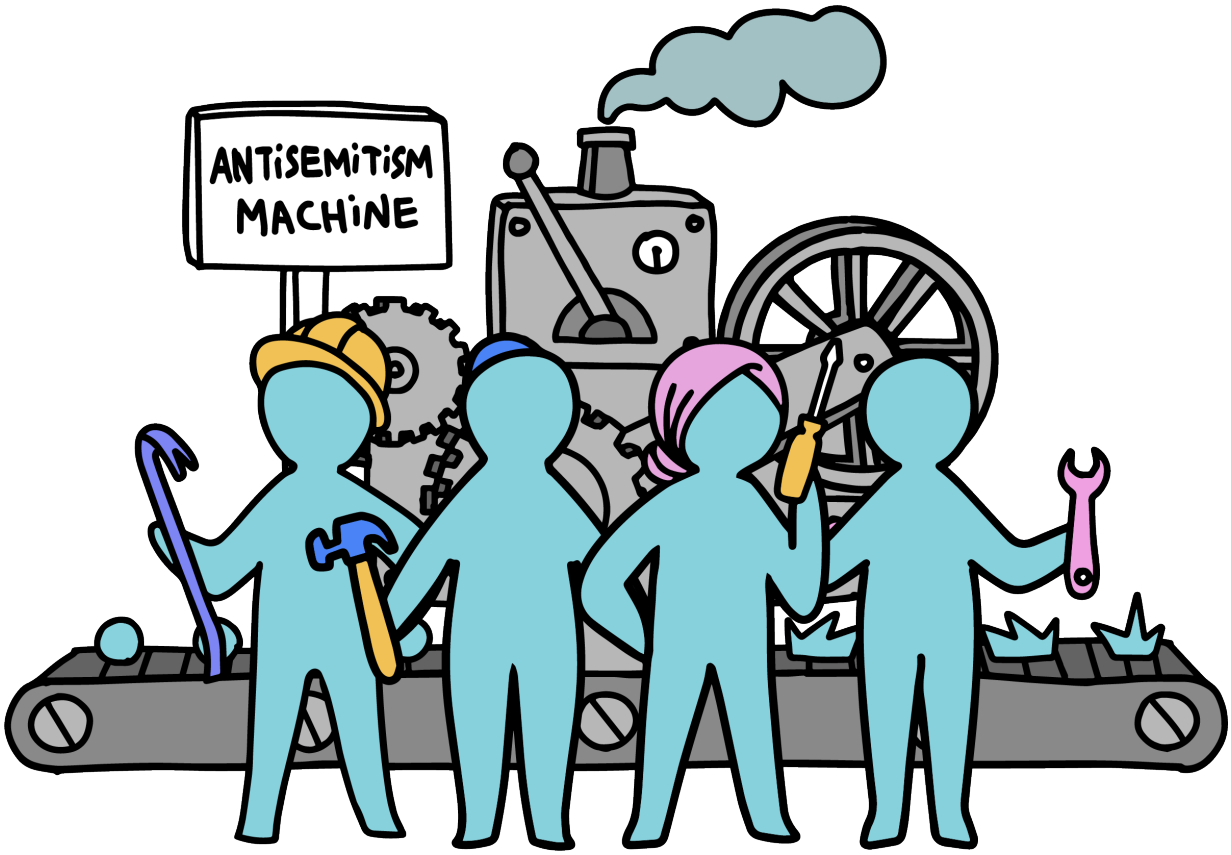
A Message Guide

DISMANTLING ANTISEMITISM

How to talk about antisemitism like we believe we can end it together—so that we can



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JEWISH TRADITION TEACHES THAT WORDS CREATE WORLDS.

The words we use to talk about antisemitism profoundly shape our reality. They inform our understanding of the nature of the problem, what solutions might be appropriate, and who has the power to do something about it. For those of us working toward a future where all of us can live full, thriving, joyful lives, no matter our religions, races, or genders, language is an essential tool.

Most importantly, our language should conjure the world we wish to create, and reflect the truth embedded in that vision that **antisemitism is a problem we can—and must—solve**. Our language should express the way antisemitism is inherently connected to other forms of discrimination and oppression, including anti-Black racism, anti-immigrant xenophobia, Islamophobia, transphobia, and more, and show how antisemitism is a fundamental threat to democracy. It should provide a framework for growth and unlearning antisemitism that has polluted our society. It should help our multiracial, multiethnic Jewish audiences overcome the very real fears resulting from our experiences and histories with antisemitism and make space to talk about the complexities of our intersecting identities. And it should help audiences outside the Jewish community to find themselves and their own stakes in this story to help us take action together across many lines of difference.

What World Are We Creating?

Unfortunately, much of the language commonly used to talk about antisemitism today does just the opposite. In subtle and overt ways, this language, in use over many decades and expressed by a wide range of messengers, has undermined the idea that we can live in a world free from antisemitism, discrimination, and oppression of all kinds. This harmful and inaccurate story presents antisemitism as a problem completely different and separate from all other forms of discrimination and bigotry—one that has and will exist forever. This leaves Jewish people feeling afraid and isolated, suspicious of our neighbors, and unable to see our fates as fundamentally interlinked. For audiences of all religions and backgrounds, it can make the idea of taking decisive action to end antisemitism seem pointless.

The stakes are very high: While antisemitism harms Jewish people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds directly, antisemitism isn't just an issue for Jewish communities to address. Antisemitism is used to deflect blame for the failures of those in power, to remove fundamental freedoms, and to weaken democracy. It is a core component of white supremacist and white nationalist ideology that is used to directly undermine movements for social, economic, racial, and gender justice. In some cases, white supremacists use antisemitic ideas about Jewish people as a supposed "explanation" of Black excellence and the transformative success of Black-led movements, the thriving of transgender people, and the imagined threat of those who are immigrants, particularly people of color—all of which should be impossible according to supremacist ideology. In other cases, those same supremacist leaders and individuals point the finger at Black, brown, and Muslim people as the source of antisemitism, inventing or exploiting mistakes and missteps—which should be opportunities for growth and repair—to break apart our efforts to join together across differences to win the future we all deserve. This two-pronged strategy pitting Jewish communities and communities of color against each other is particularly painful for Jews of color, who exist fully in multiple communities across this manufactured divide.

We cannot dismantle antisemitism without addressing anti-Black racism and all other forms of institutionalized oppression. And the reverse is true as well: we cannot dismantle anti-Black racism, nor any other form of institutionalized oppression, without addressing antisemitism. Ending antisemitism is critical to achieving a thriving multiracial democracy. We draw from the wisdom of our ancestors Emma Lazarus and Fannie Lou Hamer: freedom and safety for any of us depends on freedom and safety for all of us.

"Freedom and safety for any of us depends on freedom and safety for all of us."

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

If you are a person who wants to end antisemitism and believes it's a critical step toward a safe, liberated future for all of us—Jewish or not, no matter our religions, races, or genders—this guide is for you.

If you are Jewish and are looking for ways to talk about antisemitism that lead to action and help bring people together across lines of difference to end it, this guide is for you.

If you are progressive— no matter who your people are—and you want to learn how to take the lead on addressing antisemitism, creating more equitable and liberated movements, and winning the thriving future we all deserve, this guide is for you.

What Now?

As this guide goes into publication, many Jewish people are experiencing more antisemitism—and, as a result, more fear—than many of us have in recent memory. Those of us working to advance justice and democracy are experiencing differences in perspectives and understandings that are straining key alliances. To many, this feels incongruous with the story of progress we're taught in America: that history moves in a straight line towards justice. But the reality is that progress only happens when people take action, and reversals and setbacks are part of the struggle toward a more just and equitable society.

This is long-term, essential work which requires a broad range of educational, organizing, relational, and spiritual strategies. Language alone cannot solve all of these problems. But we also cannot solve them without finding the words to create the world we desire.

Fortunately, we can tell a different and more accurate story, one that helps us overcome fear and division and motivates us all to take action toward a future where freedom and safety are for everyone, no exceptions. The purpose of this guide is to provide specific language recommendations to help people from all backgrounds reshape conversations about antisemitism into ones that serve this purpose. It can be used in educational materials and programs, organizational efforts, public media, and as a narrative basis for proactive work intended to end antisemitism.

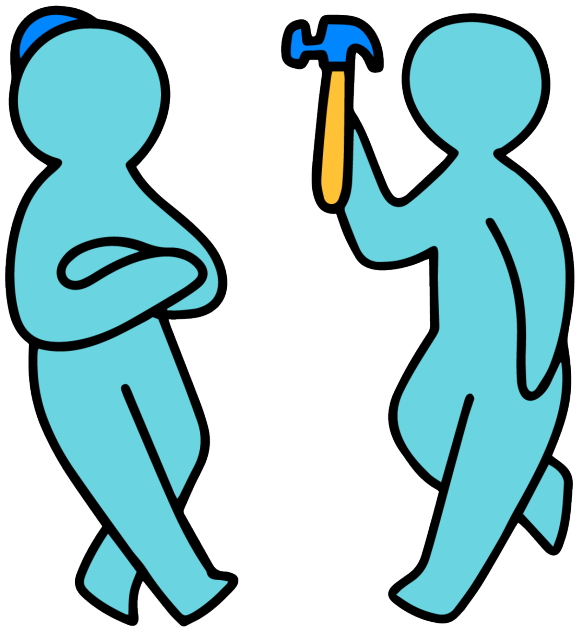
"Language alone cannot solve all of these problems. But we also cannot solve them without finding the words to create the world we desire."

What You'll Find:

This guide contains specific language recommendations advocates should use to tell a coherent story about antisemitism and how we can eliminate it, including a powerful new metaphor and guidance on how to avoid unhelpful and even damaging metaphors that are commonly used today, advice for responding to accusations of antisemitism, and guidelines for ensuring that our responses to antisemitism do not damage other connected movements and people.

The language was strongly informed by insights from polling and message testing research, including the extensively tested Race-Class Narrative research project. The guide may be updated as new research emerges.

For more analysis on the history of antisemitism and its current expressions, as well as its role in white nationalist and anti-Black ideology, we have included a list of resources at the end of this guide.



ANTISEMITISM AND FEAR

Fear is one significant way Jews in the United States and globally—a multiracial, multi-ethnic family—experience antisemitism. This fear is created by being subject to, witnessing, or remembering violent antisemitic acts in the past and present, which have ranged from individual, interpersonal discrimination or violence to state-sponsored expulsion and genocide. American Jews represent a very small percentage of the population of the United States (Pew estimates 2.4%) and roughly 0.2% of the global population. The murder of half of the global Jewish population occurred within living memory. Because of how antisemitic rhetoric has been used to foment physical violence or as a precursor to it, many Jewish people feel existential fear as a result of antisemitic words, symbols, or stories, no matter who speaks them or for what reasons.

Fear in the Brain

Fear is a powerful emotional state. In human evolution, the fear response is a critical adaptation allowing us to handle danger by activating stress hormones that cause us to laser focus on the threat. Some psychologists call these the "freeze," "fight," "flight," and "fright" responses.[1]

But fear also has important implications on our political decision-making. Social psychologists have found that fear makes people hypervigilant—constantly monitoring threats—and risk-averse,[2] which may lead us to react to situations that are hard, painful, or uncomfortable as if they represent a direct threat. It makes us seek out people we perceive to be part of our "in-group" and mistrust people we perceive as different from us. Fear decreases political participation and can even cause people to become more authoritarian.[3] Overall, researchers find that fear necessarily makes us more conservative[4]—it doesn't work the other way around.[5]

Jewish People and Fear

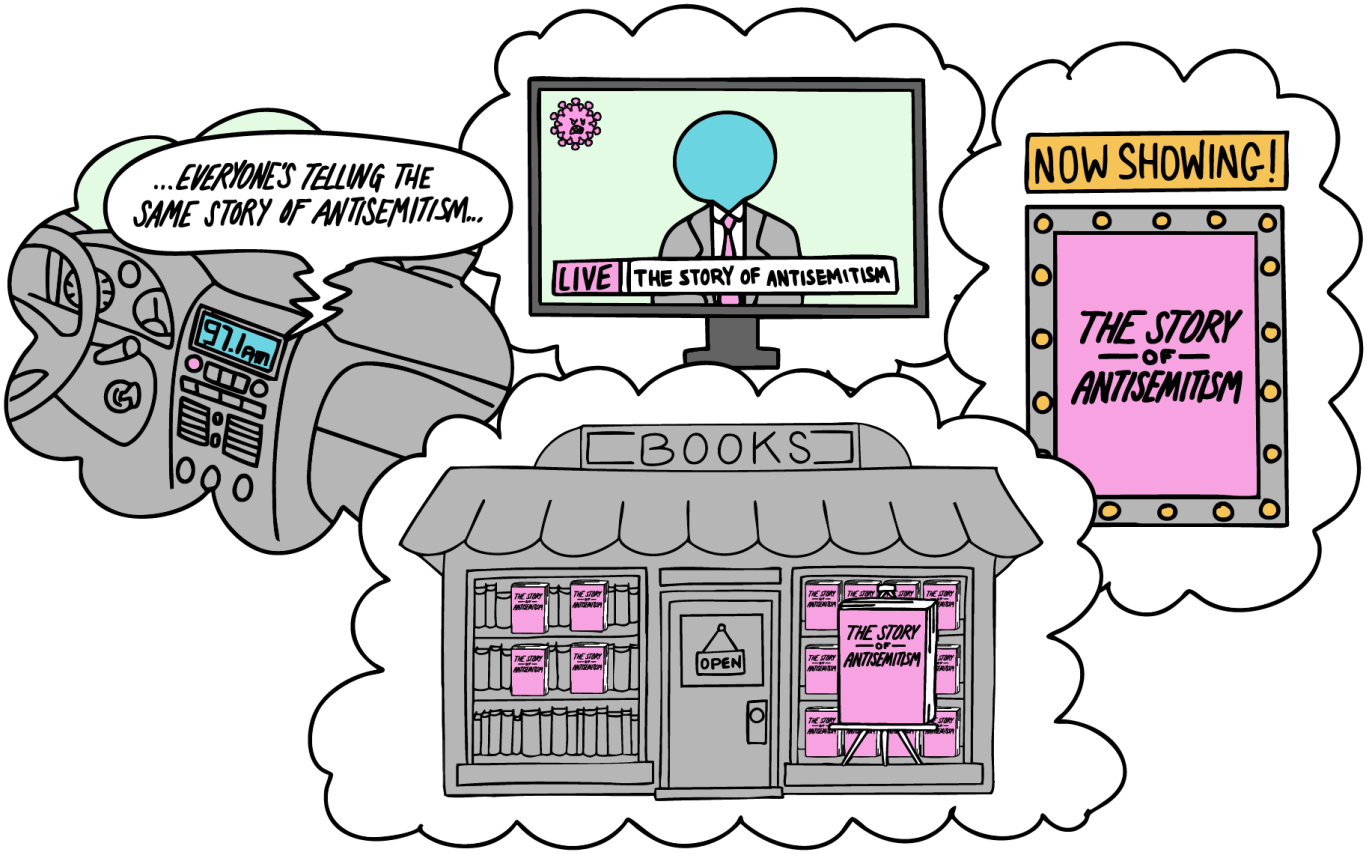
It is important to consider, then, the effect of fear from antisemitism on Jewish people. Studies from social psychologists in Israel have shown that sharing stories of traumatic events from the Jewish past increases fear among Jewish Israelis and leads to more hawkish views toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[6]

Of course, this is not unique to Jewish people—all those who have experienced trauma, on an individual or communal level, can be affected by powerful fear responses. When we understand how and why this happens, we can approach ourselves and each other with compassion while choosing to move away from isolationist and authoritarian impulses. We can also learn to recognize our own nervous system responses so that we can distinguish between real and perceived threats and make mindful choices about how to respond.

Jewish people's existential fears are triggered by antisemitism, and these fears are also reinforced by the way we talk about antisemitism. In this guide, we offer language to help Jewish and non-Jewish partners address antisemitism with integrity and compassion without triggering fear responses that make things worse.

THE STORY OF ANTISEMITISM

People from many different political perspectives all contribute to a dominant narrative about antisemitism: a deep, fundamental story that we tell in many ways and through many means. This dominant narrative isn't the story we necessarily believe is true, or one that aligns with our political analysis—indeed, in many ways, it contradicts that analysis.



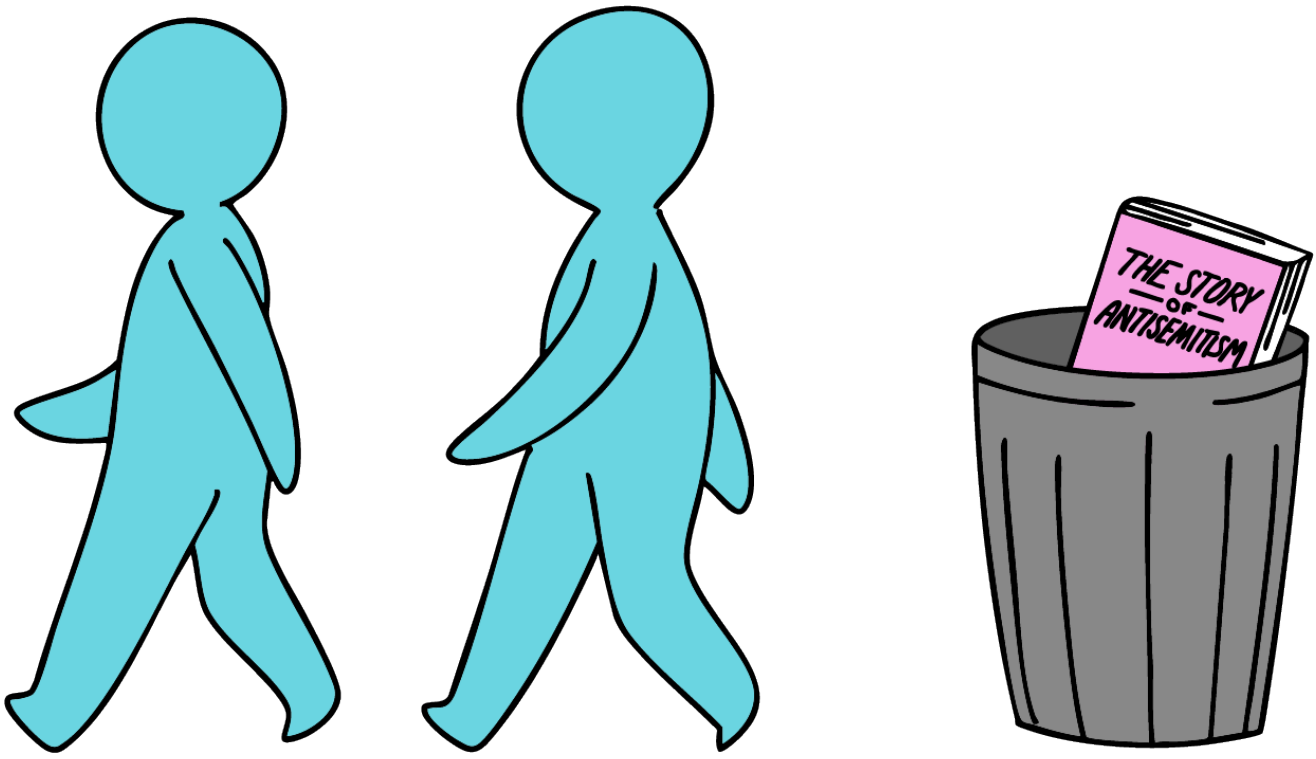
The dominant story says that:

Antisemitism is a **timeless, static force** that has existed throughout time and will exist in perpetuity;

Antisemitism **targets Jews** as the root cause of society's problems;

Anyone could be a source of antisemitism, so **vigilance and mistrust**—especially of non-Jewish people—**is warranted** and even necessary; and

Antisemitism is a **unique form of oppression** that is fundamentally different from and disconnected from all others, and therefore must be addressed in isolation from all other forms of oppression.



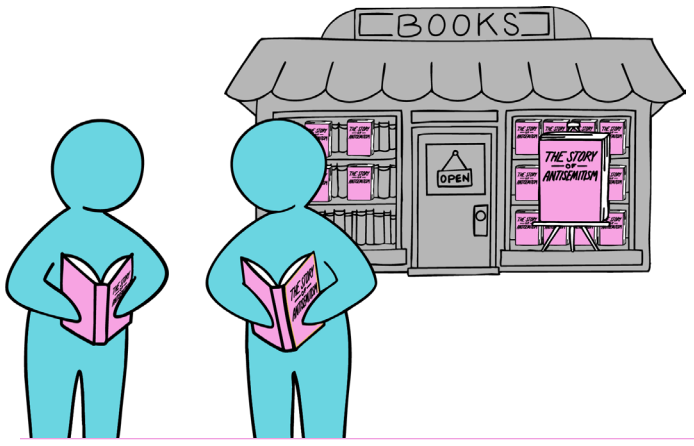
Beyond a Personal Trait

Sometimes we refer to antisemitism as a binary personal trait—a person either is an antisemite or is not one. And sometimes we refer to antisemitism as a form of "hate." Both of these linguistic patterns presume that antisemitism is primarily an interpersonal problem—something that is in someone's heart, with no particular motivation except interpersonal animus. Of course, this also suggests that someone cannot "be antisemitic" if they do not hold personal animus toward Jewish people. This is a dangerous misstatement of the nature of antisemitism because it reduces a historic, politicized, and violent system of oppression to something that is merely a matter of how individuals personally feel toward Jews.

Antisemitism as Agent

Antisemitism is often given agency and described as causing problems itself, absent the need for any human actors. For example, "The job of antisemitism is . . ." or "Antisemitism has found a home in . . ." This contributes to the feeling of helplessness among anyone who wishes to address antisemitism: when problems are not caused by people, it is very difficult to believe that people are capable of solving them. Further, it presumes that there is no reason for antisemitism to exist: it simply exists. This obscures the political and systemic nature of antisemitism and shields those individuals and movements who use antisemitism for specific political, material, or spiritual gain.

By presenting the problem as if it has neither a clear purpose nor a solution, this dominant narrative and the language that contributes to it leaves Jewish audiences feeling afraid, isolated, frustrated, mistrustful, and hopeless, and therefore less likely to join together with people across lines of difference to end antisemitism together with other forms of oppression.



What We Know to be True

More importantly, this language directly contradicts what we know to be true about antisemitism:

- **It is a form of systemic oppression with a specific function—usually to deflect blame for hardships, to discredit leaders or institutions, or to create an imagined "enemy from within" used to justify removing or damaging fundamental freedoms and democratic institutions (like freedom of speech or the right to vote);**
- **It is often a form of conspiracy theory used to generate fear and division;**
- **It is distinct but connected to other forms of identity-based oppression and present in all sectors of American society;**
- **It harms Jewish people and all of us; and**
- **We can and must dismantle it as part of our struggle for collective liberation.**

The language we use to talk about antisemitism should reflect this understanding—not reinforce an inaccurate and damaging story that just leaves people feeling helpless, afraid, and alone.

THE BAD METAPHORS

Metaphors are linguistic tools that evoke specific images to help us understand concepts by comparing them with something familiar. Social science researchers have found that the metaphors we use to describe problems have a significant but covert effect on our understanding of the nature of those problems, as well as powerfully influencing the solutions we believe are appropriate for solving them.[7] Because of this, and because of how frequently we use metaphors in speech and writing, it is instructive to examine the metaphors commonly used to describe an issue and consider how this language influences our understanding of the problems and our proposed solutions.

Two metaphors are commonly used by advocates across the political spectrum when describing antisemitism. These metaphors are so common that, before the original version of this guide began being put into practice, it was nearly impossible to find any examples of speech or writing about antisemitism that did not include one or both. They are:

Antisemitism as Water

*"Antisemitism comes in **waves** . . ."*

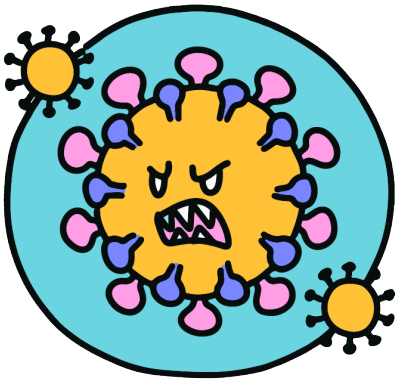
*"Antisemitism in America **ebbs and flows** . . ."*

*"We're now experiencing a **wave** of violent antisemitism . . ."*

*"We push back against the **rising tide** of antisemitism . . ."*

*"Antisemitism is on the **rise** . . ."*

*"Antisemitism is the **water we swim in** . . ."*



Antisemitism as Disease

*"[Person] is a **virulent** anti-Semite . . ."*

*"Antisemitism has **infected** the world . . ."*

*"[Person] is **spreading** antisemitism . . ."*

*"Antisemitism has different **strains/mutations** . . ."*

Examples of the Bad Metaohors in Use:

THE NEW YORKER

Where Does Antisemitism Come From?
Isaac Chatiner, November 7, 2023

"

...we discussed how different ideological strains of antisemitism coexist and overlap, what makes the latest wave of incidents so disturbing, and whether there are dangers in focussing too much on the Middle East when talking about hatred in America."

Disease

Water

"Hate" Framing

POLITICO

Nearly half the world's population holds antisemitic beliefs?
Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, January 14, 2025

Disease

"Hate" Framing

Water

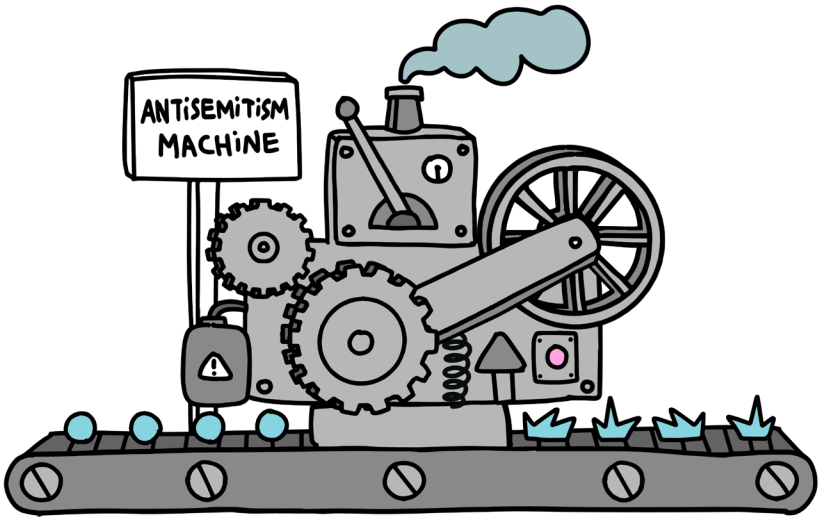
"An intractable virus of hate that has ebbed and flowed through the centuries, antisemitism has plagued Jews in virtually every country around the world."

Disease

Both of these metaphors reinforce a flawed analysis of antisemitism: that it is a part of nature and therefore will always exist; that it was not created by humans and cannot ever truly be stopped by humans; and that it is indiscriminate, equally present and equally damaging no matter its source or their political motives.

Again, the effect of this story on listeners is to increase the unhelpful feelings of isolation, fear, and division, making us less likely to take action to end antisemitism.

MESSAGE GUIDANCE



The Machinery Metaphor

To avoid these pitfalls, use a **machinery metaphor** instead:

Antisemitism is part of the machinery of division and fear created and used for specific material or political gain.

This suggests:

- **Antisemitism was built by people and is used by people for a specific purpose, and those people are the ones who benefit most from its use;**
- **Anyone can fuel antisemitism, intentionally or even unintentionally;**
- **We can stop it, shut it down, dismantle it; and**
- **Antisemitism is part of a larger whole, directly connected to other problems, and addressing it is intrinsically connected to other struggles.**

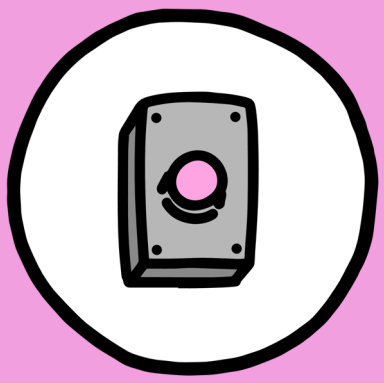
In this metaphor, antisemitism is always an object—something people use—and never the actor independently responsible for doing damaging things. It provides a clear story of WHY, showing the reasons someone would use antisemitism and highlighting WHO benefits from its use. It also allows us to more easily express HOW we can solve this problem and conceptualize what the world could look like without it.

Using vs. Fueling

All antisemitism is damaging—it is never acceptable. The machinery metaphor makes it possible to recognize this while also acknowledging the importance of power in this story: not every incident of antisemitism—from graffiti to state-sponsored violence—is equally dangerous. It also allows us to show how all antisemitism—no matter the source—benefits the people and movements who use it for political purposes like white Christian nationalist and authoritarian movements.

To do this, differentiate between ***USING*** and ***FUELING*** antisemitism:

Using Antisemitism



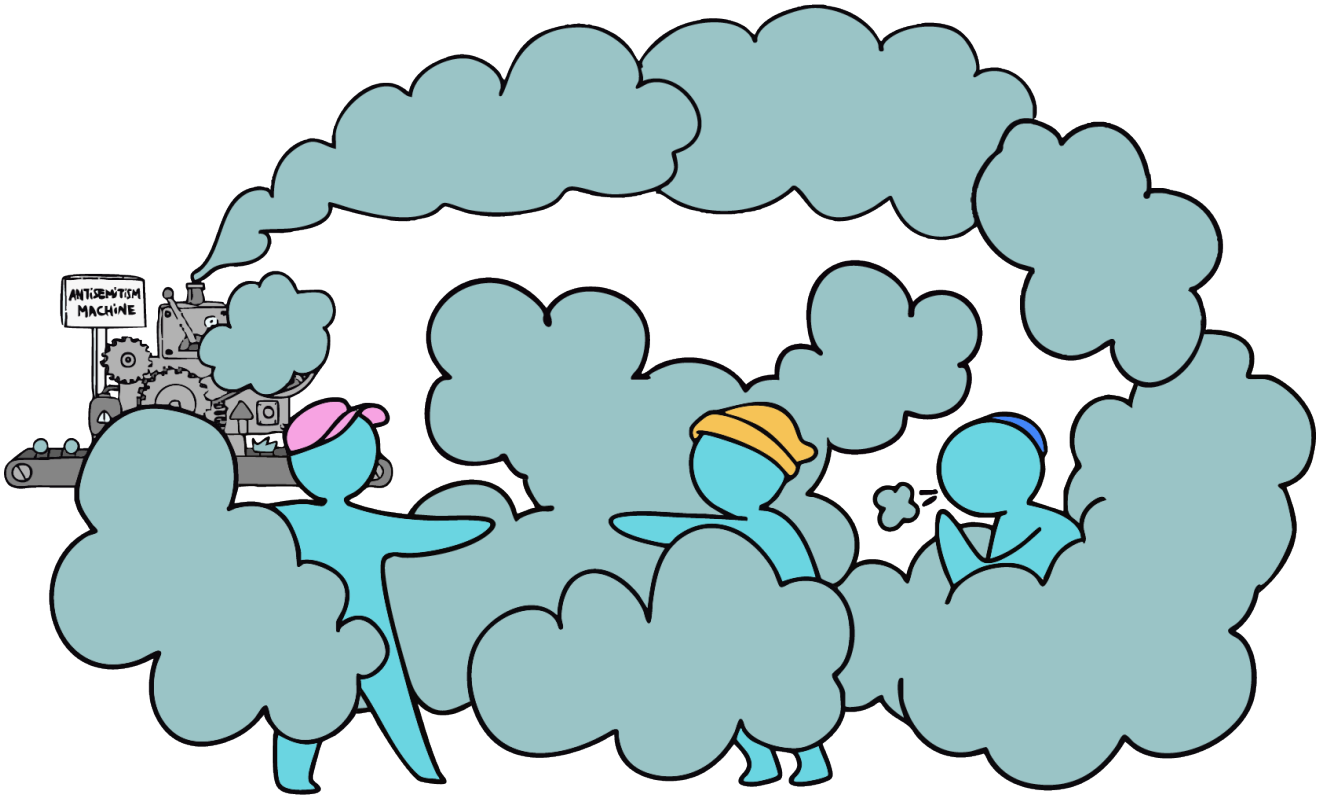
An individual or group is USING antisemitism when it is deliberate and unapologetic, when it serves their own purposes, and when they derive a concrete benefit from it like increasing fear and division in order to gain voters in an election. Using antisemitism is always purposeful; you don't use a machine by accident.

Fueling Antisemitism

An individual or group is FUELING antisemitism when it says or does something antisemitic, but doesn't necessarily benefit from it. Someone can fuel antisemitism by repeating an antisemitic story (or "trope"), whether they understood it to be antisemitic or not. For example, a public figure might fuel antisemitism by repeating an antisemitic trope and then lose their job. They might also fuel it by expressing unexamined antisemitic ideas they have learned by being part of the pervasive culture, which tells antisemitic stories as truth.

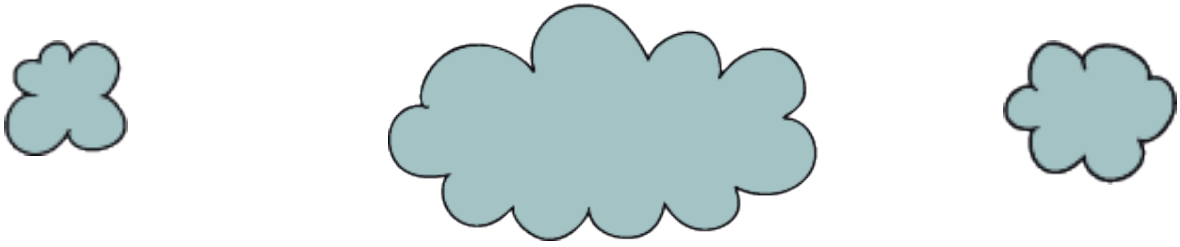
Fueling antisemitism is damaging and dangerous and no one should do it—it provides power for the machine which is then used by those who benefit from it. At the same time, unintentionally "fueling" antisemitism has to be understood as categorically distinct from intentionally "using" antisemitism for a specific gain. Because we understand antisemitism to be one component of a larger machinery—directly connected to racism, Islamophobia, patriarchy, transmisogyny, and other forms of oppression—we can also understand that some people who fuel that machinery might also be targeted by it. This understanding is critical for diverse non-Jewish audiences to be able to identify their own stakes in the effort to end antisemitism and helps diverse Jewish audiences understand their stake in dismantling other components of that connected machinery.

Differentiating between "using" and "fueling" antisemitism provides a useful way to express the truth that all antisemitism is harmful, but not all instances are equal. Differentiating between the two helps identify opportunities for growth and change. Situations where a person or institution fueled antisemitism—intentionally or not—are often opportunities for apologizing, learning, and growth through education and relationship. But this is unlikely or impossible when someone has used antisemitism deliberately and for their own benefit.



Smokescreen Antisemitism

Understanding "using" and "fueling" antisemitism is particularly important to help shield against and respond to the complex "smokescreen antisemitism" strategy used by authoritarian and antidemocratic politicians and movements—a strategy which has now been largely embraced (or at least legitimized) by the mainstream Right in America. In a smokescreen antisemitism strategy, politicians and political movements use antisemitism to increase racialized fear and division in order to gain supporters and win elections. This is a key component of their power strategy, but it could lead to being branded an antisemite, which could become a political liability. They need cover for this strategic use of antisemitism—it's too powerful a tool and too central to their ideology to give up entirely. So the second step of the smokescreen antisemitism strategy is to create confusion by pointing the finger at progressives, people of color, and Muslims for antisemitism while claiming to be the true defenders of Jews. Sometimes these accusations are completely false, and sometimes they are true or based on some truth. But smokescreen antisemitism accusations are always initiated with the intent to obscure the user's own responsibility for using antisemitism for political gain. This is still true even when some people joining in on the accusation of antisemitism don't intend to do this. All of these effects are harmful and it is useful to identify and name smokescreen antisemitism when it is used, even if an accusation warrants apology and steps toward repair.

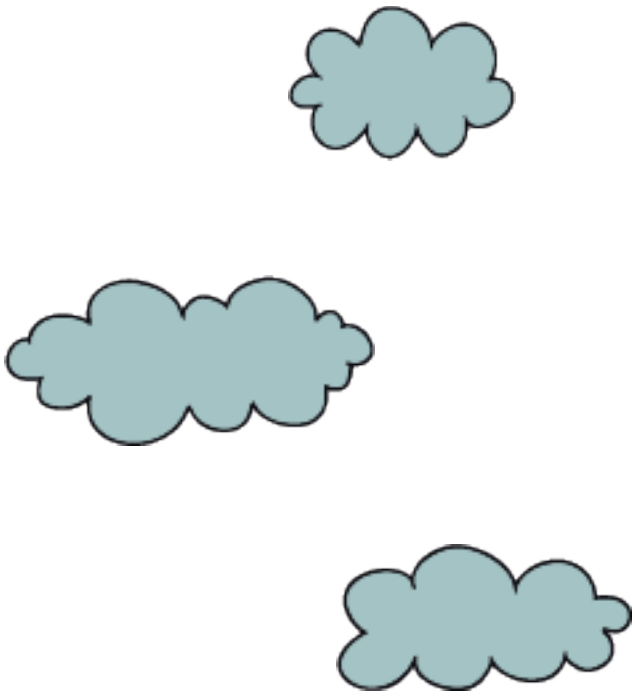


Polluting our Society

It's one thing to understand how antisemitism works and who benefits from it on a systemic level. But we often encounter antisemitism on an interpersonal level, and these experiences may or may not line up with our systemic understanding. This is not only true about antisemitism: people growing up in unjust and inequitable societies often say and do things that reinforce those inequities and injustices, whether they themselves benefit from that system or not. This is sometimes born of ignorance, mistakes, or lack of exposure rather than malice, but that doesn't make it less hurtful to experience.

Antisemitism is pervasive in our society. But using the harmful "water" and "virus" metaphors to express this can make it seem inevitable and unstoppable. Instead, think of antisemitic biases, stereotypes, and tropes like the pollution coming out of the machinery of division and fear. Noxious stories about Jews have been pumped into our society for generations—we don't always notice them but we've all been exposed, and we've all internalized them to varying degrees. And the more we're exposed, the more likely we are to accept these polluting stories as reality and to repeat them.

But, like pollution, there's nothing natural or inevitable about it. And while it's important to learn to recognize and avoid it, it's even more important—and very clearly possible—to stop it at the source by shutting down the fear machine.



Machinery Metaphor in Use

You don't need to repeat the whole machinery metaphor in order to use this cognitive frame, though it may be useful to do so in some circumstances. These are examples of more subtle ways to invoke the machinery metaphor:

Talk about antisemitism as an OBJECT, but never as the ACTOR causing problems:

> *"Politicians who rely on division and fear for their power use antisemitism . . ."*

Talk about the EFFECTS of antisemitism and who benefits from those outcomes:

> *"[Person] is **using** antisemitism to **generate** fear and divide us against each other . . ."*

Differentiate between USING (deliberate, the user benefits) and FUELING (does not necessarily lead to a benefit for the fueler):

> *"What [person] said could **fuel** antisemitism, so . . "*
> *"No matter who **fuels** it, antisemitism always benefits those who **manufacture** fear to gain power . . ."*

Think about antisemitic tropes, stereotypes, and biases like POLLUTION—they've been pumped into our society for generations, we've all been exposed but may not always notice, people are more likely to repeat them when they're hearing them more frequently, and when we stop their source we all benefit.

> *"Like many of us, I grew up around noxious stories about Jewish people..."*

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ANTISEMITISM

Message Platform:

The message platform represents foundational language, intended to be adapted and used across many kinds of media. It is built on a structure that creates a narrative arc: beginning with a **shared value**, explaining the **problem** and naming those responsible for blocking us from the desired goal, and finally showing our proposed **solutions and vision** of what the future should look like. This format has also been proven by researchers to be the most persuasive structure (especially compared to messages that lead with problems). When adapting this platform for your uses, make sure to maintain this basic message structure.

In the version below, words intended to be used by Jewish spokespeople are in [brackets]. If you or your organization are not Jewish, this messaging is still for you! Simply omit the bracketed words.

Most of us believe that every person, no matter our religion, where we come from, or what we look like, deserves to live with freedom, safety, and belonging. [As Jews, we know that] whether we're walking down the streets of our neighborhoods or through the doors of our holy spaces, freedom and safety for any of us depends on the freedom and safety of all of us.

But there are some politicians who seek to build a country that's only for themselves and people like them, exploiting divisions between us and making us afraid while they hoard power and wealth. [As Jews, we know how dangerous this is:] when politicians target Jewish people and blame [us] for hard times, it leads directly to violence against [us]. Antisemitism is part of the machinery of division and fear those politicians rely on for power; the same machinery those politicians use to blame Black and brown people, people who are immigrants, people who are Muslim, and more. But whether they manufacture division and fear based on our religion, our skin color, or how long we've been here, their goal is to keep us from working together to win the things we all need to thrive.

When Jewish people join together with [our] neighbors across differences, as we have in the past, we can shut down the fear factory and protect each other. We'll show up for each other every time one of us is targeted because of our differences and reject any politician who uses fear to divide us against each other. Together, we can build a country that fulfills the promise of freedom and safety for all of us—no exceptions.

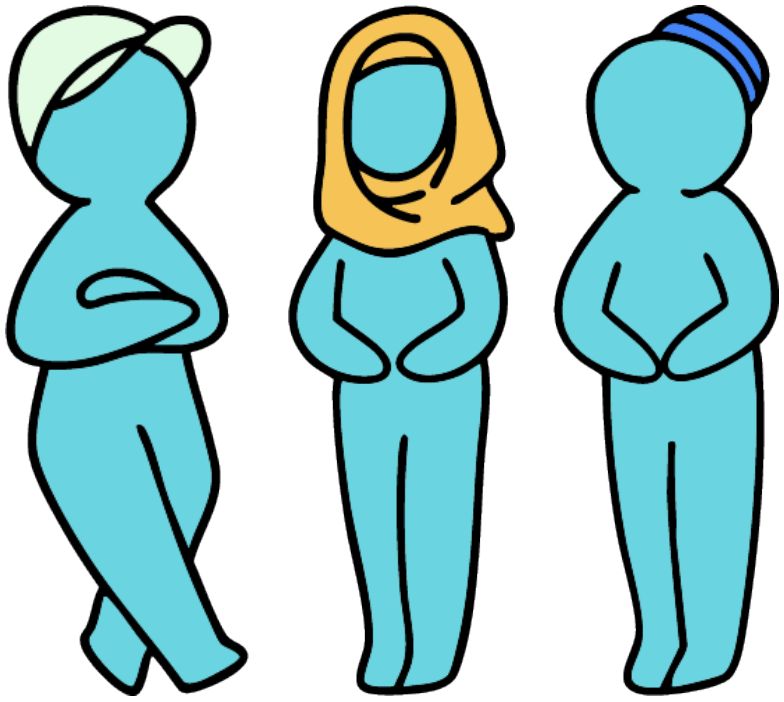
Feel free to copy and paste this whole section for your own purposes!

Language Choices in the Message Platform

Below is more information on the specific language choices in the platform and guidance for what you should consider when adapting this language for your purposes:

Shared Value:

Most of us believe that every person, no matter our religion, where we come from, or what we look like,	*Reference religion and racial difference and allude to immigration or geography. Consider which dimensions are most appropriate or which linked struggles are most important to mention for your context.*
deserves to live with freedom, safety and belonging.	*State shared values—"safety" as opposed to "security" implies broader personal goal and de-emphasizes military/policing solutions.*
[As Jews, we know that] whether we're walking down the streets of our neighborhoods or through the doors of our holy spaces, freedom and safety for any of us depends on the freedom and safety of all of us.	*If relevant, invoke Jewish identity as personal motivation for caring about others; activate minority experience; reference Jewish experiences of antisemitic violence without activating fear response.*



Problem:

But there are some politicians who seek to build a country that's only for themselves and people like them,

Reference white nationalist political movement in simple terms, creating a category of bad actors based on behaviors—not identity. Consider naming these movements if you are sure your audience understands who they are, or in political education.

exploiting divisions between us and making us afraid while they hoard power and wealth.

Point to motivation behind actions—why are they doing it? Consider whether to include "wealth."

As Jews, we know how dangerous this is: when politicians target Jewish people and blame [us] for hard times, it leads directly to violence against [us].

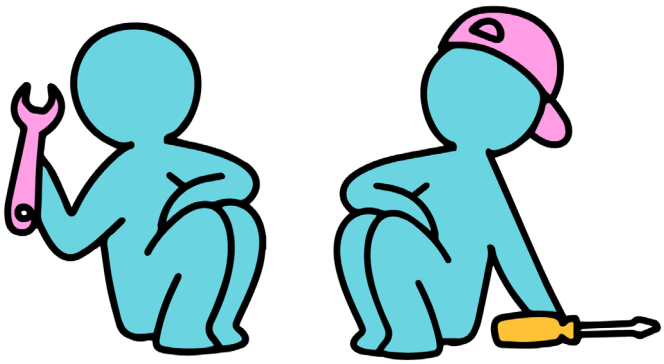
Acknowledge Jewish experience of violent antisemitism as motivation/way to understand larger system at work.

Antisemitism is part of the machinery of division and fear those politicians rely on for power; the same machinery those politicians use to blame Black and brown people, people who are immigrants, people who are Muslim, and more.

Use helpful machinery metaphor and connect antisemitism to other struggles.

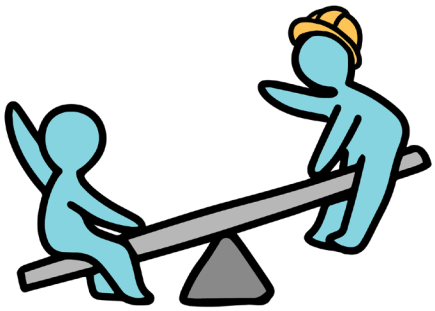
But whether they manufacture division and fear based on our religion, our skin color, or how long we've been here, their goal is to keep us from working together to win the things we all need to thrive.

Reference solidarity as mutual benefit, directly mention race, and name the obstacle to our goal.



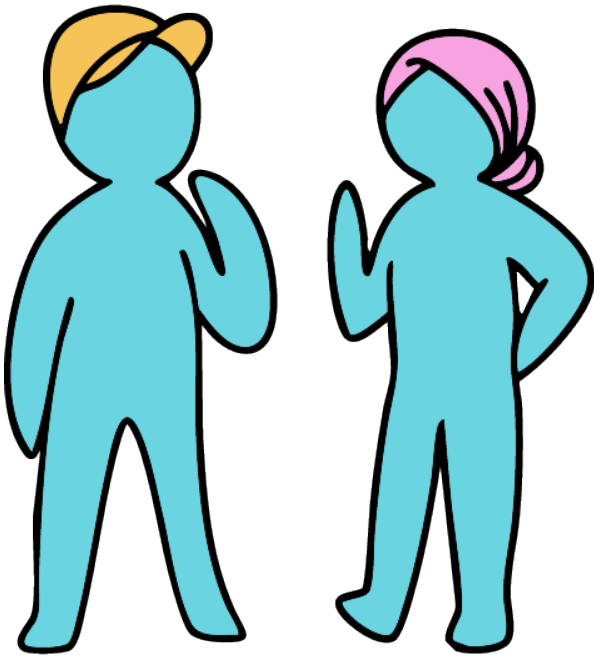
Solution and Vision:

When Jewish people join together with [our] neighbors across differences,	*Consider referencing specific differences, like race or religion, depending on the context. For non-Jewish speakers, you might change the order: "When we join together with our Jewish neighbors . . ."*
as we have in the past,	*Remind audiences of success and positive feelings of solidarity from past experiences—be careful not to overstate past successes as solidarity hasn't always been enacted or done well.*
we can shut down the fear factory and protect each other.	*Complete the metaphor with us in the active role, creating positive good (not only absence of harm).*
We'll show up for each other every time one of us is targeted because of our differences, and reject any politician who uses fear to divide us against each other.	*Show benefit of mutual solidarity; consider referencing a specific ask, such as an electoral choice, if appropriate.*
Together, we can build a country that fulfills the promise of freedom and safety for all of us—no exceptions.	*Return to shared value with a powerful vision people want.*



ADAPTING THE MESSAGE PLATFORM

The full narrative message platform above is language you are welcome to use directly. You may copy and paste it into your statements, emails, social media posts, speeches, op-eds, letters to the editor, petitions—any time you need to communicate about antisemitism, you are welcome to use it.



In fact, we encourage you to copy the message platform directly—the more people hear this message from multiple sources, the more it becomes thought of as "common sense." This is how we succeed in changing the narrative!

You may also adapt it so that it is more specific to your needs. For example:

1. **Highlight the connection between antisemitism and another form of oppression by adding in specific language about racism, Islamophobia, anti-transgender bigotry, or any other connected component**
2. **Add a specific policy ask or call to action**
3. **Add examples of solidarity across differences from your own community, from history, or from a top news story**
4. **Respond to an antisemitic incident**

Later in this guide, we offer advice on specific language choices and rhetorical strategies. But any adaptation of the message platform should adhere to the following messaging principles:

Start with a positive statement affirming the need for freedom and safety for all people, specifically naming Jews.

It is tempting to jump into the problems, but grounding in a positive statement based on basic human needs draws audiences in and leads to greater agreement.

Tell a coherent story of WHO uses antisemitism and WHY they do so.

This should include naming specific people or political movements and explaining their motivations clearly. Show what those people gain by using antisemitism. Never attribute agency to "antisemitism" as an abstract concept (see examples of language to avoid below).

Show how antisemitism is a threat to our country or democracy and directly connected to other forms of oppression.

Use the machinery metaphor to express how antisemitism is directly related to other issues, and consider naming the related systems of oppression that are relevant to your situation. Doing this shows you understand your stake in this story and prevents Jews from being isolated. In particular, make sure to acknowledge the existence and needs of Jews of color and avoid drawing artificial divides between Jewish communities and other communities. (See below for more examples of how to do this.)

Show that antisemitism is a problem we can solve by expressing a solution rooted in working together across lines of racial and religious difference.

This may be a specific call to action relevant to your topic—the more concrete, the better. Avoid vague actions that won't really solve the problems, like "pushing back" or "calling out"—more on this below.

Use metaphoric language that supports this overall message.

Always avoid using the "water" and "disease" metaphors—it takes a while to unlearn these, so use this guide to help you recognize and avoid them. Instead, use the machinery metaphor and always talk about antisemitism as an object—not an actor with agency of its own.

End with a positive vision for the future, specifically naming Jews and including people across races and religions.

This is, in many ways, the most important part of any message, so don't omit it. Show what it is you want—not just what you oppose. Show who exists in that future. Make this vision irresistible and rooted in love and care—that's how we win people to our causes!

RHETORICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

1. "Weaponization of Antisemitism"

This phrase has become popular among some spokespeople in recent years. It refers to the strategy of hurling inaccurate, unfair, or overblown accusations of antisemitism at progressive leaders, especially non-Jewish leaders of color, in order to smear their reputations, fracture alliances, and discredit progressive movements, including those advocating for the rights of Palestinians. This phrase—"weaponization of antisemitism"—is confusing jargon that most audiences do not understand: in three years of training thousands of people on this messaging—Jewish and non-Jewish leaders and activists who speak and work on antisemitism regularly—only 5-10% of participants report that they feel they know what this term means. If this expert population is confused, imagine how inaccessible this language is to nonexperts!

However, this isn't the only reason not to use this term. "Weaponization" means taking something that is not a weapon and making it into one. It implies that this narrow use of antisemitism (or accusations thereof) is the only way in which antisemitism is a weapon, or is harmful. Of course, this is not true—antisemitism is always a weapon, and always causes harm.

DON'T say: *weaponization of antisemitism. "Bad faith accusations" of antisemitism is a little clearer but still not usually recommended—it doesn't explain WHY someone is doing what they are doing. "Instrumentalization" carries the same core problem as "weaponization"—antisemitism is already an instrument.*

DO say what you mean: *"Pointing the finger at progressives for antisemitism" or something similar works well. Where appropriate, describe the strategy of someone using "smoke-screen accusations to cover up for their own antisemitism." "Using" is clearer than "instrumentalizing"—in a third of the characters and syllables.*

2. Equivocating Solutions

When we're stuck in the story that antisemitism is not a problem we can solve, it leads us to propose action steps that are weak, pointless, and ineffective. Don't ask audiences to merely "stand up to antisemitism," "push back against antisemitism," or "call out antisemitism." These may be necessary, but they are not solutions, and they reinforce the idea that we cannot imagine a world in which there is no antisemitism.

DON'T say: *"Stand up to antisemitism," "push back against antisemitism," or "call out antisemitism."*

DO say: *"End antisemitism" or "dismantle antisemitism"—and connect it to the need to end or dismantle all forms of oppression toward your positive vision for the future.*

3. Artificial Divisions

Jewish people hold a full range of racial, ethnic, geographic, gender, Indigenous, ability, and class identities, and more. Sometimes advocates talk about antisemitism and other forms of oppression, especially racism, as if the populations experiencing these oppressions are entirely separate. Or we might discuss different communities—like Jewish and Black communities, for example—as being either at odds or joining together. This language erases Jews of color from both Jewish communities and communities of color and imposes artificial divisions between many types of communities that are actually interconnected and overlapping.

DON'T reinforce those artificial divisions *by saying things like "joining together with communities of color" (if you represent a Jewish organization or constituency) or "joining together with Jewish communities" (if you represent an organization or constituency that isn't specifically Jewish).*

DO recognize *that there are Jews within diverse constituencies and audiences (for example, Black organizations should recognize Black Jews; LGBTQ organizations should recognize LGBTQ Jews, etc.).*

DO recognize *diverse identities within Jewish communities (for example, Jewish organizations should name how transphobia harms trans Jews or how racism harms Jews of color).*

DO say: *"joining together across lines of difference" and consider naming racial, religious, or other identities as they are relevant.*

4. An Interpersonal Problem

As we've discussed, expressing antisemitism as a form of "hate" creates the impression that this is mostly an interpersonal problem, obscures its political and systemic nature, and leaves audiences without a clear story of "why."

Similarly, it's harmful to express antisemitism as a binary personal trait—that someone is or isn't "an antisemite." Like the "hatred" frame, this reinforces the idea that antisemitism is primarily interpersonal—not systemic and structural.

DON'T say: *"antisemitism is hatred toward Jews," "antisemitism and all forms of hate," or "Jew hatred."*

DON'T say: *"[Person X] is/isn't an antisemite."*

DO say: *"Antisemitism is part of the machinery of division and fear" and use the machinery metaphor to explain a complete story with human actors, their motivations, and their actions. Use the "pollution" metaphor where appropriate (more on this above).*

5. Perpetuating Racism

Antisemitism is always harmful, but sometimes conversations about antisemitism—the general discourse about the issue or our responses to specific incidents—can also do harm. For example, when people of color, Muslims, and Arabs are portrayed as particularly antisemitic, or generally more antisemitic than others, this contributes to anti-Black racism, Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, and racism in general. This discourse also renders Black Jews and Jews of color invisible and contributes to feelings of isolation and despair. In fact, **disproportionate harm from antisemitism is determined by someone's access to power—not their identity.**

Often, any antisemitism that comes from a person of color is described as "antisemitism on the left" regardless of the political affiliation or ideology of the source. Taken together, all of these examples play into strategies that are designed to divide and harm progressive movements and leaders, keep Jewish people isolated, and weaken our democracy.

DON'T perpetuate racism or Islamophobia *by reinforcing ideas that Muslims and people of color are particularly responsible for antisemitism.*

DO consider the effects *of a response to an antisemitic incident on all people involved, especially considering how it might deepen divides, weaken partnerships, or harm other individuals or communities based on their race or religion.*

DO choose *to respond in ways that recognize and meet the needs of Jews of color.*

6. "Both Sides"

Describing antisemitism as existing equally or equivalently on "both sides" of politics is also harmful and incorrect. Of course, antisemitism can be fueled by anyone—even unknowingly, and even by people who are targeted by it or by other parts of the machinery of division and fear. Antisemitism is always harmful and needs to be addressed, whatever its source. However, ascribing an equivalency to "antisemitism on both sides" is incorrect, damages our ability to identify the power structures at work, and, by suggesting that antisemitism is ubiquitous and unavoidable, leaves Jews feeling fearful and isolated.

Antisemitism is foundational to far-right ideologies of fascism, white nationalism, and white supremacy, and these movements and their leaders benefit from using it. The most violent and deadly antisemitic incidents in America are almost exclusively associated with far-right movements. Years of public opinion and scholarly research affirm that there is no equivalency to this on the left.

Still, liberal, progressive, and left-wing individuals and movements do hold and express harmful antisemitic beliefs and biases like they do anti-Black racism, sexism, and other oppressive systems. Because most American Jews identify as liberal or progressive, and because these expressions are a betrayal of the values of equity and justice, experiences of antisemitism from progressives can leave Jewish people feeling surprised, betrayed, and isolated. Antisemitic stories that exaggerate the power or influence of Jewish people or the State of Israel can deflect responsibility from the real drivers of structural inequality and war like huge corporations and the US military industry. All of these incidents harm Jewish people and can further normalize antisemitic ideas that lead to violence.

This is reason enough for progressive movements to take the lead in dismantling antisemitism. It is also important for progressives to understand that when groups or individuals that profess (or are perceived) to be part of the political left use antisemitism purposefully, it directly serves the goals of far-right movements: it fractures progressive movements and tarnishes them as hypocritical or disingenuous, isolates Jewish people, and damages democracy. This gives progressives a personal stake in dismantling antisemitism, whether they are Jewish or not.

Though they are often intended to present a "balanced" perspective, attempts to draw false equivalencies in fact shield those actors most responsible for antisemitism from accountability and make it more difficult to understand and address the problem.

DON'T say: *"Antisemitism on both sides" or "antisemitism from the right and the left."*

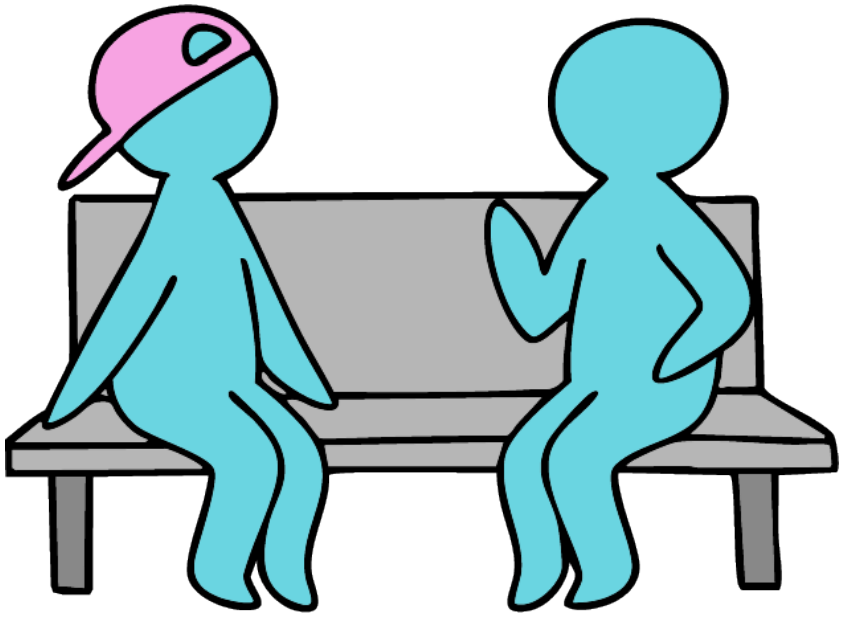
DO say: *"Using" or "fueling" antisemitism to highlight the harms while still differentiating between those who benefit from antisemitism and those who do not.*

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

One major locus of antisemitism in discourse is conversations about Israel and Palestine. And while most of the organizations involved in creating this document do not take positions on Israel and Palestine, it's important to understand the way that the discourse on antisemitism interacts with discourse on policies toward the region and vice versa.

In recent years, debates about the definition of antisemitism and efforts to codify a definition into law have focused on defining ways in which conversations about Israel and Palestine may be antisemitic. This guide does not offer a single definition of antisemitism, nor does it offer comprehensive guidelines for what "is or isn't" antisemitic—these are topics on which there is a wide range of viewpoints and for which many resources exist. Rather, this guide offers messaging advice to help audiences talk about, understand, and ultimately take action to end antisemitism.

Jewish people have a range of views on Israel and Palestine and the history, politics, and future of those places, including having no view. It is important to identify whether the conversation you are trying to have is one that is about Israel and Palestine or one that is about antisemitism. Often a conversation starts as one of these, and then is derailed by an opponent who is seeking to transform the conversation into the other. And sometimes antisemitism is expressed in conversations about Israel and Palestine.



When Antisemitism Comes Up in Conversations on Israel and Palestine

These basic understandings of how antisemitism is often expressed in conversations on Israel and Palestine may help identify, avoid, and respond appropriately to them:

1. **Antisemitism may be used by those supporting the policies of the Israeli government or by those opposed to them.** Sometimes antisemitism is expressed by those expressing a critique of the state or government of Israel. When antisemitism is expressed by those advocating for the rights of Palestinians, this harms Jews and also harms Palestinians by unfairly tarnishing their cause as motivated by antisemitism instead of genuine concern for Palestinians. Sometimes, antisemitism is expressed by those supporting the Israeli government, and that support for the Israeli government is often cited to disprove their antisemitism. Paradoxically, antisemitism is also sometimes expressed as "philosemitism," especially among evangelical Christians who believe Jews and Israel will play important roles in bringing about the "Rapture," a desired end to life on Earth. If the speaker holds state power or controls an army, their use of antisemitism is substantively more dangerous than the case of a speaker who does not, regardless of their political goal.

2. **Conflating all Jewish people with the state or government of Israel is antisemitic, no matter who does it or for what reason.** This is an antisemitic trope often reinforced by the political right (like when former-president Donald Trump referred to Israel as "your country" to a room full of American Jews at the White House); by those who blame all Jewish people for actions of the State of Israel or use the term "Zionist" as a stand-in for Jewish people;or by President Biden when he claimed that "no Jew in the world is safe without the state of Israel."

3. **It is not inherently antisemitic to express criticism of the State of Israel, its government, or its laws, policies, and actions—as is true with any state.** While there is often an attempt to conflate criticism of the Israeli state, government or military with antisemitism, research shows that an overwhelming majority (91%) of American Jews believe that it is not antisemitic to level such criticism.[8]

4. **It is unfair to ask Palestinians and those advocating for Palestinian people's rights and freedom to prove that they are not antisemitic in order to express their needs and aspirations.** Palestinian partners have shared that they are often assumed to be "antisemitic until proven otherwise"—this is dehumanizing and harmful. Like all people, Palestinians have the right to articulate their own humanity, needs, desires, demands, and aspirations. When people who are or claim to advocate for Jewish safety make this presumption, it tarnishes efforts to address antisemitism as reactionary and racist and harms the credibility of those working to end antisemitism. No one should have to pass a litmus test in order to be deemed worthy of safety, dignity, and belonging.

5. **It is unfair to assume a Jewish person has any particular opinion toward Israel, Zionism, or Palestinians.** Jews are a diverse community and hold a range of views on all of these and many topics. Making this assumption, or presuming any kind of opinion until a Jewish person proves otherwise, feeds into a troubling "good Jews" vs "bad Jews" dynamic in which Jewish people are judged as worthy of safety, dignity, or belonging based on proving adherence to a particular set of political beliefs. This is dehumanizing and serves to further isolate Jewish people.

6. **People across demographics, including Jewish people, have a wide range of opinions and understandings of "Zionism."** Research shows that Americans do not have a shared understanding—and most have no understanding—of what this term means. It is also important to note that most people who consider themselves Zionists in America are not Jewish—there are nearly twice the number of members of a single evangelical Christian Zionist organization, Christians United for Israel (10 million), than the entire population of American Jews (approx. 5.8 million).

7. **Free speech is a core democratic protection that is particularly important for minority groups, including Jews—Jewish people and concerns for Israel should never be used as an excuse to damage these rights.** Some efforts to codify a definition of antisemitism into law (including the International Holocaust Remembrance Association [IHRA] definition) or limit people's right to participate in boycotts or protests have the effect of damaging the right to free speech. These efforts damage Jewish communities, all minority groups, and our democracy. It is useful to refer to these efforts as "gag legislation."

Messaging Principles

Use these messaging principles to have more productive conversations on Israel and Palestine without fueling antisemitism:

1. **Keep people and human needs at the center of messages and avoid rhetorical traps that pit Israelis and Palestinians against each other.** It is helpful to talk about the basic human needs and aspirations that are shared by Palestinian and Israeli people followed by exploring the ways in which they do not always have the same ability to fulfill those needs and aspirations. By expressing a core value of shared humanity, while also drawing attention to structural imbalances of power and privilege, you help audiences understand how solutions to address structural problems can benefit all people in the region.

2. **Include both Israeli and Palestinian people in your vision for the future.** Failing to do this leaves the audience to decide what you think should happen to the group that isn't mentioned. Many audiences will assume you either don't care about the people from that unnamed group, or they do not exist in your desired future because they have been killed or expelled. This may sound extreme, but for people who have or are currently facing existential threats, these fears are very present— there are political and military leaders who actively and explicitly support genocidal policies toward Jewish Israelis or Palestinians. It's easy to allay these fears by explicitly naming both Palestinians AND Israelis in your vision for the future, regardless of what that vision looks like.

3. **Situate the conflict in a global context and de-exceptionalize the State of Israel when making demands for freedom, safety, stability, and regard for human rights.** It is useful to show how any demands, especially those toward the Israeli government, are consistent with commonly held values and expectations of all states. It is still possible to discuss how the Israeli-Palestinian context is unique while maintaining that the basic expectations of states to protect human rights and democracy are the same across identities and geographies.

Specific language recommendations

DON'T use "Israel" or "Palestine" as a shorthand for a state, government, or ruling faction. In Jewish tradition, "Israel" can mean many things: a name for biblical figure Jacob, the "people/nation of Israel" (Am Yisrael) which may be understood to include all Jewish people, the "land of Israel" (Eretz Yisrael) referring to the physical place, or the modern nation-state of Israel, its government, military, or citizens. Similarly, "Palestine" may be understood to include the physical land or historic territory, the Palestinian people, a future or current Palestinian state, and more. Audiences may infer any or all of these meanings when "Israel" or "Palestine" is used as a shorthand.

DON'T personify the State of Israel in language. Do not use phrases like "friend of Israel," "stand with Israel," or discussions of whether "Israel is serious about peace". This causes the same (often intentional) confusion about the meaning of "Israel".

DO be specific: say "Israeli government," "Israeli military," "Israeli people" (and "Palestinian people," "Palestinian Authority," "Hamas," etc.) as appropriate.

DON'T focus messages on "Zionism" as a concept—this is more likely to confuse than contribute to meaningful action because it's difficult to imagine taking actions to solve an abstract concept. "Zionism" (like "antisemitism") should never be expressed as having the agency or responsibility to cause or solve problems.

DON'T use "Zionist" as a stand-in for "Jew."

DON'T reference "cycles of violence"—this makes violence seem inevitable and unstoppable and erases the power dynamics at play in armed conflict.

DO attribute responsibility for problems—and for solutions—to specific human actors.

DON'T use "security"—this suggests that policing or military solutions are the only appropriate ones.

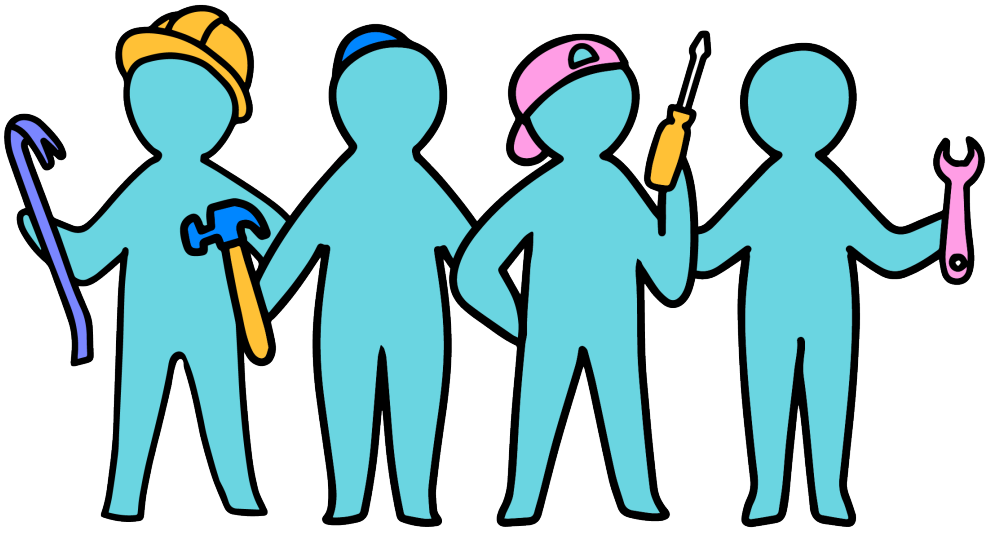
DO use "safety" as this suggests a broader range of human needs and solutions. Also consider using "living a safe life"—this evokes long-term thinking as opposed to focusing on short-term (and short-lived) solutions.

DON'T say "criticism of Israel crosses a line into antisemitism." Saying something has "crossed the line" from one thing to another paints a clear picture that the two things are necessarily adjacent to each other. Because criticism of the state or government of Israel and antisemitism are not necessarily and always connected to each other, we should never describe something as "crossing a line into" antisemitism.

DO differentiate between those who may fuel antisemitism (even inadvertently) and those who use antisemitism and all the machinery of division and fear for political gain.

DO name "smokescreen antisemitism" when you see it, even if the accusation leveled by the person deploying the smokescreen strategy is credible. We can still hold people accountable for fueling antisemitism while refusing to cooperate with those using smokescreen antisemitism for their own benefit.

PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONDING TO ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS AND ACCUSATIONS

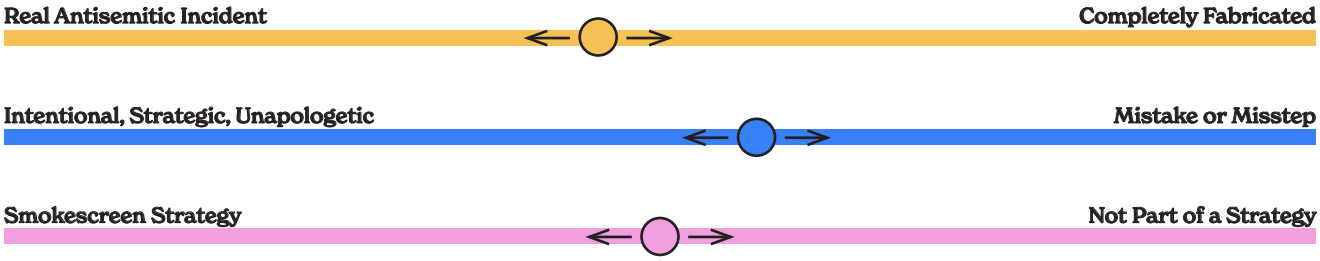


This is a proactive messaging guide intended to help advocates take the lead on antisemitism, have the conversations we want to be having (rather than the ones we're forced into), and motivate audiences to take action. Still, we are often called upon to communicate reactively, in response to an antisemitic incident or an accusation of antisemitism. The political right, and especially the white nationalist movements that have become mainstream in American right-wing politics, use antisemitism consistently as a core part of their power-building strategy. And there are mistakes, missteps, and deficiencies that fuel antisemitism and harm Jewish people (while bolstering those antisemitic movements) among those who are not part of those movements, including among progressives. It is important that we can respond effectively and appropriately to all kinds of antisemitic incidents.

The Best Defense

Still, before you're called upon to respond to an antisemitic incident or accusation, take proactive steps: take the lead on understanding and dismantling antisemitism, educate others, include Jews explicitly in your "story of us" and vision for the future. The best time to build credibility on antisemitism is not when you or your partners are being accused of it. The more progressives know and understand about antisemitism, the better they'll be able to avoid mistakes and missteps and respond appropriately when something goes wrong. Progressive organizations can look to Jewish progressive groups to help educate on anti-Jewish oppression, but this is a task for everyone. Taking this on proactively, participating in and offering trainings, expressing how ending antisemitism is part of your work and how all Jewish people are part of your "story of us" goes a long way toward establishing trust that will be invaluable when mistakes, missteps, or smears occur.

Analyzing an Incident of Antisemitism



8 Steps to Responding to an Incident or Accusation of Antisemitism

We recommend the following steps for both Jewish and non-Jewish partners to formulate a response:

1. Think.

Before jumping into a reaction, it's important to think carefully and assess the situation. Each one is unique, though certain incidents fall into patterns or follow a strategic playbook. Consider where the incident falls on each of the following scales. Each of these is independent but should be considered together to get a complete picture of the challenge.

To assess the situation, ask the following questions:

Are we participating in an effort designed to harm our movements, leaders, or causes? If so, don't participate! (See below.)

Was this antisemitic? Did it trigger fear, discomfort, or hurt for Jewish audiences but was not antisemitic? What/who was harmed?

What are the real stakes for all parties involved? How are people more vulnerable because of their races, classes, or other aspects of their identities?

What will be the effects of public responses on all parties?

What is the best possible outcome of the situation?

2. Start from relationship.

The first thing to consider when a difficult moment arises is your positioning and relationship to the actors involved. Remember that, often, the biggest risk in these moments is fracture or disruption of relationships, and while it may feel important to jump quickly to make a statement or put out a tweet, take a moment to consider: which relationships do we have that we want to preserve? Which relationships could we leverage to make things better? When a difficult moment related to antisemitism, Israel, and Palestine comes up, there are two communities who are at greatest risk for harm depending on how things go: Jews and Palestinians. What cross-communal organizational relationships, perhaps through work on other justice issues (immigration, anti-racism, housing, etc.), exist? Reach out directly and privately first, get clear on what's happening and what everyone's concerns are, and strategize together. Even if you don't share all the same positions and perspectives, use this as an opportunity to learn and make sure you are strengthening each other—not driving wedges.

3. When political opponents seek to attack progressive and social justice advocates with claims of antisemitism, don't take the bait.

Accusing progressives of antisemitism is an explicit tactic of right-wing political movements and organizations, and it is intended to break apart progressive coalitions and damage democracy. In some cases, it is intended to suppress any efforts to speak up for the rights of Palestinians or against unjust policies of the Israeli government. Sometimes this looks like accusations of antisemitism that are wholly made up. Sometimes they involve subjecting progressives—and specifically Muslims and progressive women of color—to intensive scrutiny and amplifying even minor mistakes or missteps into full-blown crises. Some of the organizations behind these smear attempts exist solely to "track" and "monitor" progressives to find opportunities to accuse us of antisemitism. Whether the accusations they amplify are legitimate or not, it's important to recognize when we are the targets of a smear campaign, and to refuse to take part in it. If something antisemitic has happened, it's important to address it and take steps toward repair. But rushing to condemn, demanding public apologies, and putting out communications that feed a story that is designed to harm us, our movements, and our partners is always a mistake. Never participate in a campaign designed to break us. Instead, move forward with integrity and by leaning into relationship—even through mistakes and missteps.

4. Name the harm, orient toward repair.

Whether the accusation of antisemitism is made in good faith or not, it's also true that mistakes and missteps happen and if there has been an incident of antisemitism, it's important to take it seriously. Take a lesson from the teachings of restorative justice and from Jewish concept of teshuvah (repair): in any response, public or private, start by considering who was harmed, whether intentionally or not. Even if an antisemitic trope was repeated without knowing its history, Jewish people may be harmed. If a mistake or misstep has occurred in the context of a movement struggle—for Palestinian rights, Black liberation, immigrant rights, climate justice, or anything else—those movements and their constituencies may be undermined or unfairly tarnished. Acknowledge those harmed and how they were harmed in public and private communications and orient responses toward repairing the damage. Being willing to acknowledge when people are harmed is a marker of a sophisticated and strong understanding of antisemitism even if it follows an accusation of antisemitism that was leveled as part of a smear campaign. You gain trust among audiences by showing your values, especially in moments of crisis.

5. Demonstrate savvy on antisemitism using the messaging in this guide, and name who benefits from using it.

Showing you have strong values that include Jewish people, a strong understanding of how antisemitism is connected to your core work, and a commitment to ending it will build trust among audiences, especially in difficult moments. Show which individuals, political parties, or movements are using and benefitting from antisemitism. If it's appropriate, name the strategy being used against you or your allies, and show how those hurling the accusations have demonstrated that they do not care about safety for Jewish people.

6. Avoid negation *(or say what you're for).*

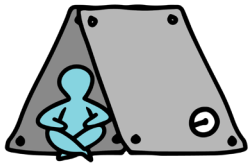
This is a simple but very important point: it's very tempting to respond, especially when faced with a smear campaign, "This is not antisemitism"—or, for example, "It's not antisemitic to criticize Israel." But, in fact, saying this undermines what you're trying to communicate, reinforcing a mental link between "criticism of Israel" (or anything else) and "antisemitism." Instead, say what antisemitism IS, and state clearly what you are FOR using the messaging in this guide.

7. Learn and make changes if needed.

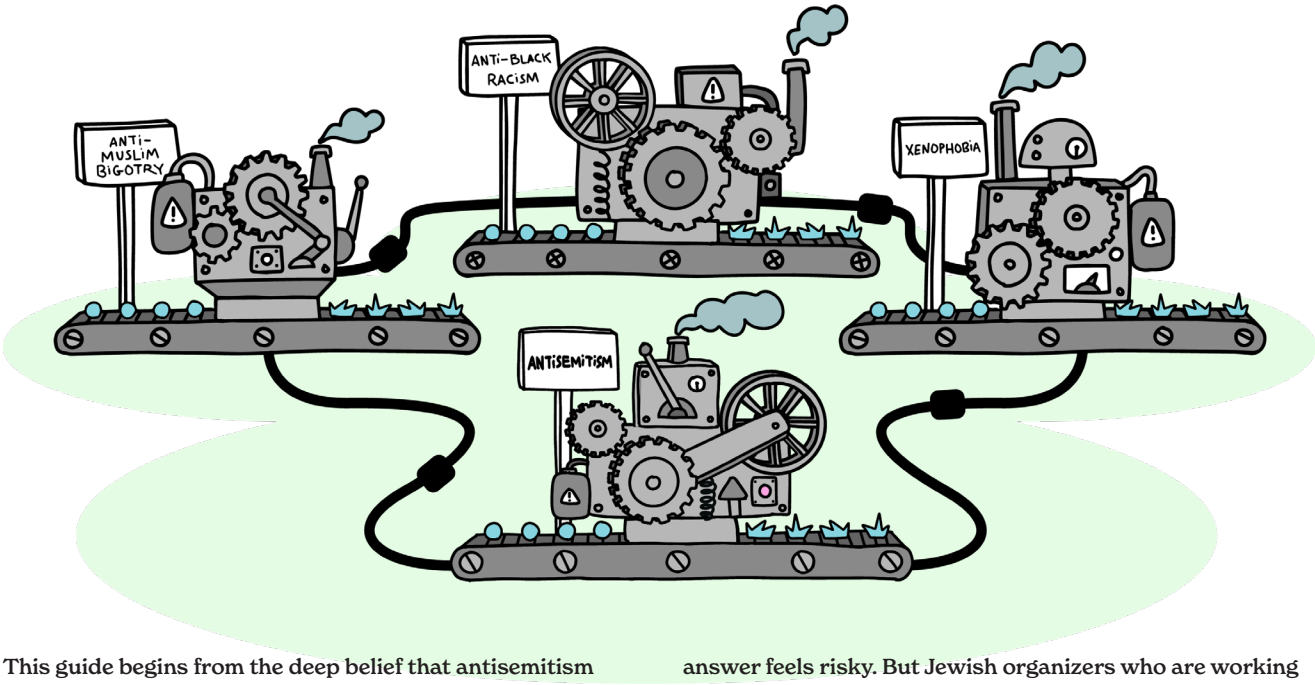
Every incident—real, manufactured, and everything in between—is an opportunity to learn. If the situation has revealed a deficiency in knowledge, understanding, relationship, or anything else that would have helped the situation, don't sit on it! Use the opportunity to implement any changes that need making. Even better: share your learning with partners so that your experience can benefit all of us. And when partners share this hard-won advice: listen and act accordingly.

8. Keep showing up.

We all make mistakes. We all face opposition. We can all learn and grow. Even when things go wrong, or when we disappoint each other, recognize that we need each other, across many lines of difference, to realize the future in which we are all safe, free, and thriving. That means we have to keep showing up.



HOW TO DISMANTLE ANTISEMITISM



This guide begins from the deep belief that antisemitism is neither natural nor unstoppable; that we can imagine a future in which Jewish people—and all people—can live in freedom and safety, without fear; and that we must take action with people from many religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds toward that future.

Merely "standing up to," "pushing back against," or "countering" antisemitism is insufficient if we want to end it and believe that, collectively, we can. But how do we do it?

Jewish communities have struggled with this question for generations, and attempting to lay out a comprehensive answer feels risky. But Jewish organizers who are working toward a thriving, democratic future for all people are already leading work to end antisemitism. This represents the collective wisdom of those who are dismantling antisemitism together with anti-Black racism, anti-immigrant xenophobia, anti-Muslim bigotry, and every other part of the connected machinery of division and fear that is keeping us from the future we deserve. It is offered to our Jewish and non-Jewish partners with humility and deep love for Jewish people and for the multifaith, multiracial communities in which we live.

1. Learn about antisemitism.

What we can't see, we can't change. It is important to be able to recognize common antisemitic tropes and lies that have been used to target Jewish people with violence and about atrocities toward Jews, like the Holocaust. It is important to understand how antisemitism has been used historically and in the many parts of the world where Jews have lived. It is also important to learn about how antisemitism is used today and in our own society. This includes understanding how Jewish people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds experience antisemitism, the important function it fulfills in white nationalist and anti-democratic ideologies, and how it is connected to other forms of oppression like racism, sexism, and Islamophobia. Examine the intersections between antisemitism and Israel and Palestine, understanding that there are many perspectives to consider. See our list of resources to help.

2. Unlearn antisemitism.

The bad news is that noxious stories about Jews have been pumped into our society for generations—like all forms of discrimination or oppression, we've all internalized them in different ways. The good news is that we can unlearn them, just as we strive to unlearn the sexist and racist stories we have also internalized. That means it is all our responsibility to examine ourselves, our communities, and our organizations and movements with bravery and humility and work to make changes to our biases, our attitudes, and our actions. This isn't a one-time project; it is a long-term approach to changing the inequitable society into which we were born and within which we are trying to build a better future. For Jewish people, unlearning antisemitism also means healing from generational and ancestral trauma so that we can move forward into the liberated future we are building.

3. Find yourself and your personal stake in this story.

For Jewish people, this may seem obvious because Jews are the direct targets of antisemitism. For those who are not Jewish, it is important to realize that you are still part of this story. Consider how your own life has been affected by antisemitism. How is your history or culture—including any ways in which you are marginalized or discriminated against because of your race, religion, gender, or any other aspects of your identity—directly connected to antisemitism? How have you been harmed by or benefited from antisemitism? For Christians, it's important to recognize the role Christianity has played in the perpetuation of countless forms of violence and oppression, including antisemitism, from historical uses of antisemitism by central church authorities through the more contemporary practice of Christian theologically based advocacy around Israel. For those who are working toward an equitable distribution of wealth and power, consider how stories that blame Jewish people can obscure the systems and structures that create inequality and injustice and make it impossible to dismantle those systems. Consider how antisemitism has been used to drive us apart from each other, and imagine how your own life and future would benefit in a society free from antisemitism. It will take all of us—whether we are Jewish or not—to dismantle antisemitism together, so in order to commit to this work, finding your own stake is critical.

4. Articulate and work toward a future of freedom and safety for Jewish people and for all of us.

Jewish people should include people of all religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds in our positive vision for the future. People who aren't Jewish should include Jewish people explicitly in your story of who constitutes "us," among the communities with whom you stand, and in your positive vision of the future. Whether we are Jewish or not, we should throw our communal energy, time, and support into work that builds a future of freedom and safety for all of us together. This necessarily means rejecting isolationist approaches that separate Jewish freedom and safety from that of others. If we can fully embrace the ways in which our futures, our safety, and our thriving are deeply connected to one another, we can achieve the free, joyous future we all deserve.

5. Respond appropriately to antisemitism.

Use the techniques in this guide to help you respond to antisemitic incidents when they happen. Use your informed judgment and the leadership of Jewish partners to assess the situation, including an analysis of the powers at play. If a mistake or misstep has happened, apologize and take steps toward repair. Make sure reactions don't harm or tarnish Jews or anyone else, and be careful not to overreact as this can diminish trust and make people less likely to listen in the future. Very importantly, include a power analysis when deciding how to respond: not all incidents are the same, and responses should match appropriately. Remember that responses need not always be public, and are best when they lean into and deepen long-term relationships. Orient

responses to things that you believe contribute meaningfully to solving the problem—not merely statement-making or grandstanding.

6. Respond appropriately to smokescreen antisemitism.

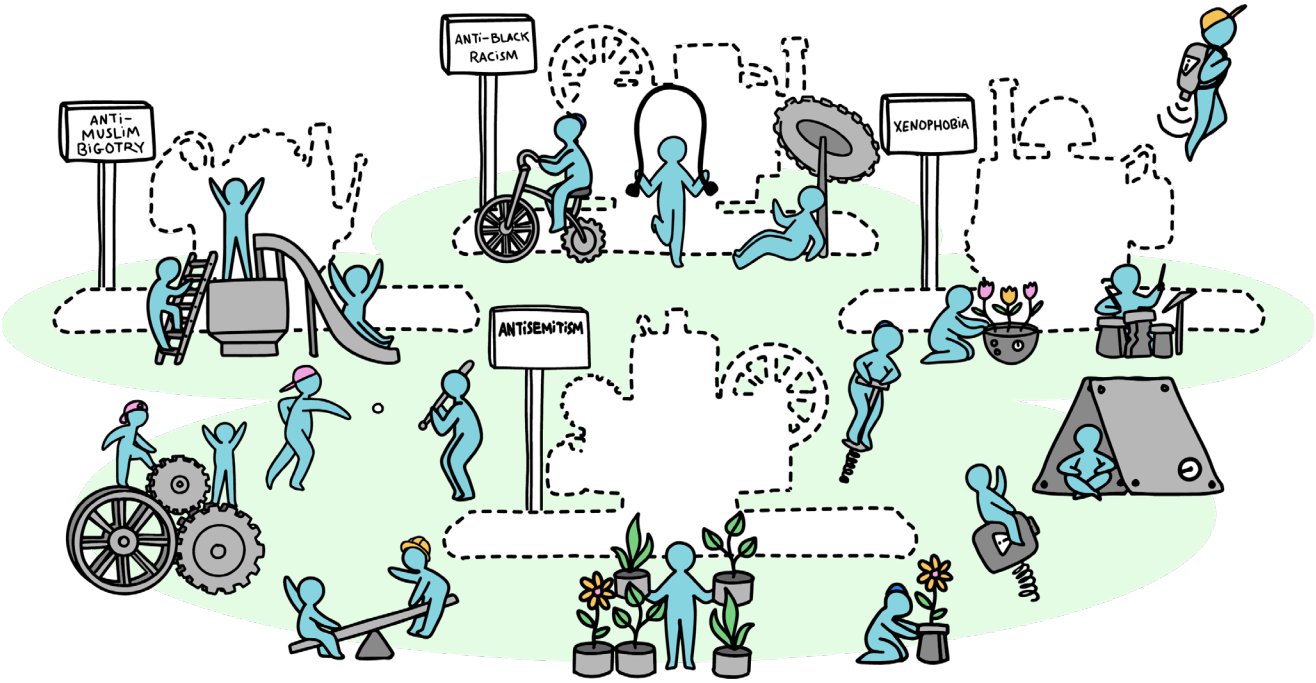
Recognize and refuse to take the bait when people offer unfair or bad-faith accusations of antisemitism intended to smear someone. The purpose of these smokescreen efforts is to confuse and divide us—it's our shared responsibility to clear out the smog and keep ourselves focused on real threats to our collective safety and the solutions we know will work. This includes holding responsible those who use these smokescreen tactics.

7. Reject any effort, policy, or leader that weakens multiracial democracy or our fundamental freedoms,

even if its stated intent is to protect Jewish people or our interests (real or perceived). Democratic freedoms and a thriving multiracial democracy are critical to the safety and wellbeing of everyone in society but are particularly critical for minority groups and those facing oppression or discrimination —including the multiethnic, multiracial Jewish community. Any efforts to damage democratic freedoms must be seen as antithetical to dismantling antisemitism. This includes things like laws that gag people's ability to engage in consumer boycotts or attempts to codify definitions of antisemitism that damage our freedom of speech.

8. Keep showing up together and refuse to be divided.

If we understand that antisemitism is used to divide us against each other, then part of the solution has to be to refuse to be divided. This goes beyond mutual respect and understanding, and it isn't easy: there are disagreements in political analysis, tactics, and approach that mean that not every relationship and alliance will last. But we also have to understand that mistakes and missteps will definitely happen, and do everything we can to keep them from being breaking points in important work toward the future we deserve. This means being uncomfortable sometimes and not only for Jewish people: no woman, person of color, transgender or nonbinary person has always felt 100% safe and comfortable in diverse organizations and coalitions, even those working toward a more just and equitable future. Whether we are Jewish or not, we've all been exposed to noxious antisemitism in our society, and unlearning it is a process—there will be setbacks. But the only way things get better is when we address and work through them together. Keep showing up.



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The Collaborative For Jewish Organizing includes:

Detroit Jews for Justice

JCUA Jewish Council on Urban Affairs

rac Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Jewish Community Action

CJJ Carolina Jews for Justice

JFREJ Jews For Racial & Economic Justice

jalsa Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action

Bend the Arc jewish action

Jews United for Justice

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