the needs of Black students to be better addressed. The new experimental district created a new, racially-aware school curriculum and hired a more diverse group of principals to oversee the local schools.

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis began in May, 1968, when the community-controlled school district also began a process of firing 83 teachers from the district. Black education activists cited, in part, the teachers' unwillingness to go along with this new experiment in racially and socially conscious education. The firings, however, were in violation of the teachers' union contract and neglected any due-process through the New York City Board of Education. This was the beginning of an intense battle between the local, mostly Black, parents and community activists, and the UFT, representing a group of mostly Jewish public school teachers.

Teaching was a field that included a large number of Jews who, for a generation, had used the profession to build stable, middle class lives in the city. Until the late 1960s the neighborhood teachers had belonged to the Teachers' Union (the "TU"), a leftist, progressive organization with many socialist and communist Jewish members. The TU's philosophy of social-movement unionism included "building alliances with grassroots organizations for the purpose of providing resources to the communities and schools in which teachers work. The TU's brand of unionism prioritized forging partnerships with Black and Latino parents, civil rights organizations, unions, community groups, and civic organizations to improve the lives of the children they taught as well as the working conditions of their members."

Severely weakened by McCarthyism, by the late 1960's the TU was displaced by the more conservative, more mainstream United Federation of Teachers (UFT) as the union in Brownsville. The UFT advocated "race-neutral" education policies, which would, by definition, leave structural racism unchallenged.

The conflict between the UFT teachers and the parents of Brownsville went on for months, and included Brownsville parents blockading the school building to prevent the teachers from returning, police intervening on behalf of the teachers, and a city-wide teacher's strike that shut down the entire New York City school system in protest.

The conflict was infused with racism and antisemitism. The UFT's racism was embodied in their opposition to the community's desire for racially-conscious, community-controlled schools. Meanwhile members of the community described the UFT as "Jewish-dominated," implying Jewishness as inherently negative or

suspect. The UFT circulated a flyer that derided the Afrocentric curriculum of the experimental district. In response, someone in the community printed a flyer that included the following, "THE IDEA BEHIND THIS PROGRAM IS BEAUTIFUL, BUT WHEN THE MONEY CHANGERS HEARD ABOUT IT, THEY TOOK OVER, AS IS THEIR CUSTOM IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY." In a pivotal incident, a history teacher from the district read a poem in a radio interview. Written by one of his students, and addressed to the head of the teachers' union, it began, "Hey, Jewboy, with that yarmulke on your head / You pale-faced Jew boy - I wish you were dead."

Ultimately, the city (under a non-Jewish Mayor), and the State (under a non-Jewish Governor), ended the experimental district, and UFT teachers were hired or re-hired. The publicity around the appearance of antisemitism weakened the community activists' campaign and helped the UFT politically. The crisis did enormous damage to the relationship between Blacks and Jews in New York.

Some questions to reflect on:

- Why did the union intervene against the community school board? Was it because the union was "Jewish-dominated?"
- What role did Jewish identity actually play in the crisis? Did attacking the teachers' Jewishness help or hurt the movement for a community controlled school district?
- Even though they were aligned with institutional racism, how much power did the teachers actually have in the crisis? Who else had power? What position were the teachers in?
- What might have been different if the TU, instead of the UFT, had been the teachers' union in 1968? How did the targeting of Jews by McCarthyism end up hurting the movement for racial justice in education?

Photos: (L) The UFT protests. Sign reads, "Stop Teaching Race Hatred to Children." (R) Community members fight for their schools. Sign reads, "Please Please Pretty Please Let My People Go." Photo by Richard Kalvar.

working-class and POC clients are actually empowered to change the system. However, the professionals do have more positional power relative to their clients. For those clients, these doctors, lawyers, social workers and teachers — often Jewish — are the most immediately accessible face of those systems. They are the "middlemen" between the oppressed and the systems oppressing them.⁹¹ This focuses anger about racism on Jews, and because of antisemitic stereotypes about Jews, that anger spreads and persists even in places where there are few, or no, Jews.

Examples of the middleman position abound. Historian Edward Baptist, author of *The Half That Has Never Been Told*, offers this example: "Through the Caribbean, the British literally brought in Jewish — as well as Syrian, Lebanese, Indian and Chinese — migrants to be the interstitial classes. They would be low-level functionaries in the plantation economy, and later run company stores, managing debt at usurious rates."⁹² This legacy of being the moneylender, the store owner or the employer stems from and simultaneously reinforces antisemitic conspiracy theories such as those at play in *The Protocols*.

This dynamic makes us all vulnerable to a terrible feedback loop of racism and antisemitism. When the anger of People of Color is misdirected toward a story of specifically Jewish power, and away from the core mechanisms of racialized capitalism and white supremacy, it diverts attention from the system of structural racism that all white people contribute to, and which is far, far bigger than any one ethnic group.

And when People of Color fall prey to a narrative that singles out Jews as being more responsible than other groups for oppression in the U.S. or abroad, it makes Jews think that People

91 Bonacich, Edna. "A Theory of Middleman Minorities." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 38, no. 5, 1973, pp. 583–594. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2094409

92 Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014

of Color are more antisemitic than the white Christians who invented antisemitism, and the largely white, mostly Christian institutions that actually have the cultural influence and power to implement anti-Jewish policies.

This feedback loop — middle agency, misdirected anger and misplaced fear — is central to the false narrative that Blacks and Jews are in perpetual conflict in the U.S. While the beliefs of non-Jewish People of Color, like everyone else in our society, have been shaped by Christian hegemony and include anti-Jewish misinformation, singling out Black people and other People of Color as especially anti-Jewish is racist.

When non-Jewish communities of Color buy into and act on false anti-Jewish narratives, they undermine the possibility of powerful alliances. They also become vulnerable to defensive counter-attacks by white Jews who push back by leveraging white privilege, derailing and delegitimizing the racial justice work of People of Color. When white Jews buy into and act on white supremacy, they also undermine the possibility of powerful alliances, and uphold an oppressive and violent system.

How do we use awareness of antisemitism to build unity and stronger movements?

As we've noted, Jews voted overwhelmingly against Donald Trump. Significantly, many Jewish voters and communities publicly oppose a number of flagship Republican policies. They support public education and oppose privatization; they support women's bodily autonomy, including the right to abortion and reproductive justice; they support the separation of Church and State, and the rights of immigrants and refugees – just to name a few. This makes them an obvious enemy of the political right, and incentivizes the right to embrace antisemitic elements in its base. "There are different sectors of the right, such as white nationalists and the Christian right, that threaten Jews in different ways," explains Tarso Luís Ramos. Let's be clear — this kind of political calculus is not what animates antisemitism; the roots are vastly deeper and older. But awareness of this political context hints at the potential of a potent political re-alignment if Jews can be more integrated into the movement left.

A left, multi-racial Jewish movement working in close coordination with non-Jewish communities of Color that embodies anti-racist culture and analysis will be a powerful alliance in challenging white supremacy. It also requires that the rest of the left [embrace Jews](#) as comrades in defeating white supremacy and ethnic nationalism when they show up. We must recognize our common interest in collective liberation for all people, and the centrality of ending white supremacy and racial capitalism in the struggle to end all related systems of oppression.

None of us can defeat the surging engine of white nationalism alone. In order to win, we need to be led by those most directly impacted by oppression, and [Jews must up their game and organize their communities and institutions](#) to actively support grassroots, People of Color-led organizing for justice. This is only possible if Jews abandon any ideological litmus tests that marginalize the individuals and groups working on the front lines and prevent us from building real solidarity across communities. No one is required to agree with every position held by every leader or organization. But the Jewish community has to keep its eyes on the prize, and stay in relationship with other communities so that we can agitate and change each other, with love. The only way Jews can resist antisemitism, white nationalism and white supremacy is to actively participate in the campaigns for racial justice, such as police accountability, being waged all across the country by local organizations, especially those led by People of Color. We can win, but only by creating movements too powerful to be ignored. In this struggle there is no neutral ground. If the Jewish community isn't part of the solution, then it is part of the problem.

The false notion that all Jews are white, and that People of Color cannot be Jews sets up inaccurate and racist barriers between communities. So a key strategy we must embrace is supporting the leadership of Jews of Color in movement work, particularly Black Jews and Arab Jews in fighting anti-Black and anti-Arab racism. Jews of Color are best positioned to lead the Jewish

A left, multi-racial Jewish movement working in close coordination with non-Jewish communities of Color that embodies anti-racist culture and analysis will be a powerful alliance in challenging white supremacy.

community's work for racial justice. In addition, Jews of Color are already engaged in, and leading movements and organizations but aren't always "out" or visible as Jews. When non-Jewish People of Color actively demonstrate solidarity with Jews, it allows Jews of Color to participate in social justice work feeling honored and safe in the fullness of their intersecting identities. The leadership of Jews of Color has the powerful potential to expose the connections between racism and antisemitism, and challenge them together. Jews of Color, Mizrahi, Sephardi, poor and working-class, and other minoritized Jews disrupt the story of a universal, static, assimilated, white Jewish identity, which undermines the entire compact of white privilege through which antisemitism operates in the United States. When we highlight our shared and overlapping identities, we threaten the false idea that we have inherently conflicting interests.

Conclusion

Confronting antisemitism is a necessary precondition for collective liberation. It is a central feature in the history and functioning of European and American capitalism. It regularly undermines and distracts movements for social justice. It hurts Jews, and for both political and psychic reasons interferes with Jews' ability to effectively work in movements for justice.

The stakes have never been higher, but neither have the possibilities for transformational change. Antisemitism is real. We need to sharpen our analysis in order to more accurately identify it, and deepen our resolve to wrestle with it. There is no better time than the present for all of us on the left — Jews and non-Jews — to start tackling it together.

This resource invites you to cultivate clarity about the nature of antisemitism and to interrupt it wherever you find it. This is a praxis that demands risk-taking and mistake-making. But as author Dove Kent reminds us regularly, all we can hope for is "better mistakes tomorrow." If we all commit to seek curiosity over reactivity, relationships over rigidity, and love over tolerance, we can find ways to be more free as we forge our path to collective liberation together.

THE END

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SUGGESTED READING LIST:

Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities

by Aaron J. Hahn Tapper

How Jews Became White Folks And What That Says About Race In America, by Karen Brodtkin

On Antisemitism: Solidarity and the Struggle for Justice by Jewish Voice for Peace

The History of White People by Nell Painter

On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements: Selected Writings of Ella Shohat

by Ella Shohat

Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony by Paul Kivel

The Past Didn't Go Anywhere by April Rosenblum

“Skin In The Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism” by Eric K. Ward

“Jewish Fear, Love, & Solidarity in the Wake of Charlottesville” by Jonah Sampson Boyarin

Negroes Are Antisemitic Because They're Anti-White By James Baldwin

The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

Constantine's Sword: The Church and Jews, A History by James Carroll

“Ctrl-Alt-Delete: The Origins And Ideology Of The Alternative Right” by Matthew N. Lyons

Hope Into Practice: Jewish Women Choosing Justice Despite Our Fears, by Penny Rosenwasser

ABOUT JFREJ

For 27 years, Jews For Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ) has pursued racial and economic justice in New York City by advancing systemic changes that result in concrete improvements in people's everyday lives. We are inspired by Jewish tradition to fight for a sustainable world with an equitable distribution of economic and cultural resources and political power.

The movement to dismantle racism and economic exploitation will be led by those most directly targeted by oppression. We believe that Jews have a vital role to play in this movement. The future we hope for depends on Jews forging deep and lasting ties with our partners in struggle.

www.jfrej.org

Twitter: [@jfrejnyc](https://twitter.com/jfrejnyc)

www.facebook.com/JFREJNYC/

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Compiled by Gabriella Zutrau & Leo Ferguson

AJO (N.)

Anti-Jewish oppression; the systemic or institutional oppression of Jewish people.

ARAB (N.)

In modern usage, Arab embraces any of the Arabic-speaking peoples living in the vast region from Mauritania, on the Atlantic coast of Africa, to southwestern Iran, including the entire Maghreb of North Africa, Egypt, Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Iraq. Today there are over 450 million Arab people throughout the world, 430 million of whom live in Arab League nations. Most of the world's 3.2 million Mizrahi Jews are indigenous to majority-Arab areas and cultures.

Further reading and sources:

http://www.africa.upenn.edu/K-12/Who_16629.html

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arab>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabs>

ARAB CHRISTIAN (N.)

Arab Christians are indigenous peoples of Western Asia, with a presence there predating the seventh-century Early Muslim conquests in the Fertile Crescent. Their ancient Arab Christian clans did not convert to Islam. Arab Christians populations are estimated at 520,000–703,000 in Syria, 221,000 in Jordan, 127,000 in Israel and around 50,000 in Palestine. There is also a sizable Arab Christian Orthodox community in Lebanon and marginal communities in Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.

Further reading and sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Christians

<https://www.thoughtco.com/christians-of-the-middle-east-2353327>

ASHKENAZI (ADJ.)

Technically: of Central or Eastern European Jewish descent. Today, however, it is often used as a catchall term that includes Western European Jews as well. Historically, more distinctions were made between Ashkenazim and, for instance, Yekke (German) Jews.

ASHKENAZI DOMINANCE

The institutionally and socially enforced omnipresence of Ashkenazi culture and history within Jewish spaces as well as society as a whole, resulting in the erasure, marginalization and diminution of other Jewish traditions and narratives. In the U.S., Ashkenazi identity is so thoroughly normalized that the phenomenon is effectively invisible unless directly challenged by the assertion of Mizrahi and Sephardi cultures

and histories. It also refers to a specific history of oppression, exploitation, discrimination against non-European Jews by European Ashkenazi Jews. While Jews from Western Europe were initially most involved in the imperialist and colonial endeavors of their home countries that affected non-European Jews, Eastern European Jews have become a part of perpetuating this system as they continue to access European Jewish privilege and power both in Israel/Palestine and in the U.S.

ASSIMILATION (N.)

A process by which non dominant or non mainstream people or cultures slowly take on more and more features of the dominant culture, and slowly lose their native/original cultural markers.

BLACK JEWS (N.)

Generally, Black Jews would simply refer to any Jewish person who claims African heritage, such as African-American Jews, Afro-Latinx Jews, Ethiopian Jews, etc. However there is a distinction to be made between those who identify with mainstream Jewish practices and traditions, such as Reform, Conservative and Orthodox Judaism, and the groups known variously as Black Hebrew Israelites, Black Hebrews, Black Israelites or Hebrew Israelites. Israelites do not convert to Judaism, and as such are often not considered Jewish by other Jews, including by other Black Jews and Jews of Color.

BLACK HEBREW ISRAELITES (N.) (ALSO BLACK HEBREWS, BLACK ISRAELITES OR HEBREW ISRAELITES.)

These groups are made up largely of African-Americans who believe that they are direct descendants of the ancient tribes of Israelites (the biblical ancestors of modern Jews). Israelites do not convert to Judaism, and as such are often not considered Jewish by other Jews, including by other Black Jews and Jews of Color. However some Black Jews feel a kinship born out of shared racial identity. Their ritual practice includes many elements of Jewish tradition, as well as other practices from outside Judaism, including Christian practices. One of the first Black Hebrew group, called the Church of God and Saints of Christ, was formed in 1896. Others followed after WWI and the tradition has grown as a variant of Afrocentrism.

Further Reading and Sources:

<https://manishtana.net/2012/05/11/confoundment-keepers/>
<http://forward.com/news/347996/who-are-the-hebrew-israelites/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/26/nyregion/they-re-jewish-with-a-gospel-accent.html>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Hebrew_Israelites

CHAREDI (ADJ./N.)

An array of groups under the umbrella of Orthodox Judaism, sometimes referred to as ultra-Orthodox, who attempt to limit their contact with secular culture and the non-Jewish world.

Further Reading:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haredim-charedim/>

CHRISTIAN HEGEMONY (N.)

“The everyday, systemic set of Christian values, individuals and institutions that dominate all aspects of U.S. society” and date back to hundreds of years of global history. According to author Paul Kivel, “It is a complex and shifting system that benefits all Christians, those raised and those passing as Christian. It refers to the concentration of power and wealth accumulated to a predominantly Christian power elite, while all others experience exploitation and constant vulnerability to violence.”

Further Reading:

<http://christianhegemony.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/WhatisChristianHegemony.pdf>
<http://christianhegemony.org/>

CHRISTIAN DOMINANCE (N.)

SEE CHRISTIAN HEGEMONY

CHRISTIAN ZIONIST (N./ADJ.)

A subset of Christians who believe that the Jews returning to Israel is in accordance with Biblical prophecy. Some Christian Zionists believe that the gathering of the Jews in Israel is a prerequisite for the Second Coming of Jesus and ultimately, the destruction of all non-Christians. Christian Zionists are on the whole politically conservative Republicans who, for example, oppose abortion and gay marriage, and support prayer in public schools. Christian Zionists are major funders of Israeli settlements, including illegal settlements.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/christian-zionism>
<http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/students/student-journal/sum-13/130930-sum13-mohr.pdf>
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.692.6967&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

COLONIALISM (N.)

The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country or region, occupying it with

settlers, and exploiting it economically, usually at the expense of the indigenous residents.

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM (N.)

A contemporary Jewish religious movement. Conservative Judaism began in the 19th century in reaction to what it perceived as the radical nature of Reform Judaism. The latter, according to Conservative Jews, threw out too much of what is vital to the Jewish religion. So, Conservative Judaism is a sort of middle position between Orthodox and Reform groups. Conservative Judaism has nothing to do with being politically conservative — the meaning is different.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.world-religions-professor.com/orthodox-jews.html>

DIASPORA (N.)

Generally a mass movement of a people out of a concentrated area. Used here, we are referring to the mass displacement and movement of Israelites from their native homeland of what is now Israel/Palestine, and their eventual settlement in other parts across the globe.

DIASPORIC (ADJ.)

SEE DIASPORA

DOG WHISTLE (N.)

A subtly aimed political message which is intended for, and can only be understood by, a particular group.

END TIMES (N.)

The end of the world; armageddon.

ETHNICITY (N.)

A social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, or language.

GENTILE/GOY (N./ADJ.)

A non-Jewish person. Not an insult, just kinda sounds like it.

GHETTO (N.)

A part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups. The term comes from the Roman ghetto, where the Pope in 1555 required the Jews of Rome (who had existed as a community since before Christian times and who numbered about 2,000) to live. The ghetto was a walled quarter with its gates locked at night. Jews were forced to pay the cost of building the wall. Since then, ghetto has referred to any small area of land that populations of Jews were forced to live in throughout history. Another infamous example was the Warsaw Ghetto in World War II Nazi-occupied Poland.

Further reading and sources:

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005069>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Ghetto

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Ghetto

HAREDI (ADJ./N.)

SEE CHAREDI

HEBREW (N.)

The ancient language of the Israelites and the modern language spoken by many Jews, as well as the official language of Israel (along with Arabic). The language that the Torah (the Old Testament) is written in.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL (N.)

Essentially just another conspiracy theory about Jews. Holocaust deniers claim that the murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis never took place or they minimize the number of Jews killed. They allege a secret, massive conspiracy by Jews to fool the world, ignoring the obvious and overwhelming evidence to the contrary and the basic absurdity of their claim. As with climate change deniers, 9/11 conspiracists, and birthers, they often use rhetoric that calls for an “open debate” about the Holocaust, or describe the issue as a “controversy” when in fact there is no disagreement about the tragic truth of the Jewish genocide anywhere outside of antisemitic fringe groups and there is nothing to debate.

Further reading:

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007272>

<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007272>

<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/holocaust-denial>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-of-holocaust-denial>

IDEOLOGICAL OPPRESSION (N.)

Any oppressive system has at its core the idea that one group is somehow better than another and the power to disseminate and elaborate on these ideas. Ideological oppression forms the basis of all other forms of oppression because it is about the ability to affirm and re-affirm certain privileged cultural preferences as “right,” “normal” and/or “beautiful.” When the standards of appropriate action, thought, and expression of a particular target group are perceived as negative or less than, cultural racism has occurred. Conformity to the dominant culture is then viewed as “normal” when in fact the myth of the inherent superiority of the group setting the standards is operating. This often results in pressure to assimilate just to be accepted as competent, attractive, and/or talented.

IMPERIALISM (N.)

The ideology behind, and practice of, expanding a country’s power and influence through diplomacy, military force, violence, or diplomacy.

INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION (N.)

The intended and unintended consequences of policies, practices, laws, styles, rules and procedures in society that systematically function to the advantage of privileged groups and to the disadvantage of target groups. This type of oppression is about access to power and opportunity in society, and is not necessarily about individuals’ attitudes or behaviors. Examples of institutions in the U.S. include legal, educational, healthcare, social service, government, media and criminal justice systems.

INTERPERSONAL OPPRESSION (N.)

Expressed behaviors and/or actions based on conscious or unconscious biased assumptions about self and others. This usually looks like discrimination, micro-aggressions and implicit bias. It is often through uncomfortable or tense cross-cultural interactions that individuals discover subtle racist behaviors within themselves or others.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION (N.)

The unconscious beliefs and behaviors that are the inevitable result of being oppressed. These beliefs and behaviors are usually learned early in life and are usually passed down in families and communities. They are therefore rooted in historical trauma and are re-enforced by present-day oppression. They usually take the form of patterns of behavior that are rigid and reflexive. This kind of oppression can be learned directly, through overt messages, or indirectly through observation.

ISLAMOPHOBIA (N.)

A fear or hatred of Muslim people and Islam.

JEW OF COLOR (N.)

Jewish people who are People of Color. Often abbreviated “JOC.”

KU KLUX KLAN (N.)

(ALSO KLAN, KKK)

The Ku Klux Klan is a white supremacist, Christian, nationalist terrorist organization. It was originally formed in the late 1860s in response to Black progress after the Civil War. It was re-formed in 1915 and surged in popularity in the 1920s and again after World War II. The Klan uses terror, murder, intimidation, propaganda, and social control to assert straight, cisgender, white Protestant Christian supremacy over Blacks, Jews, Catholics, immigrants and LGBTQ folks. As of 2016,

the Southern Poverty Law Center estimates its membership at 6,000.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/grant-kkk/>
<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan>

LABOR MOVEMENT (N.)

The social movement to create better conditions for workers through organizing.

Further reading:

<http://www.history.com/topics/labor>; <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-workers-and-trade-unions/>;
<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/labor-movement-in-united-states>

LADINO (N.)

Ladino is the language of Sephardi Jews who were expelled from the Iberian peninsula during the Spanish Inquisition. It is a mixture of Spanish, Hebrew, Arabic and Turkish.

Further reading and sources:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-languages-from-aramaic-to-yiddish/>

LITMUS TEST (N.)

Referencing chemistry, a pass-fail test, meaning to judge someone harshly based on a single belief or other criteria.

MCCARTHYISM (N.)

The political practice of persecuting or slandering people without sufficient evidence or just cause, for political or ideological gain. Named after the systematic witch-hunt-style campaign carried out by Senator Joseph McCarthy, which targeted communists and alleged communists to be blacklisted, deported, or otherwise formally punished. The efforts of McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) were part of the Second Red Scare. Some of those involved were overtly antisemitic. For example, Representative John Rankin was a member of the Ku Klux Klan and known for his blatant antisemitism toward fellow Congressmen. Suspected Communists were pursued across society, but two areas in particular were considered fertile ground for finding Communist sympathizers: education and the entertainment industry — both fields in which large numbers of Jews had found employment in recent decades. Jews were also particularly vulnerable to charges of radicalism in this period because of the high profile case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Arrested in 1950 on charges of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union, the Rosenbergs were convicted and executed in 1953. The specter of McCarthyism

and the execution of the Rosenbergs haunted a generation of Jewish radicals. The Civil Rights Movement, and other social justice movements, were also deeply impacted by the Red Scares, and movement leaders — including many leaders of Color — were targeted, persecuted, exiled and marginalized.

Further reading and sources:

<https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/jewish-radicalism-and-red-scare-introductory-essay>
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/julius-and-ethel-rosenberg/>
<http://www.peoplesworld.org/article/the-other-blacklist-red-scare-s-impact-on-african-americans/>
<http://bostonreview.net/race-politics/andrew-lanham-when-w-e-b-du-bois-was-un-american>
<http://prospect.org/article/enduring-du-bois>
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6925/>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/08/28/meet-the-gay-socialist-pacifist-who-planned-the-1963-march-on-washington/?utm_term=.e121185f1013

MIZRAHI (ADJ.)

Jews who were indigenous to the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and the Balkan region, many for up to 2,500 years. Not to be confused with Sephardi Jews, many of whom migrated and settled in these same regions after their expulsion from Spain.

Further reading:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethnic_divisions
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sephardic-ash-kenazic-mizrahi-jews-jewish-ethnic-diversity/>

MIZRAHI BLACK PANTHERS (N.)

A movement of Mizrahi Jews in Israel that began in the 1970s to protest systemic discrimination against Mizrahim. They drew inspiration from the Black Panther Party in the United States, seeing themselves as Black within the racial hierarchy of Israeli society, which is where their name comes from.

Further reading:

<https://972mag.com/the-roots-of-anti-mizrahi-racism-in-israel/114424/>
<http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/israels-black-panthers-remembered/>
<https://972mag.com/israels-black-panthers-remind-us-what-their-struggle-was-all-about/122566/>

MOOR (N.)

The term “Moors” refers primarily to the Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb, the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta during the Middle Ages. Of mixed Arab, Spanish, and Amazigh (Berber) origins, the Moors created the Arab Andalusian

civilization and subsequently settled as refugees in North Africa between the 11th and 17th centuries. Along with Jews, they were expelled from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, which began in 1492.

MOORISH (ADJ.)

Having the qualities of the Moors.

MYSOPHOBIA (N.)

Fear or hatred of pollutants and germs.

NEO-NAZI (N./ADJ.)

A term that usually refers to individuals or groups who subscribe to white supremacist ideology, and or specifically the ideology and rhetoric of Adolf Hitler and the German Nazi party, usually centered around antisemitic beliefs.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM (N.)

A contemporary Jewish religious movement. Orthodox Jews are those who maintain the most traditional beliefs and practices of the religion. They strictly observe the dietary laws (called “kosher” or “kashrut”) and the practices of the Sabbath, and are often marked by their ways of dress and appearance—they wear black suits and hats, and sometimes allow their hair in front of their ears to grow into long curls. Women sometimes wear hats or other head coverings, and dress modestly.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.world-religions-professor.com/orthodox-jews.html>

OTTOMAN EMPIRE (N.)

A Turkish empire in northwestern Anatolia in the vicinity of Bilecik and Söğüt by the Oghuz Turkish tribal leader Osman. The dominant religion of the empire was Islam. It was founded at the end of the thirteenth century and collapsed after World War I.

PERSIAN (N.)

Persians are an ethnic group that make up over half the population of Iran. Although of diverse ancestry, the Persian people are united by their language, Persian (Farsi), which belongs to the Indo-Iranian group of the Indo-European language family. (Dari, a variant of the Persian language, is spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan.)

Further reading and sources:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Persian>

POGROM (N.)

A violent riot including attacks, killing and/or persecution of an ethnic or religious group, sometimes intended to purge

that group from a town or region. (In our context, aimed at Jewish people.)

RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL (N.)

Abraham Joshua Heschel was a Polish-born American rabbi and one of the leading Jewish theologians and Jewish philosophers of the 20th century. It was his participation in the civil rights movement that first made Heschel widely known. He worked together not only with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. but also with Jesse Jackson, Albert Cleague, Andrew Young and others. For many Jews the photograph of Heschel in Selma with Dr. King at the start of the Voting Rights March of 1965 is an iconic picture.

RACIALIZED (ADJ.)

Having been ascribed ethnic or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group that did not identify itself as such.

RACIAL(IZED) CAPITALISM (N.)

The process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person.

RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM (N.)

Unlike classical Reform Judaism, Reconstructionism holds that a person’s default position should be to incorporate Jewish laws and tradition into their lives, unless they have a specific reason to do otherwise. Reconstructionist Judaism holds that contemporary Western secular morality has precedence over Jewish law and theology. The most important distinction between Reconstructionist Judaism and traditional Judaism is that Reconstructionism concludes that all Jewish religious law should be categorized as “folkways” — historical traditions, not binding requirements.

Further reading:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/who-is-a-reconstructionist-jew>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism

RED SCARE (N.)

SEE: MCCARTHYISM

REFORM JUDAISM (N.)

A contemporary Jewish religious movement. Reform Judaism began in the 19th century to bring Judaism in line with the ideas of the Enlightenment in Europe and the United States. Reform Jews reject outright what they see as the dogmatic, outdated practices of Orthodox Jews and focus on the ethical dimensions of the faith instead of the traditional rituals, commandments and practices.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.world-religions-professor.com/orthodox-jews.html>

RICHARD SPENCER (N.)

A contemporary white supremacist leader and president of the National Policy Institute, a white supremacist organization.

ROMANI (N./ADJ.)

A nomadic ethnic group living primarily in Europe, originally from the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent.

ROSENBERGS (ETHEL & JULIUS)

SEE MCCARTHYISM

SCAPEGOAT (N.)

A person or entity onto which blame is unfairly and irrationally attached.

SCIENTIFIC RACISM (N.)

Scientific racism traces its development from Carl Linnaeus's [Systema Naturae](#) in 1767 through Arthur de Gobineau's [An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races](#) in 1853 to [Francis Galton](#) to Madison Grant's [The Passing of the Great Race](#) and his collaboration with Charles Davenport to found the Galton Society in 1918, and find recent support in the work of Charles Murray's [The Bell Curve](#) in 1994. It was central to the ideology of [German Nazis](#) and American eugenicists and undergirds modern American racism.

Further Reading:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_racism
<http://nelsonssociology101.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/1/6/26165328/jews.pdf>

SECULAR JUDAISM (N.)

Secular Jews (or "cultural" Jews) are those who identify with their Jewish cultural heritage and ancestry, but are not religious. They have Jewishness as a core part of their identity, but they may not believe in God or simply do not engage in most Jewish rituals and holidays. They are secular people whose Jewish identity is cultural and familial but not religious.

SEPHARDI (ADJ.)

Jews who lived in what is present day Spain and Portugal until Spanish Inquisition began in 1492. During the Inquisition, the majority of Sephardi Jews converted to Catholicism, while many fled. Most of the exiles settled in the Ottoman Empire (such as present day Morocco), while others migrated to the Americas and parts of Europe. Sephardi also refers

to the cultural practice of Mizrahi Jews from non-European countries, even if they are not ethnically Sephardi.

Further reading:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethnic_divisions
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sephardic-ashkenazic-mizrahi-jews-jewish-ethnic-diversity/>

SPANISH INQUISITION (N.)

An extension of the Papal Inquisition, set up in 15th century Spain by Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, who also sent Christopher Columbus on his expedition to the Americas. After forcing all religious heretics to either convert to Christianity or leave Spain (thereby relinquishing all assets to the Church), the Inquisition itself lasted hundreds of years with the goal of investigating, torturing, and killing Jewish, Muslim, and Romani conversos. It did not legally end until 1834.

Further reading and sources:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-inquisition>
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/spanish-inquisition#E0d0qsf00wUAqRbO.99>

TZAR (N.)

19th Century Russian supreme ruler. (Also spelled Tsar or Czar.)

Further reading and sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_B._Spencer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rh1dhur4aI>

WHITE SUPREMACY (N.)

According to Frances Lee Ansley, writing in the Cornell Law Review, white supremacy is "A political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings." White supremacy is the system of oppression that empowers white people at the expense of People of Color.

WHITE SUPREMACISTS (N.)

People who are invested in actively perpetuating the ideology of white supremacy and who generally believe that white Christians are genetically and culturally superior to other races and religions. White supremacist groups often have long histories of antisemitic and racialized violence.

XENOPHOBIA (N.)

A fear or hatred of foreign people or ideas.

YIDDISH (N.)

The historical, international language of Ashkenazi Jews. Prior to the Holocaust, there were 11—13 million speakers of Yiddish among 17 million Jews worldwide. 85% of the approximately 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust were Yiddish speakers, leading to a massive decline in the use of the language. Assimilation following World War II further decreased the use of Yiddish both among survivors and Yiddish-speakers from other countries (such as in the Americas). However, the number of speakers is increasing in global Hasidic communities and in the Yiddish revival movement led by Adrienne Cooper, Jenny Romaine and others.

Further reading and sources:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-languages-from-aramaic-to-yiddish/>

<http://www.jewfaq.org/yiddish.htm>

<https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/17/a-yiddish-revival-with-new-york-leading-the-way/>

ZIONISM (N.)

According to Wikipedia: Zionism is the national movement of the Jewish people that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel (roughly corresponding to Canaan, the Holy Land, or the region of Palestine). Modern Zionism emerged in the late 19th century in Central and Eastern Europe as a national revival movement, in reaction to antisemitic and exclusionary nationalist movements in Europe. Soon after this, most leaders of the movement associated the main goal with creating the desired state in Palestine, then an area controlled by the Ottoman Empire.

Advocates of Zionism view it as a national liberation movement for the repatriation of a persecuted people residing as minorities in a variety of nations to their ancestral homeland. Critics of Zionism view it as a colonialist, racist and exceptionalist ideology that led advocates to violence during Mandatory Palestine, followed by the exodus of Palestinians, and the subsequent denial of their right to return to property lost during the 1948 war.

Further reading and source:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionism>

<http://www.justvision.org/glossary-alphabetic?letter%5B0%5D=25>



JEWISH IDENTITY FACT SHEET

What's the deal with Jews?

- Jews are a tiny percentage of the U.S. population: there are 5.3 million Jews — approximately 2.2% of the total population of the country. Among those five million U.S. Jews are people of every race, gender, and economic status. There are Jews in every state of the US, with the largest absolute populations in New York, California, and Florida and the most per capita in New York, New Jersey and Washington D.C.
- Jews are a racially and ethnically diverse community. Some Jewish ethnic groups include Eastern and Western European and Russian (Ashkenazi); Middle Eastern, North African, Central Asian, and Balkan (Mizrahi); Ethiopian and Ugandan (African); and Spanish and Portuguese (Sephardi).
- Jews come from every part of the world, and look every kinda way.
- Though many people think that all Jews in the U.S. are white, somewhere between 11% and 20% of Jews in the United States are People of Color. Like all other People of Color, Jews of Color are the targets of racism and white supremacy, as well as antisemitism.
- Jews have been in the US since the colonial period, though much of what we associate with Jewish life and culture in the United States arrived with the large wave of Ashkenazi Jews immigrating from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1921.

Clarity, Not Stereotypes: Debunking Myths About Jewish Wealth

There is great class diversity among Jews.

- Of the 13.1 million people in the world who are millionaires, 56.2% were Christians, while 6.5% were Muslims, 3.9% were Hindu and 1.7% were Jewish. Jews make up 11.6% of the world's billionaires — higher than Jews' percentile in the world's population but a small fraction of the total. Contrary to conspiracy theories about Jews — and conspiracy theories in general — no single group controls the planet's wealth.
- The vast majority of high income people in the U.S. are non-Jews. It is also true that in the U.S. Jews are disproportionately better paid than most other religious and ethnic groups: Some 25% of Jews in the U.S. report household incomes over \$150,000, compared to 8% of the general population. However, Jewish adults make up a very small percentage of the U.S. population, only 5.3 million out of 318 million (2.2%).
- 45% of all children in Jewish households in New York now live below or near the poverty line and the Jewish poverty rate is 26.4% — only slightly lower than the general population (30.8%). The number of poor Jews increased by 22% between 1991 and 2011.
- Despite widespread Jewish poverty, the experiences of poor and working-class Jewish communities are erased by false characterizations of Jews as uniformly wealthy.

In short, our community is extremely diverse. It includes rich Jews and poor Jews, white Jews and Jewish People of Color. It is important to be clear that there are many Jews with race and class privilege.



COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM TIPSHEET 1

For non-Jews: Tips for Countering Antisemitism...

In general:

- Educate yourself: Learn at least a little about Jews, and become “antisemitism literate.”
- A little solidarity goes a long way: Reach out to your local Jewish communities with support during threats or attacks on Jewish communal spaces.
- If you feel ready, forge real relationships. Get yourself to a progressive seder. You’ll have fun, promise.
- Don’t “compliment” Jews for being wealthy or “good with money.” Even if the intention is genuinely well-meaning, perpetuating the stereotype that there is somehow something exceptional or excessive about Jewish wealth only reinforces antisemitism. Myths about Jews and money have caused enormous pain over the centuries and led to the deaths of countless Jews. Very few of us are going to react well to this “compliment.” And while in the U.S. there are many middle class or owning class Jews at this moment, many others are poor or working-class — fixating on “Jewish wealth” erases that fact along with that lived experience.
- Don’t make assumptions or generalize about Jews — that POC next to you might be Jewish: Acknowledge the race and class diversity of the Jewish community, and ways in which Black and Arab Jews get particularly targeted, as well as the ways that poor and working-class Jews are rendered invisible.
- Support the leadership of Jewish People of Color
- Notice the operation of Christian dominance in U.S. society, and how it shows up in the political and social landscape, and in your organizational practice, culture, and policies. You don’t have to stop loving Christian culture, just be thoughtful about how and where it shows up.

In your organizing and campaigns:

- Remember that we fight institutions not groups of people; if folks around you are focusing on any group — including Jews — rather than transforming oppressive systems, something’s probably wrong.
- If your campaign engages with Jews or Jewish groups, make accurate assessments of Jewish power. What do these folks actually have control over, and what don’t they? Is there a larger system or institution setting both of you up to be in conflict?
- Especially if you need to target or call-out a Jewish policymaker or institution, look to progressive Jewish organizations and individuals as valuable allies. (But do it anyway, because we’re great!)
- If your politics extend to Israel/Palestine, take care to distinguish legitimate anti-Zionism from antisemitism.
- If you want to be inclusive, be inclusive: if you’d like Jews to be able to attend, take account of the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays when planning meetings




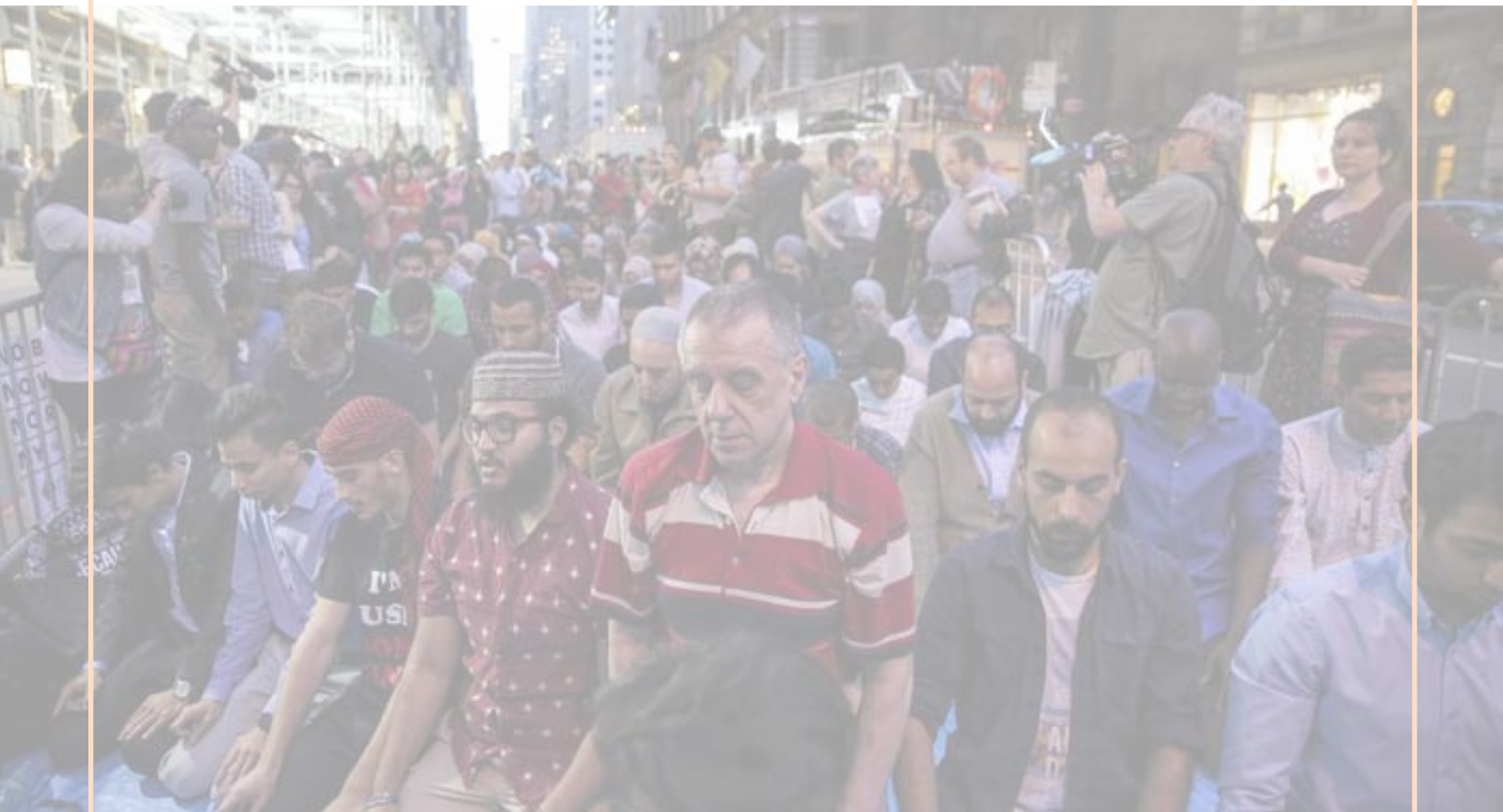
JEWES SHOWING UP IN ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENTS TIPSHEET 1

For Jews: Showing-up in anti-racist movements

- Support the leadership of Jewish People of Color
- *Central but not centered.* When confronted with real or perceived antisemitism, white Jews sometimes panic, make demands for attention, care, time, etc. or voice their opinions in a media landscape that they may have easier access to because of race and class privilege. White Jews need to make careful, thoughtful choices about how they show up, with clarity about how much “oxygen they can suck out of the room” when they make accusations of antisemitism in public, or demand to be included in campaigns, events or movements that they may not have been contributing to until very recently. White Jews have vital contributions to make to anti-racist movements, and our stories can and should be central to the fight against white nationalism, but they need to find roles that center the voices of People of Color (including Jews of Color), Muslims, immigrants and others directly targeted by state violence.
- Jews: organize your communities and institutions to actively support grassroots, POC-led organizing for justice. Without litmus tests. The only way we can resist antisemitism, white nationalism and white supremacy is to actively participate in the campaigns for racial justice and police accountability being waged all across the country by local organizations, especially those led by People of Color. You may not agree with every position held by every leader or organization. But we have to keep our eyes on the prize, and stay in relationship with each other so that we can agitate and change each other, with love. We can win, but only by creating movements too powerful to be ignored. In this struggle there is no neutral ground — if the Jewish community isn't part of the solution, then it is part of the problem.

— by *Dania Rajendra, Audrey Sasson & Leo Ferguson*

 JEWS FOR RACIAL &
ECONOMIC JUSTICE



Jews form a protective circle around Muslims praying at an "Iftar in the Streets" protest outside of Trump Tower, in New York, 2016.