

Talking Points on Anti-Semitism and Black Lives Matter

- Racism and antisemitism are not oppositional but rather must be fought together. According to the President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin: "Antisemitism and racism are two sides of the same coin, and we must fight them wherever they appear."
- The pandemic followed by the Black Live Matter civil rights movement came directly on the heels of the Jewish community experiencing a rash of antisemitic violence and vandalism. The Tree of Life shootings in Pittsburgh, the shooting in Poway, the murders in Monsey, the killings in Jersey City and the violent attacks in New York, sent shockwaves throughout the Jewish community. Many in the Jewish community are rightly focused on the growing threat of antisemitism and may be slow to pivot to the current focus on Black Lives Matter.
- Yet, the pandemic has highlighted the intense racial disparities in our country in healthcare, policing, criminal justice, etc. This has ignited the largest social movement in our country since the 1960s. This new civil rights movement--called Black Lives Matter--advocates for both policy and culture change on issues of equity and reimagining of public safety. It asks Americans to understand the experience of Black people in America, and to work toward an inclusive vision of America.
- Black Lives Matter should be understood as the new civil rights movement in America, not as a particular set of policies or organizations. The Jewish community is proud of its strong solidarity and participation in the civil rights movement of the past and should be equally eager to engage in the present.
- Many national organizations, and millennials have taken the mantle of Black Lives Matter. However, some in the Jewish community believe that it is antisemitic. Rumors supported by Jewish thought leaders on the right have spread like wildfire without being based in fact. Black Lives Matter has been accused of being antisemitic, Marxist, a dangerous ideology, creating a tsunami against Jews and Israel and more. What are they referring to? A wedge is being forced between the Jewish and black communities, a wedge of fear. Every movement has its radicals. However, it is unfair, untrue and inimical to our own best interests to characterize the movement as antisemitic.
- One subset of the movement, the Movement for Black Lives, opposes US military aid toward Israel. This is not the consensus position of the entire movement. The Black Lives Matter movement is diffuse and diverse. The majority of action and policy positions, on such issues as poverty, policing, healthcare, food security, and education are determined locally. In 2016, it issued a charter that leveled ugly accusations against Israel. We agree that should this issue creep back into Black Lives Matter movement, the Jewish community relations field should strongly oppose it. But we don't believe that

such an occurrence should cause us to abandon the civil rights movement of our time. We should call out antisemitism when it arises in our coalitions and continue to educate about Israel. Experience has shown that we can have a far greater impact in deterring antisemitism if we are in relationship with leaders and organizations.

- As Jews, our tradition calls us to act for justice to support our neighbors. This can only happen by knowing our neighbors, understanding their trauma and history, building trust, and working together to reimagine a country that is safe for everyone. It is the same thing that Jews want. Jewish organizations share an overlapping agenda with the Black organizations. This is an asset we should build upon. This moment calls upon the Jewish community to lean in. As stated by NAACP President and CEO on a recent JCPA webinar: “you need to call-in before you can call out”. As stated by civil rights activist Eric Ward, “we must be part of the movement and fight antisemitism where it occurs. But let it not be an excuse for staying on the sidelines”.