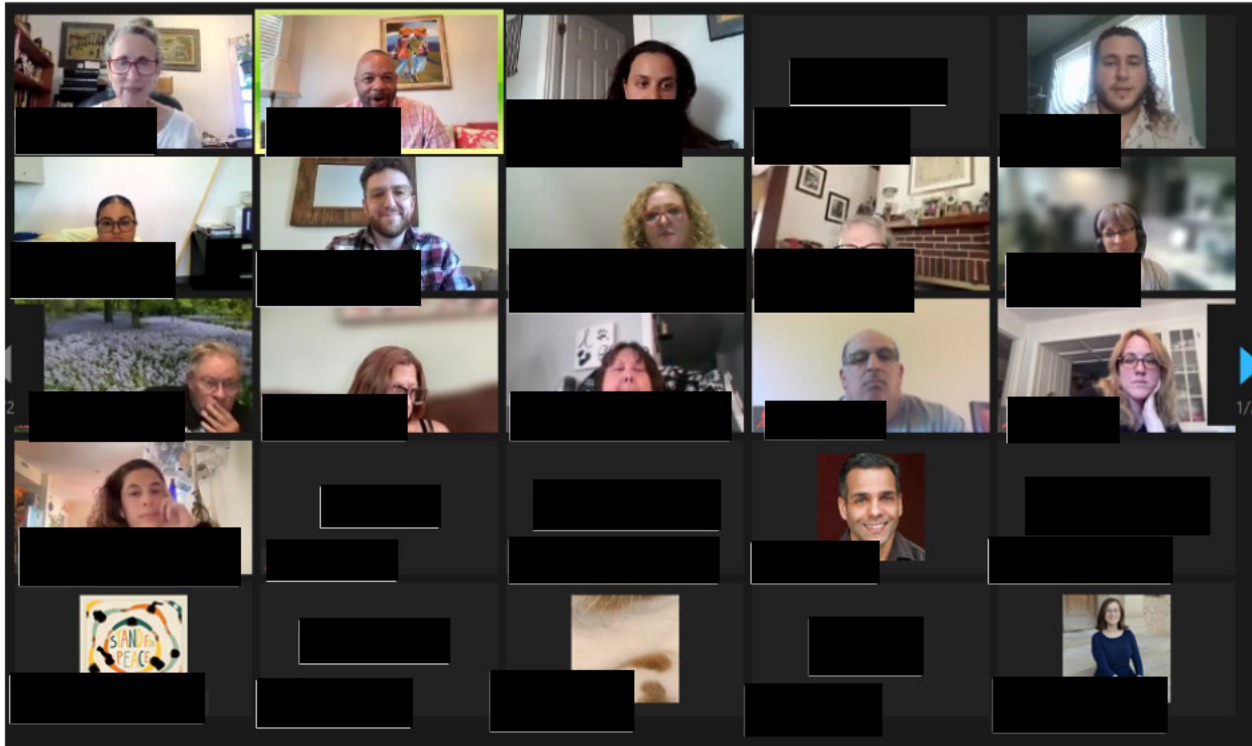


MTA Antisemitism Webinar (June 27, 2024)



██████████: My name is ██████████. I'm the co-chair along with ██████████ of the MTA Anti Racism Task Force. I don't want to spend too long talking at the beginning of this webinar, but we're really excited to be hosting it. Just a few things that we want to discuss before we get started.

So everyone's going to be muted until a host un-mutes you, and that would usually happen through, you know, raising your hand on Zoom. At the end, towards the end, there's going to be a breakout room with panels, and if you have questions for the panel, that would be a great time after the breakout room to do so.

So we ask that everyone engages constructively with alternative perspectives, alternative to your own. That is, all perspectives are alternative to everyone else's. Recognize how our own social positions and socialization informs our perspectives and reactions through this process. Try to let go of personal and anecdotal evidence and look at broader patterns as that's what we'll be discussing today.

Do your best to differentiate between the feeling of safety and comfort, because

accepting discomfort is necessary for growth, and I'm sure any educators in this group could agree with that statement.

Then finally, respect each other by asking for clarification, rather than making assumptions. And without further ado, thank you once again. I'd like to have our presenters introduce themselves.

██████████: My name is ██████████. I'm the former director of the New England Jewish Labor Committee, and I continue to be involved being on the board and showing up to support workers.

I grew up in a family and extended family that was committed to workers' rights and civil rights, and that commitment came from my Jewish religion and heritage and culture. I'm really happy to be here at this time and do this presentation on antisemitism. I appreciate all the teachers and educators and community members who are trying to navigate very tough terrain right now.

The war going on and the conflict and conflict are hard for everyone, and I hope the words we say will help you understand antisemitism, its history, how it's playing out during this time, and also help us all both unite together.

Okay, I'd like to hand this over to my friend and colleague who I'm privileged to work with, ██████████, and co-leader in the training on antisemitism.

██████████ **(an African American pastor)**: Thank you, ██████████. Good evening, everybody. I'm David Waters. I am a minister for formation, outreach, and spiritual care at Grace Episcopal Church in Kirkwood, Missouri.

I am thrilled to be with you this evening. Not least of which is because I grew up surrounded by Jewish friends and family. We had Jewish folk who I called aunt and uncle from a very early age, and so I grew up going to Shabbat dinners on Friday evenings.

I am also, as a black American, keenly aware of and connected with our joint collective liberation struggle as Jewish people, as black people. And so that informs my desire to be here with you and participate in help conduct this training this evening.

As a minister and as a person of faith, I also understand the Jewish people to be our older siblings in faith, and so I come here in that spirit as well. I am also committed to continuing our collective struggle for liberation, and I certainly hope that this evening will enable us to have the conversations that move that struggle forward. I am pleased to turn it over to ██████████.

[REDACTED]: Hi, I'm [REDACTED]. I use she/her pronouns, and I'm an organizer with SCIU 509. So also coming from the Union world, 509, if you're not familiar with it, represents over 25,000 workers in Massachusetts.

So not as big as the MTA, but also pretty big. And we represent state workers, private sector human service workers, and academic workers. So if there are any folks from higher ed on the call, I have done a lot of new organizing with adjuncts, non tenure track faculty, and grad students, and undergraduate workers as well. And I'm really excited to join.

I'm also a board member of the Jewish Labor Committee. And I joined the board soon after being an organizer for the Jewish Labor Committee. So this has been an organization that I've been passionate to work with for a long time because I think that there's an important connection between the Jewish community and labor movement and that the history of American labor has involved the Jewish community struggling for justice. Being a huge part of the fight for the weekend for their working conditions and I understand that our liberation is bound up together, and that both Jewish and non Jewish workers can come together to build a better world and so I'm excited to talk about ways that we can do that while thinking about anti racism. I'm not going to be part of the presentation but I will be on the panel so I will bow out while Marya and David take it away.

[REDACTED]: So, and we have the slides. Okay, I'll just start. And I want to say, okay, there we go. Okay, I'll go into slide mode. So I will just say a few words about the Jewish Labor Committee who's doing this presentation. The JLC was founded in 1934 by some people who were working on a Jewish led training trade unions who came together to fight the rise of Nazism in Europe. In the US Jews were key builders of the early American labor movement. The Jewish Labor Committee developed into a social justice organization and dedicated to building the power of workers through educating, mobilizing and organizing the Jewish community to advocate for collective liberation and economic justice. At times we also call the labor movement to stand against anti-Semitism. Our religion and the labor movement have taught us that labor nation is realized through collective organizing against oppression. Oppression that continues to target the Jewish community and communities of workers alike. And that we can overcome persecution when we stand together in solidarity.

People may ask, what is our Israel policy? We are a big tent organization, so people on the board have a range of views on, for example, the Israel-Gaza war. **As an organization, we are part of the Progressive Israel Network, which is calling for a ceasefire.**

[REDACTED]: Okay, next slide. So our goals for this workshop are listed here. They're first to understand what anti-Semitism is and how it operates to divide people. We want to learn how to recognize anti-Semitism. We want to briefly

touch on the ongoing crisis in Israel and Palestine and the context of anti-Semitism. We want to think through next steps as individuals and as members of unions to combat anti-Semitism and to build a stronger movement for our collective liberation. We want to leave with the skills to identify and interrupt anti-Semitism.

And so I just want to make an additional note that that first one is important. Not only do we want to understand what anti-Semitism is, not only do we want to learn how to recognize it, but we want to figure out how it operates to divide people. And so for a community and for an audience that consists largely of educators, I think this is an important goal of ours to go beyond the appearance of anti-Semitism and understand what anti-Semitism is and who anti-Semitism works for. And in that way, I think we can equip folks to think critically and have these conversations and have them be fruitful.

[REDACTED]: Next slide, please. Okay, so who are the Jews? Okay, many people have misconceptions about who Jews are and here are some just basic facts. Jews are in every race, in every country. The majority of Jews are in the U.S. and Israel, but they're all over the world. Major Jewish ethnic groups include Ashkenazi Jews, which are European, Black Jews, Sephardic Jews—whose origins are in Spain and North Africa. Mizrahi Jews— who are from Arab countries and many claim an Arab identity. Ethiopian Jews, Latinx Jews, Crypto-Jews, Chinese Jews, and more.

There are 5.7 million Jews in the U.S. That's 2.2% of the population, very small. 10 to 20% of Jews in the U.S. are people of color. There are 6.3 million Jews in Israel and 52% are people of color. Worldwide, the Jewish population is 15 to 16 million, or 0.2%. Many people think we're a large group, but we are only 0.2% of the world population.

Next slide. So who are the Jews? We are people. There are many different ways that people identify as Jewish. There are Jews who identify with Judaism as their religion, while others identify as cultural or ethnic Jews, and may or may not practice Judaism. Jews have always been a diverse group of people who do thousands of years of migration, cultural integration, and tradition that offers people to become Jewish.

This Venn diagram illustrates many of the overlapping aspects of the Jewish people. We are a group of people, culture, religion, ethnicity, tradition, a commitment to "Tikun Olam", which means repairing the world, and more. Every Jewish person gets to figure out how they are Jewish. So part of anti-Semitism is that other groups try to define who we are. We each, as individuals, and as a group, get to define who we are.

[REDACTED]: Next slide. So what is the Jewish religion? Well, Judaism is an Abrahamic religion that predates both Christianity and Islam. It's characterized by a belief in one God, matrilineal heritage, and the central texts of the Torah and the Talmud, which are written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic.

The Jewish religion introduced the Sabbath, our weekly day of rest, which is celebrated in the Jewish religion from Friday evenings to Saturday nights. So those were those Shabbat dinners that I was going to as a kid, and with my in-laws currently. The religious religion emphasizes the collective over the individual and action over faith. We are given the lunar calendar as a matrix by which the Jewish religion operates, and the Jewish religion is influenced by a Jewish identity as a diasporic people, as so people who are expelled multiple times from an ancient homeland and who now live all over the world.

Some Jews are religiously observant, some are atheists, some combine faith practices, and some focus on cultural practices instead of on religious ritual. Some are born Jewish, while others convert to Judaism. And what's important to understand here is that both among secular Jewish folk and among religious Jewish folk, there's a multiplicity of practices.

[REDACTED]: I was talking a little bit about Jews in the labor movement, and I'll just add the Jewish community and the labor movement share the role of working together to build a better world for everyone. And as we said before, the main narrative of the Jewish people is coming out of slavery into liberation. So it starts there. Jewish legal tradition dating back thousands of years also includes strong protections for workers, including the right to work, organized union. Jews have been integral to building the U.S. labor movement as salts, as key leaders, organizers, garment factory workers, food workers, tradespeople, educators, and more.

In Judaism, we have the tenet of Tikun Olam, and as I said, that's prepared the world. And regardless of our religious practice, we understand this concept and it guides us as Jews. In the earlier days of establishing union, these Jews were central to organizing.

People like Thea?? Shabelsen, Rose Scheiderman, David Dubinsky, Pauline Newman, Samuel Doppers, Sidney Helmandus, to name a few. Okay, next slide.

So what is anti-Semitism and how does it work?

So there are so many myths about Jews. Some of the states that Jews run the banks, own all the businesses, are in a worldwide network that takes money from working people. Another myth states that Jews are secret communists, sewing up people among other groups. The myths say Jews are to blame for economic injustice or any other problems in society. The myth says that Jews are not loyal

to where they live, but instead, oh, they're allegiance to an international conspiracy, or to each other, to Israel, or simply to money.

Other myths include that Jews murder Jesus, that Jews have horns, that Jews steal Christian blood or kidnap children, and grind their bones into flowers and other demonizing horrible plants.

And I'll just say that when I lived out West for a while, this was a while ago when I moved there, people asked me where are my horns, and that happened several times. So that's, you know, still goes on.

Okay, next slide. All right, so we're going to talk about the dynamic of anti-Semitism, which is to divide and conquer. That's the purpose of anti-Semitism and how it's used against Jews and against everybody else.

So let's look how it's operated historically. Jews have historically been seen as a foreign presence, distinct because of their lack of a homeland. Often they could not own land or join craft fields. They're restricted to middleman roles like money lending and tax collecting, particularly in Europe. This public position allows the ruling class to shift criticism, blame, and retribution for social ills into a foreign other, often turning to violence, expulsion, genocide.

So I'm going to tell you this little how it will work.

So there's, it's like a big detour sign. Okay, let's look at the feudal times of the Middle Ages, for example. Barons lived in a castle. Serfs lived on the land and farmed it and were terribly oppressed. These are Gentiles. A group of Jews lived in a ghetto, was usually locked near the serfs, but separate. They were as poor as the Gentile serfs. But the Barons let out a few Jews out of the ghetto to work in the court and also to collect taxes. And the Barons said, if you collect taxes, we will protect you. This happens over and over again in different ways. They never actually protect, but anyway. Okay, poor Gentile people eventually had had enough, at least the Serfs, and started to rebel. They marched to the castle with pitchforks to revolt. But the Barons will come out of the castle and say, we owe the bad guys taking your money. No, it's those Jews over there who have been collecting your taxes. And then the serfs would rampage and kill the Jews in the ghetto. Not only did the Jews suffer, but the poor Gentile serfs got nothing for their revolt and returned to horrible conditions and also felt guilty and disempowered. This happened over and over again in Europe for centuries.

So anti-Semitism divides working people and it disempowers progressive movements. And someone who really understands this and what's going on right now, who recently spoke at a webinar on anti-Semitism, is AOC. (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez)

And we put that webinar link, the recording, and the resources listed at the end of this. So she really understands how anti-Semitism right now is undermining democracy. And there's a quote from the British journalist, John L. Freeland. Jews have often functioned as a canary in the coal mine. When a society turns on its Jews, it's usually a sign of a wider ill health.

Put another way, as in history shown us that racism never stays confined to mere pockets. Once the virus is inside, it does not rest until it has affected the entire body. And one more quote by April Rosenblum. "Because the point of anti-Jewish oppression is to keep the Jewish face in front, so that Jews instead of the ruling class become the target for people's rage, it works even more smoothly when Jews are allowed some success and can be perceived as the ones in charge by other oppressed people."

Okay, next slide, [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]: So we want to talk about what is anti-Semitism. We also want to talk about how it works. So the term itself was coined by a mid-19th century race scientist to replace the term Judenhau, which was literally Jew-hatred. And it shows up in many different ways, including interpersonal discrimination, legal discrimination, expulsion, blame, isolation, terror, genocide. And it shows up across the political spectrum. The important thing to understand is when [REDACTED] was talking about that myth, we are experiencing a spike in anti-Semitism now, but anti-Semitism has been in operation for a long time.

And then there are common recurring tropes that happen. Jews are attacked as a peoplehood. The Jewish religion is attacked. There are racial and political attacks. And so there are tropes that you continue to see throughout history that recur in slightly different guises. And that's what we kind of want to understand.

How does it work? It works cyclically. So, you know, inevitably something happens. There's a spike. We sort of, you'll see perhaps a calming and then there'll be another spike.

And the question that's not explicitly articulated on this slide is who does it work for? Right? And it works for the wealthy and the powerful who are already wealthy and powerful. And so when you see anti-Semitism happening, that you have to understand that it is meant to divide people and to distract people from levers of oppression that are already working.

Next slide, please. So we've seen anti-Semitism happening in three spheres. We see an **interpersonal anti-Semitism and institutional anti-Semitism and an internalized anti-Semitism**. And so for those of you who are involved in

anti-racist work, you'll note that these are recurring themes also from anti-racist work. Some of those prejudice, scapegoating, stereotyping, denial or minimization of oppression, these happen in an interpersonal realm. And often we think, well, if we don't see these markers, then it's not really happening, right? People can kind of deceive themselves. But we also have to understand that anti-Semitism happens on an institutional level. So throughout history, that has looked like for self-identification, immigration and college admittance quotas, redlining, ghettoization.

Some of these things that we see at play in the black community are also at play in the Jewish community. And moreover, some of these things like redlining and ghettoization have happened to pit Jewish people and black people against one another historically. And so there's a memory of this institutional anti-Semitism that then works to fuel a kind of interpersonal anti-Semitism.

At the intersection of these two areas, we find then sometimes an internalized anti-Semitism where an intergenerational trauma gets handed down, fears, anxieties, wariness, fear of being scapegoated. Similar things that you will see in internalized racism, you will also see an internalized anti-Semitism. And so what we really need to do is not deny or minimize oppression and also understand how we can get to a point where we realize that everybody's kind of operating from a traumatized space right now, and that these traumas are not newly created.

And so when they are activated, it is not only in this moment, but it's based on moments that have happened also in the past.

Anti-Semitism is reaching historic levels in the U.S.

According to a 2022 FBI hate crime report, Jews are the most targeted group for religion-based hate crimes, making up 78% of the total, which is a 28% increase over 2021. In Boston itself, there's been a 56% increase in anti-Semitic incidents, 2021 to 2022 over the 2020 to 2021 period, which is the highest since the FBI began tracking these incidents in 91.

Most recently, we've seen things like vandalism, threats targeting of the Brooklyn Museum director and several ward members. A mob painted an inverted red triangle on the door of their homes, which is a symbol used by terrorists to mark targets that they wanted attack. In a recent report on anti-Semitism at Columbia University during this period, a professor told them to avoid reading the mainstream media because it was owned by the Jews.

There are other examples here. Bomb and arson threats to synagogues, the Tree of Life synagogue shooting 11 people killed in October of 2018, an increase in violent attacks on Jewish people in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California and other places, student groups at schools and universities that

don't allow Jewish students to participate or demand that Jewish students first identify their relationship with Israel.

██████████: More examples. In France, 588 anti-Semitic incidents have been reported to police resulting in 336 arrests just in 2023. In Germany, a 240% increase before the incident since October 7th compared to the same time last year. 91% related to Israel.

We'll talk more about this later. Celebrities making public comments about Jews controlling the media, questioning whether the Holocaust happened, and Donald Trump. "I think any Jewish people that vote for a Democrat, I think it shows either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty." So that's a trope. He refers to Israel as "your country."

I just want to say before I get into this next slide, when ██████████ was talking about interpersonal anti-Semitism, people in there are like, sometimes you don't like people because they're argumentative. When we just talk, that's who we are, that's our culture. We talk, we argue things through. And my nephew, who worked for a political campaign, who's very good at that, and he was demoted because he kept bringing things up. And he said to me, I just, in my family, everything was up for discussion. And obviously, his boss didn't like it. He kind of was questioning and asking questions all the time. So that's a kind of a form of anti-Semitism. Okay. Yes.

All right. So how is this affecting young people? And a lot of you are teachers. And so I just want you to know, many young Jewish kids are asking their parents, why do people hate us? That's kind of what's going on for young people. And then many people, many Jews are people of color. And so the binary just doesn't apply to them.

Some high school and college kids are going into hiding as Jews. They don't want to show that they're Jewish, especially those who are, you know, not active right now in taking sides or anything. Okay. Go ahead, ██████████.

██████████ So I want to talk a little bit about racism and anti-Semitism. The first thing to acknowledge is something that I sort of acknowledged in my introduction, which is that, you know, that famous image that you see here on the slide of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King Jr. walking arm in arm. That informs my sort of understanding of our current situation and our need to remain united for collective liberation.

Another thing to note is that Jews of color are often subject to both racism and anti-Semitism. These things are not mutually exclusive. And these experiences are often neglected or erased from the public narratives in ways that we need to reclaim. Boston banks and real estate professionals have targeted Jewish

neighborhoods, stoking white flights, selling homes at inflated prices to new black residents. This is part of that institutional racism, right? The memory of which remains and can begin to stoke a kind of interpersonal anti-Semitism.

It's also important to understand that Jews are targeted for being the most racist. BIPOC people are targeted for being the most anti-Semitic. People like Kyrie Irving, Kanye West are held up, you know, kind of in the public discourse as somehow being representative of, you know, where relationships are with Jewish and black people today. There can be feelings of proprietorship in the civil rights struggle. Excuse me, that is a struggle.

There are tensions to be found, but I think one of the things that we travel back to is a thing that █████ mentioned earlier, which is this common theme of liberation, and that also comes from a spiritual perspective. So it's no accident that you have a rabbi and a Christian minister arm and arm because that is a story of liberation from oppression is a story in which we both find commonality.

█████: Okay. So how is white supremacy related to anti-Semitism? Eric Ward, a brilliant scholar, a black person, explained the ideology of the current white nationalist movement and traces it back through the 70s. And I recommend an article he wrote called Skin in the Game, How Anti-Semitism Animates White Nationalism. That's also in our list of resources. But according to Ward, white nationalists say Jews are to, quote, blame for the civil rights movement succeeding and for immigrants coming to this country and for gay rights and feminism. And I think, you know, the Tree of Life person who killed people there, he was mad at the Jews for standing up for immigrants.

So that was one example. And Ward goes on to explain that white nationalists believe all of their problems with society had to be created by a conspiracy of Jewish people for organizing for civil rights and immigration support. Their belief system disregards people of color because in their minds it's not possible for successful organizing to come from these social justice organizations. Instead, it is a secret ball, a conspiracy of Jewish people who are making such things happen. This makes Jewish people the main targets, or one of the main targets of white nationalists.

And yeah, okay, we're right.

Now, anti-Semitism in Israel/Palestine. Okay. So while we look at this, I just want to say, this is hard. This is hard for everybody. We're all struggling right now. You know, there are many truths on all sides of this. We have to figure out how to listen to each other.

And yeah, the divide and conquer mechanism of anti-Semitism also plays out, has played out over history in Israel/Palestine, with the British wanting a piece in the Middle East, and the United States wanting that too, the Suez

Canal wanting oil, all of that plays a role. Okay, [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]: I just wanted to add here, right, our purpose is to build unity. Our purpose is also to help people understand and talk about this situation in a way that's fruitful and productive, and that leads to our collective liberation.

And so part of my approach to this is similar to my approach to other things, which is to first adopt a hermeneutic of generosity, and to approach it with curiosity and humility, right? And so I think in so many of our conversations today, we've already kind of, you know, separated into our groups, and that separation then breeds a kind of certainty about, you know, what it is that we're seeing, what it is that we understand. And the real struggle here, part of the struggle here is to adopt a sense of humility when having these conversations and a sense of curiosity about where it is that the other is coming from.

So I'm glad that we're having this conversation with many educators who are, you know, helping to equip us and helping to equip our next generation with the tools to have those conversations.

[REDACTED]: Thank you, David. Okay, a little history.

And of course, you know, we can teach several classes, several whole, you know, semesters on all of this. Jewish people originated in what was now Israel and Palestine during the Bronze Age. Jewish political control ended with the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple in the 70 CE common era. At that time, many Jews moved to different parts of Europe. There were still thousands of Jews that stayed in the land we call Israel.

The Palestinians had thousands of years old, ancestral, spiritual, and national connection to the land also. So in the meantime, you know, the Jews had to leave and there were centuries of repeated genocide and expulsions in and from countries in Europe and Russia.

In early 1900, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion was written and publicized, describing the both secret plans of Jews to rule the world by manipulating the economy, controlling the media, and fostering religious conflict. And by the way, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, that's something that Henry Ford was a great proponent of. So it was right here in the U.S. as well.

So after these centuries of anti-Semitism, significant waves of European Jewish migration occurred beginning in the 19th century, what we now call Israel-Palestine, mostly refugees of states sponsored violence. So organized waves of migration grew with the advent and promotion of Zionism. We'll talk a little bit more about that.

So after World War I, there was a significant opportunity and support between Arabs and Jews. And there's books written about this. "There could have been peace." It's a good book. Hard to read, but good. It's also in our list.

There were many leaders on both sides working to come together to figure out a country together. However, the British were really against this and they stopped it. They wanted to control the region. They wanted the Suez Canal and the oil and they consciously and purposefully sabotaged those efforts. And the British and the French also promised to homeland the region to both Jews and Palestinians, developed the Balfour declaration, promised to home to Jews, the S? P? to the Arabs. This is a big setup.

Skipping ahead to World War II, the realities of the Nazi Holocaust. We're barely talking about the Holocaust, but obviously that's the main point in history of anti-Semitism. And the global Jewish refugee crisis generated sympathy for the Zionist cause of Jewish state in the ancient homeland of Israel.

So you have to understand, no countries would take the Jews. The US did not take the Jews. They sent back a shift that came to the US, who many of them ended up getting killed. The European countries didn't want the Jews. So these European countries in the US said "Let's settle them in Palestine." So it was just really a total setup. And some people really did want to be in Israel and that's another whole important part that we're going to get to in a little bit. Okay, [REDACTED], next slide.

[REDACTED]: So the state of Israel was created by the new UN as the British government seated control of the mandate for Palestine, as it was called. Promises were made to both Jews and Palestinians that the new country would be theirs. And instead of fighting together against the British for a unified country, they end up fighting each other. Eventually the US became a power in the region, also war-related. And so we need to understand the US role in this as well.

For centuries until the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, a Palestinian majority and mostly Mizrahi Arab Jewish minority coexisted in relative peace.

Israelis referred to 1948 as their war of independence, while Palestinians referred to it as the Nakba or the catastrophe. Neighboring Arab countries took up arms against the Jews. The ensuing regional conflict forced many Arabs and Arab Jews to flee to the new country. And the Israeli military launched an offensive that permanently displaced roughly half of the Palestinian population. Also during the war, Jews had to flee Arab countries where they had lived for many centuries, including Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Yemen. They left homes, businesses and communities behind to escape to Israel.

In the Israeli national narrative, the Holocaust was the formative trauma. In the Palestinian national narrative, it's the Nakba. And so both modern national identities are forged and understood in the context of these traumas.

██████████: Okay, next slide. What is Zionism? Now there's a word, right? Zionism is a political movement to establish a Jewish home. This idea and movement was founded by Theodore Herzl. In the late 19th century, this movement came to locate the Jewish homeland in what is now called the state of Israel. People will identify as Zionists for many reasons, but a central tenant is that a separate Jewish state is the only way to ensure safety in the world, though with anti-Semitism.

So even though many Jews had started to migrate to what we now call Israel in the early 1900s, the Zionist movement gained a lot of momentum in 1941 when the world learned about the death camps in the Holocaust.

Many countries around the world, including the U.S., would not admit Jewish refugees. And, you know, this is like we said before, this is one of the ways that powers of the world set up Palestinian and Jews to be against each other.

So there's always been a deep debate about Zionism in the Jewish community since the political movement was founded. And not all the Zionists, not all Jews are Zionists, and not all Zionists are Jews. There are also Christian, the U.S. Christian right is an example of such a force in U.S. politics. So there's no connection between level of religious observance and Zionism.

The word Zionism means a lot of different things to people right now, and it often doesn't explain what's going on. And it is sometimes used in place of the word Jew as a “racist person who hates Palestinians and who is evil.” And the use of this word would be anti-Semitic. And, yeah.

So people who are anti-Zionists are not necessarily anti-Semitic. Okay, next slide.

██████████: The 75 years of conflict erupted in a new iteration of violence on October 7th, 2023. Hamas, a Palestinian political and military organization, launched an attack from Gaza on neighboring Israeli towns. 1,200 Israelis were killed and several hundred people were taken captive.

The Israeli government launched a now almost nine month long campaign to eradicate Hamas that has led to tens of thousands of deaths, widespread destruction, and a growing humanitarian crisis.

With little aid entering Gaza, both sides see their military activities as self-

defense against an entrenched enemy. We must cultivate a nuanced understanding of power and violence in the region.

The Israeli government has more power than Palestinian governments, and Hamas and other Palestinian organizations are not blameless in this conflict. The denial of the violence of October 7th feeds into anti-Semitic tropes of the denial of harm to Jews.

Other examples include claiming all Israelis are viable targets, celebrating the murder of noncombatants, blaming all Jews for the actions of the Israeli or American governments, and more. So understanding this can also help us understand that celebrating the murder of non combatants or blaming all Palestinians for the actions of a government or non-government entity is also an expression of hatred.

██████████: Okay. So just to a little reality— many Israelis, and you don't necessarily hear this on the news, but many Israelis and especially those with family members held captive in Gaza, have consistently called for a ceasefire and mutual return of captives. Many Palestinians are calling for a ceasefire and for humanitarian aid even as they flee their homes. The US uses Israel as an outpost in the region, and is more interested in pursuing their own interests than in making peace. And any real solution to this conflict must recognize the need for economic, political, and human rights for all people in the region, including the right to safety for both Jews and Palestinians. I want to underline that. Everybody has to have safety, or it's not going to work for anybody.

We're not going to... Yeah. I just also want to say that the news doesn't cover all but the thousands of Israelis that are in protest of the Netanyahu government, and that's been going on for a long time. Okay. Next slide.

██████████: So some of the dynamic today includes the right wing's representation of Israel. **They've weaponized charges of antisemitism** to work against progressive forces, to weaken and divide solidarity among oppressed people, and to shut down conversation.

We've seen this in the wake of October 7th. **We've seen it in trying to stop DEI initiatives, curriculum, and policies. In education, we've seen right wing attempts to define anti-Zionism as antisemitism and to exclude histories of Israel and Palestine from textbooks and curricula.** Many Christian Zionists are anti-Semites and also support the state of Israel. Some give millions of dollars to fund settlements impeding efforts for peace.

Politicians like Donald Trump claim to be friends to the Jews because of their policies regarding Israel, whether they tacitly or explicitly support violent white nationalism that's grounded in anti-Semitism. See, the Jews will not replace us as

a chain from the Charlottesville riots echoed in the note from the shooter at the Tree of Life synagogue. All of these begin to connect together.

Anti-Semitism can show up anywhere. In the U.S., most violent incidents of anti-Semitism are corrected to white-wing ideology or no ideology. Attempts to isolate Jewish people, deny harm or experiences of harm, and the use of dog whistles and scapegoating also occur in movement spaces.

██████████: Okay, next slide. It's absolutely possible to critique Israel without being anti-Semitic, but it's not automatic. If your idea of forcing Israel government policies is to assault, harass, or scream at Jewish people or Israeli businesses and restaurants, you're not an advocate. You're being antisemitic. It's critical to be clear and accurately describe specifically the action or policy you oppose and critique those things as unjust. Not the Jewish people or nation as equal. And you should be open to corrections. If somebody suggests that you're targeting Jews in something that you're saying or doing, don't shoot them down. Listen and seek out useful information and what they're saying that might help you give your message, even more clarity and impact. **The same is true for Jews. We need to listen to Palestinians about racism.** We all just need to listen and think rather than just react.

So taking care to resist anti-Semitism is not about walking on eggshells or acquiescing to pressure. It's about making a greater commitment to refusing to take part in oppression and building movements that give in.

So, you know, there's dog whistles, perpetuating anti-Semitic worldviews like globalists, cosmopolitan elite, dual loyalty, Kebaal, and the New World Order Rothschild, Soros, New York values, same Zionists instead of Jews.

You know, labor history teaches us we're stronger together and we need to figure out how to come closer to each other when we disagree, not run from each other. We run towards each other.

Jewish history teaches us that we are safest in communities with our allies and anti-Semitism functions by keeping us divided and suspicious of each other.

When we allow the right wing, you know, if we allow the right wing monopoly over addressing anti-Semitism, which is their weaponization, which we haven't talked to very much, we could do more on that, we will only deepen the mistrust and division. And organized labor can play a key role in combating anti-Semitism, calling it out, correcting the narrative and building relationships of solidarity with Jewish organizations. And I think now we're going to turn this over to ██████████. ██████████. And we're going to go into where breakout rooms. ██████████, let's spotlight her.

██████████: Yeah, thank you. So we're going to have 10 minutes in breakout rooms. Right now it's 5:50 and you all are going to come back at six o'clock. And the point of these breakout rooms is to have a chance to talk to each other, to think about the presentation and process it, ask questions, share your ideas. And I will put these in the chat so that everyone has them. **[this was not done]**

But in your breakout groups, we want you to answer what surprised you, what makes sense, what are you curious to learn more about. And for all the folks there who are very action oriented like me, if you want to start thinking about what can we do about anti-Semitism, like on a structural level, systemically, interpersonally, what can you do in your classrooms.

I will take these two questions in the chat. And again, we'll come back together at six o'clock.

██████████: Recording in progress. Welcome welcome welcome back everyone glad to see your faces. My name is ██████████ I am a field rep organizer with the MTA. I operate out of the Metro Boston office and represent workers in seven locals around Boston.

I'm also a board member on the New England Jewish Labor Committee and I'm so glad to be here and to help facilitate a panel discussion. I hope that your discussions in your small groups were productive. What I will say is we got a few questions in the chat and in personal messages and we're gonna have the panel start to answer those but if there are other questions that you have that you'd love to be answered please don't hesitate to put those into the chat.

We won't be able to get to all of them and I will just ask folks to you know ask questions that will help with the sort of dialogue that we've been trying to create here but please feel free to put those in in the chat and while you're doing that I'm going to ask our lovely panel of ██████████ and ██████████ and ██████████ there was a **question in the chat from somebody asking about an IHRA definition of anti-semitism and whether you believe in that** so I will ask anybody who feels called to to answer that and I'll ask folks just to keep your responses to about two minutes or less so that we can get through some meaningful questions.

██████████: Well I can answer the IHRA. A lot of people really think that should be the definition of anti-semitism it stands for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance their definition– the problem with it and what I've heard is– it's more the people who have used it um it it doesn't allow for criticism of Israel. It says criticism of the state of Israel is anti-semitic so that's a problem. So I think a lot of um well progressive organizations don't necessarily want that to be used. That's what I'll say.

██████████: Thanks ██████████. ██████████ or ██████████?

██████████: I'll just say briefly you know I pulled it up again just to kind of refresh myself and I think when you go to the page there's the initial definition and then there's examples. And I think that last example that they list is holding Jews collective really responsible for the actions of the state of Israel, right? And that portion of that definition really seems to me to strike at the heart of what we're talking about, especially in the context of a post- you know October 7th world. It's a thing that frustrates me I guess because I just don't I can't quite understand why people have such a hard time making that distinction um I would hate for somebody to hold me accountable for the actions of the American government when at various points in my lifetime it has not been a government that I voted for right um so I just think making distinctions is a critical part of having this conversation and I am called to make those distinctions all the time.

I will say I now currently reside in Missouri's first congressional district and there's an effort to primary. The candidate for that position who's held it for a while and I have to understand that you know whatever the sources of that attempt they don't represent all Jewish people, right? Nor do they represent all of the people who you know um you know um who have a role in that so just making distinctions is an important part of being able to have this conversation fully.

██████████: Thanks ██████████.

██████████: Yeah thanks. I think ██████████ started getting at some of the problems that I see with this definition and David was pointing out that too, right?

Not Jews aren't a monolith and ██████████ showed a slide earlier of all the ways that Jews can practice their Judaism right through tradition, through ritual, through collective action, through belief, through their values, right?

And anti Zionism and anti-Semitism are not circles because there are lots of anti-Zionist Jews and there are lots of anti-Semitic Zionists. The political ideology of Zionism feels distinct from the religious and faith tradition of Judaism. And one challenge that I have with the IHRA definition is that I think when it gets adopted by organizations outside of the IHRA which I don't think it was really originally intended to but different organizations and governments have taken it on if it can make it harder for us to combat anti-Semitism in some ways so one thing that came up to peel back the curtain is when we were prepping for this training, we were looking to see, you know, like we've all experienced anti-Semitism being on the rise. We saw white nationalists walk through Charlottesville several years ago right? Like we know that that's happening but it was hard to find accurate numbers of what's going on because so many of the organizations tracking what's happening with anti-Semitism use a definition that I

think might include incidents that aren't necessarily anti-Semitic and so this like this blurring and homogenizing of anti-Semitism, I think, can actually make it harder for us to know about what's happening and combat it ourselves.

██████████: Can I add one more thing?

██████████: You can but you can only use the 30 seconds left from your previous allotment

██████████: **Anti-Semitism changes all the time, so one definition isn't appropriate. And the other thing is that none of the definitions that I've heard actually talk about the dynamic of anti-Semitism is dividing people.**

██████████: Thanks ██████████. I've gotten a few more questions in the chat. So Mike, I see another one coming in. So one question that was asked is just **how have you seen people stand up and fight anti-Semitism?** Can any of you sort of talk through any examples of that that you've seen or experienced in your life?

██████████: Yeah I think. Do we want to go to the same order?
Okay. I think naming anti-Semitism as this divisive force is one way to combat it because it allows us to work together and build alliances.

When ██████████ was talking about the number of Jews that are out there were a very small proportion of the population. And so moments when I've seen people combating anti-Semitism usually involve building a group, and I'm sorry if I sound like a union organizer, but I think it's hard to combat anti-Semitism on your own. Like all my answers come back to my organizing training which is that if we want to get something done, we have to do it as a group and that group can involve organizing other Jews but it can also involve bringing in other people experiencing many of the same forces of violence or related forces of violence to take these on.

So one example that I can think of is in a school district near where I grew up there was anti-Semitic like physical violence people were bullying a group of Jewish kids who went to the school and to fight back against that a bunch of the other students in their high school all got together and like started walking with these Jews between class. And instead of allowing people who were visibly Jewish wearing yarmulkes, wearing tzitzit to be picked on, as happens to a lot of kids in high school, other people in their school walked them to class and made sure that they weren't alone in that and I think that's like a really powerful visual representation of what solidarity looks like.

██████████: I can see. Yeah. That's great. I love that story, ██████████. I mean I think learning about Jews and reading Jewish history is one way to be an

ally, you know. And then speaking up when you see it. Just really say, you know you, just don't, You see it, say something. Don't let it happen.

██████████: Yeah I think that's I think both of those are really great examples you know and in my vocation, a lot of the anti-Semitic work is around you know reclaiming our sacred stories and reclaiming sacred scripture and pointing out what has been used for anti-Semitic purposes over time. And so obviously the Christian faith, you know, uses the Hebrew Bible and also uses the New Testament and there are many, you know, God bless the Evangelists right but many of them have troublesome tropes that are going on because they were writing for a particular people in a particular time in a particular place and so it's for us to say, Well listen this has been used for anti-Semitic purposes in the past. This is not how we ought to understand this as people of faith and so how do we understand this differently and how do we stand with our Jewish siblings, right, against a violence, against an anti-Semitism that purports to arise from a Christianity that is problematic so that's one of the ways that I both see and participate in, you know, efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

██████████: Thanks I see a lot in the chat and I see you all responding to each other which is all great I see a question from Mike how can the labor movement help combat anti-Semitism so you know moving out of sort of the personal realm right, thinking about structural and systemic aspects of anti-Semitism. What can our union do? What can we as union members do uniquely that we wouldn't be able to do if we weren't union members?

██████████: One thing I think the labor movement can do is offer really rigorous class analysis, right? Like as workers and as union members, we have to be really honest about who the boss is and sometimes there are Jewish bosses, right? Like it is true that there are Jewish bankers and Jewish real estate owners, but as ██████████ was saying, one common anti-Semitic trope is to blame Jews as individuals and claim that they hold the money when, in fact, like global capital is not being held by 0.2 percent of the world's population of Jews. It's being held by like a tiny, tiny sliver of people as very, very rich wealthy owners and it means that we have to be and I think one thing that labor movement can offer is we don't win unless we name who the boss is and who actually has the power to make change and so when we correctly identify who it is that has money and has power and who controls factories or owns land or controls the flow of money or is influencing our schools right like who actually has power in these situations we're taking a stand against anti-Semitism in some ways right like we're saying we're not just going to fall into a somewhat lazy trope of thinking Jews just control this. We can't do anything about it we're taking an active stand to know who it is and win back power for us as working people and of course those working people include a mix of non-Jews and Jews.

██████████: David or Maria you want to throw anything in about what unions might be able to do or what what we as union members can do?

██████████: I just agree with everything that ██████████ was saying. We just need to come together and take stands against anti-Semitism against racism against gay oppression you know we need to unify against all of the oppressions and you know and not let them divide us and that's you know I mean you know they just figure out different ways to divide different groups and so you're in your group you feel like that you're the worst oppressed of any other group and they divide you know they kind of go after us in slightly different ways and then it's kind of we are off feeling victimized against these other people they have it better than me, you know you know and we're all we're all messed up world.

██████████: Thanks ██████████. I see some questions in the chat that are more rhetorical, right? They're designed to make a point, which absolutely is totally fine, and folks are free to respond to each other. We probably have time for one more question before we lead to some resources for folks and and other thoughts leading out so I guess there's a question in the chat about about **how to support students with with families in Israel**. I might even expand that to just ask you folks like how might you recommend to educators how they can be supporting Jewish students or Israeli students or students with family in Israel right now what are some strategies or things that you might offer to folks with that question.

██████████: I would say, have them come together and like the support group would be really good and you know and also to do in classrooms talk about these different, you know, some of the history and that all people are good. I mean, not each individual is good, but that like all our peoples are good and we've all been hurt terribly. And we want to stand with you. You're good. You're not bad because you're Israeli. We need to say that. We need to be very specific about it and take stands for Israelis. That's really important.

██████████: I don't know how to answer this question on a personal level because I feel like I don't honestly... I think we have a lot of... there are a lot of people, um probably a lot of Israeli students who are suffering from lots of trauma and fear. And frankly, like I don't have the background of a social worker or counselor to answer that fully. But as union organizers, part of what I would say is to talk to your fellow teachers about the importance for having those people in your school. And I know that a lot of districts in the state have been pushing to have better staffing ratios for both physical and mental health care in our schools, right. To have more nurses and to have more counselors and social workers so that teachers have the support that they need from those people and so that when you aren't able to be everything to your students you also have somebody that you can go to and and get support in and so not to avoid the question but my answer would be I think we should pull in people who

are trained in helping people cope with the kind of fear and trauma that so many of our students including Israeli students, including Palestinian students, who are witnessing, including students who have no connection to the region, but are like witnessing unfolding war and who are probably really scared like they all, I'm guessing, need a lot of support. And if you're you're as a teacher maybe in the same position I am, which is where like I don't know that I have like been especially trained in social work. I think you can advocate for school districts to put more money into that.

██████████: One of the things that came to me. I don't know that it answers this question directly, but just thinking in terms of schools and groups of students and I think about a little over to that I participate in that approaches textual study from a queer, Jewish perspective, right, but it's open to Jews and non-Jews.

And that is a space that I've been in for several years now and I'm just thinking about spaces safe spaces spaces where you can experience discomfort right and that those things are not mutually exclusive and so by virtue of having built this relationship with people over these years now we're able to have real conversations that can get uncomfortable right because we've been able to establish that baseline of trust you know and so I don't know in what ways teachers can be equipped and you know situations will vary right but to the extent that you can provide spaces for people to encounter one another build trust and then begin to have these difficult conversations. I think that's certainly been vital for me, right, and you know to the extent that we can create that for other people. I think that would be helpful.

██████████: I want to just someone asked about, you know, teachers also need support and I just say of course teachers will support of course you do and you know schools are just like everything else in society right now schools don't have enough resource to do what really needs to be done and um but anyone who wants to call the little teachers to talk about this and have a little support group I encourage you to do so and just listen to people and care about each other even if you disagree which is kind of what ██████████ was talking about you know we have to figure out how to care about each other and listen and understand there are many truths going on right now.

██████████: Thank all three of you for leading this this conversation with love and humility and with conviction to to eradicate anti-semitism and to do it in the context of building a movement for collective liberation. It's an honor to see and to be your comrade. I'm gonna pause here I'm gonna go back to sharing the slides as we as we transition out and turn it back over to ██████████ and ██████████ to sort of close the the conversation.

So I guess I could do you want to go ██████████?

██████████: Sure. Let's see just have a minute. I'll say a couple things. This is hard. And I, you know, I was looking at the chats and I know a lot of teachers are really having a really hard time, and I'm sorry, you know, and I'm not ... I can't do anything about that exactly. But I just want you to know we care about each of you and, you know, that's all I can say right now. Maybe we can figure out some little stories for people. But people are hurting and you know Jews, each one of you is precious and wonderful. I just want you to know that and you know and I think unity is important. Okay turn it over to ██████████.

██████████: yeah I can't really say much better than that. I would encourage people to use these resources, right? There's so many different parts of this, but I guess what I would just... The final thoughts I would offer up are, you know, use these resources explore more resources talk to people. Track down the resources that they have, right?

You know I'm an educator myself and it is about getting a context for things it is about contextualizing things. It is about making distinctions. I think that's one of the single biggest things that we can do to. To have fruitful conversations, know. Aaron just said three words that really resonated: Love Conviction and Humility. And I think for so many of us, especially in times that are fraught, you know, conviction becomes the enemy of humility, you know, and love, right? And I think many of us are people of great conviction, right? And those convictions just didn't spring up overnight, right? We exist and we operate at intersections of lots of different identities and based on those, you know, intersections and based on those experiences is how we develop our convictions and so then what we need in the face of some of the certainties that those convictions can build is that sense of humility and is that sense of love and care and so you know, as a person of faith, I think if we can but combine those things right um then I think we're better equipped to not only have these conversations and not only make these important distinctions but also participate in that great healing uh that we hope to be and see in our world so I've really I'm able to be with you all this evening and I'm really grateful for our time together all right it's 6:29, so I think on that note I want to thank all of you so much it has been a wonderful presentation your perspectives have been invaluable I've learned a lot and I hope everybody that has participated has as well um right before we go I'm going to put an email in the chat the presenters have asked that feedback be sent to that email so please do so I believe Alison we also have a survey to send out I don't know if you could put that in the chat as well yes everyone will receive it in their email um I can get it but probably not in one minute it could be okay if everyone has it in their email that's just fine um thank you all for tonight I hope you have a wonderful evening uh and we'll see you next time be well everyone