

# CAMPUS ADMIN & STAFF **RESOURCE GUIDE**

ENSURING JEWISH  
INCLUSION & SAFETY

Last updated  
**OCTOBER  
2024**

[info@projectshema.org](mailto:info@projectshema.org)  
[www.projectshema.org](http://www.projectshema.org)

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# MEET OUR TEAM



**Jackie**  
Facilitator & Coach



**Deitra**  
Facilitator & Coach



**Daniel**  
Director of Content & Community Engagement



**Sophia**  
Senior Facilitator & Coach



**Andi**  
Facilitator & Coach



**Erica**  
Operations Manager



**Havi**  
Community Engagement Manager



**Jill**  
Senior Advisor to Org Development



**Eli**  
VP of Organizational Development



**Kara**  
VP of Stakeholder Engagement



**April**  
VP of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



**Kiyomi**  
VP of Partnerships



**Zach**  
VP of Community Engagement Co-Founder



**Brianna**  
VP of Strategy & Design Co-Founder



**Oren**  
Executive Director Co-Founder

# OUR APPROACH

## Nurturing Understanding

The word *shema* comes from the Hebrew word “to hear,” and it’s this concept that guides everything we do. We are a team with diverse identities who have invested our lives in uplifting vulnerable communities

Listening with curiosity and compassion is at the center of our relational engagement approach. Our goal is to help others understand Jews’ stories, identities and lived experiences.



## Antisemitism is a systemic bigotry impacting all of us

We are all socialized into anti-Jewish ideas and must do the work to unpack these bigotries and act as allies. These biases show up everywhere, including in mainstream society and sometimes in Israel & Palestine discourse. When these bigotries and biases become normalized, Jews become dehumanized and isolated in society and Jewish people face collective risk.

**All of us have a responsibility to disrupt antisemitism wherever it appears, even and especially when it is our peers who are perpetuating anti-Jewish harm.**

We also recognize how antisemitism fuels white supremacy, undermines democracy, and divides efforts toward equity and progress.

## A paradigm shift in this critical moment

We recognize that there are some people with malice toward Jews in every movement. We need new ways to engage peers who don't wish to harm the Jewish people, but may accidentally perpetuate anti-Jewish harm. This shift requires relationships and nuance. We have to transcend binaries, demonstrate allyship, and call out all dehumanizing language, including about Palestinians, Muslims, and Arabs.



# This resource is designed for leaders on campus

Those responsible for building & maintaining healthy vibrant, and inclusive environments

## GOALS OF THIS RESOURCE

**01** Help **administrators, DEI practitioners & student life staff** understand how the normalization of specific ideas is **undermining Jewish inclusion & safety**

**02** Help universities build campus cultures that **foster healthy discourse across differences**, in recognition of how **antisemitism undermines democracy & civil rights**

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# CAMPUS ADMIN & STAFF RESOURCE GUIDE INTRODUCTION

**Over the last decade, anti-Jewish sentiment has risen globally.** As has been true for millennia, Jews are being blamed for a wide range of societal issues, often defined as the ultimate example of society's sins. Regardless of intent, in the aftermath of October 7th, we've seen a surge of anti-Jewish rhetoric and action, often unnoticed and unchecked. Consequently, ideas which undermine collective Jewish safety and inclusion are being mainstreamed.

## ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

On campus, a majority of Jewish college students have experienced or witnessed some form of antisemitism. From drawing swastikas to glorifying Hamas's terrorist attacks, **rhetoric which demonizes and dehumanizes Jews has become more normalized**, often leading to exclusion, isolation, and, in some cases, acts of physical violence. That's true on campus specifically, and in general across the country.



# TWO KEY PRINCIPLES

For navigating these complex moments

## 1 FREEDOM OF SPEECH MUST BE UPHELD

**Even for speech we find objectionable**

We believe that it is not inherently antisemitic to criticize Israeli government policy, advocate on behalf of Palestinians, or call for an end to the war. The concerns raised in this guide are not about those conversations

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SHOULDN'T IMPACT STUDENT SAFETY

Jews/Jewish institutions should not be targeted or held responsible for the Israeli government's actions, as it leads to dehumanization & ostracization, making the Jewish community more susceptible to systemic violence. Similarly, students protesting on behalf of the Palestinian people should be protected from harassment & retribution

# UNDERSTANDING JEWISH IDENTITY & ANTISEMITISM

01

## WHO ARE THE JEWISH PEOPLE?



### what people **assume**

Most people **think of** Jews as a **white, religious community**.

### who we **are**

- **Jews identify as a people or nation**, now and long before there was a religion called Judaism.
- Many Jews do not consider themselves to be religious.
- Jewish people are **multi-racial and multi-ethnic**, with diaspora communities **all over the world**.
- Jews **originate from the Land of Israel**, but were expelled and turned into a largely diasporic people as a result.

02

## WHY THIS PERCEPTION?

### **Erasure of a complex identity**

Despite the prevailing social constructs around race and identity, Jews are often and primarily categorized by non-Jews as a religious group, erasing the complexity of our identity. This ignores how the Jewish diaspora has been shaped by a history of expulsions and persecution, leading to the dispersion of Jewish communities across nations worldwide.

### **Safety through assimilation**

In the U.S., many Jewish immigrants actively sought safety through assimilation into whiteness (changing names, adapting cultural practices, etc.). Images of Jews in media & popular culture are typically centered around white Jews. This centering of one Jewish narrative erases the complexity, beauty, and diversity of our global peoplehood.



# UNDERSTANDING JEWISH IDENTITY & ANTISEMITISM

03

## WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM?

MOST THINK  
ANTISEMITISM  
IS ABOUT  
RELIGION



BUT  
ANTISEMITISM  
IS ABOUT  
PEOPLE

Jews are typically attacked for **who we are**, not how we pray.

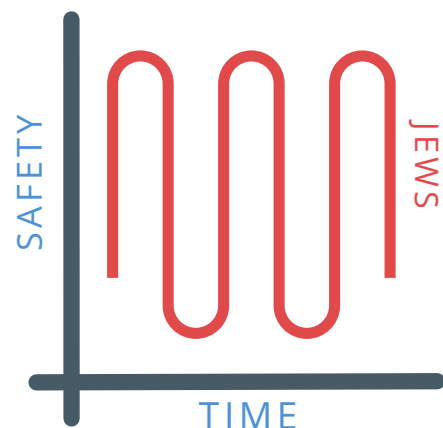
**CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM IS TYPICALLY  
ANTI-JEW, NOT ANTI-JUDAISM**

04

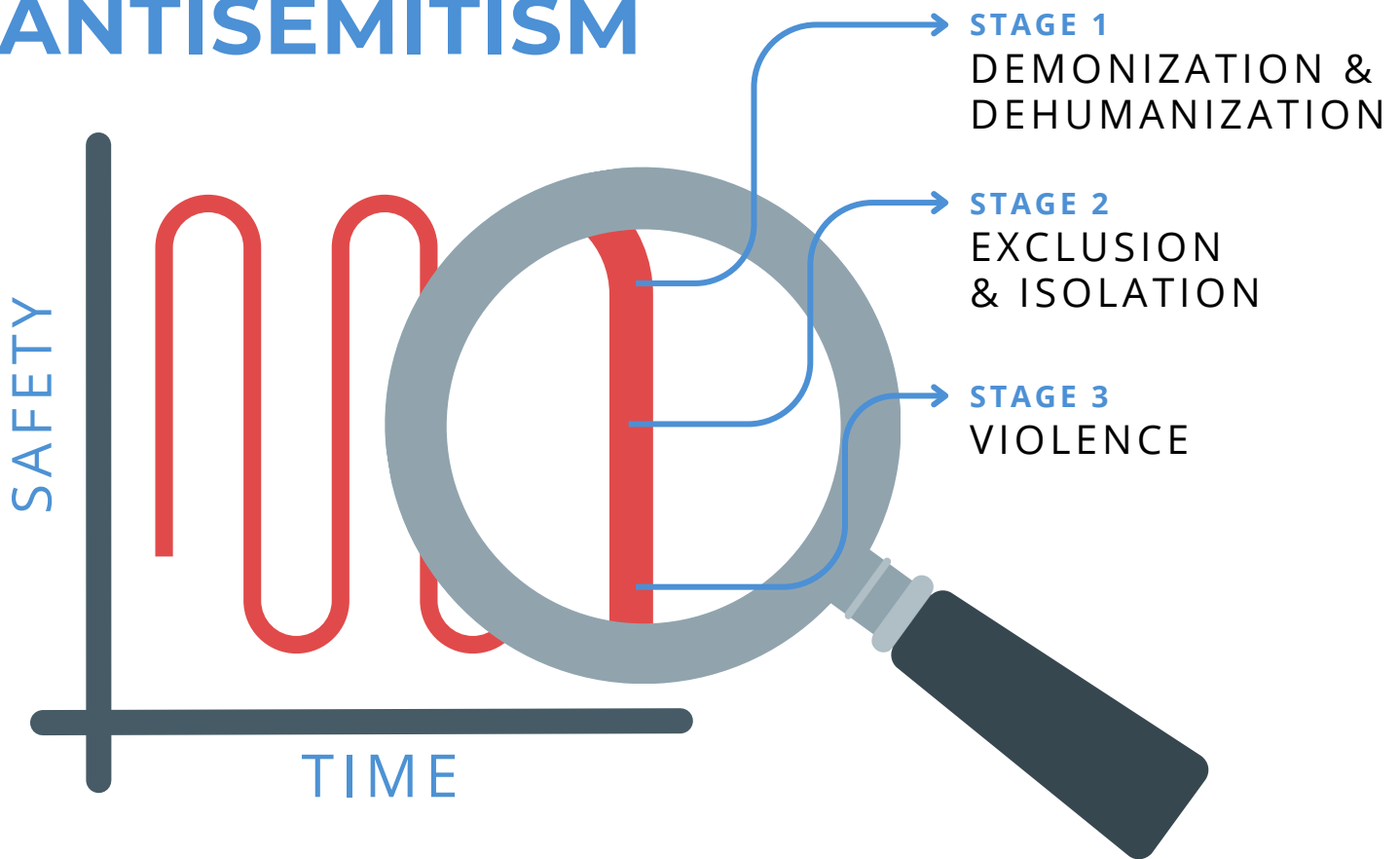
## HOW DOES ANTISEMITISM WORK?

### JEWISH SAFETY CAN CHANGE RAPIDLY

- Antisemitism functions differently than other systemic bigotries, which are typically fixed in a given society.
- There are many examples of Jews living safely and thriving in a society, only for this status to shift rapidly, leading to systemic violence and even expulsions.
- Throughout Jewish history, skin color & status have not guaranteed safety in any society.



# STOPPING THE CYCLE OF ANTISEMITISM



## ANTISEMITISM CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE

Because antisemitism is so adaptable, elements of all three of these stages come from the far left or far right. White supremacists may demonize Jews as a non-white group that is trying to replace the US' white population while the far left may demonize Jews by treating them as exemplary of white supremacy

## OUR GOAL IN COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM

Whether from the right or the left, these examples undermine individual and collective Jewish safety while also destabilizing the environment of pluralism & inclusion that serve as the bedrock of our educational institutions

**Allyship with the Jewish people means working to stop this cycle**

# THE HARMFUL NARRATIVE

## UNDERMINING JEWISH INCLUSION AND SAFETY

01 Our description of this narrative is not intended to serve as commentary on **whether the narrative itself is inherently antisemitic** or the people espousing them are.

02 Our intent is not to **discredit Palestinians' lived experiences**.

03 Our aim to help others understand how some of these narratives, in the way they're being reductively told, regardless of intent, are **undermining Jewish inclusion and safety**.



# THE HARMFUL NARRATIVE

## UNDERMINING JEWISH INCLUSION AND SAFETY

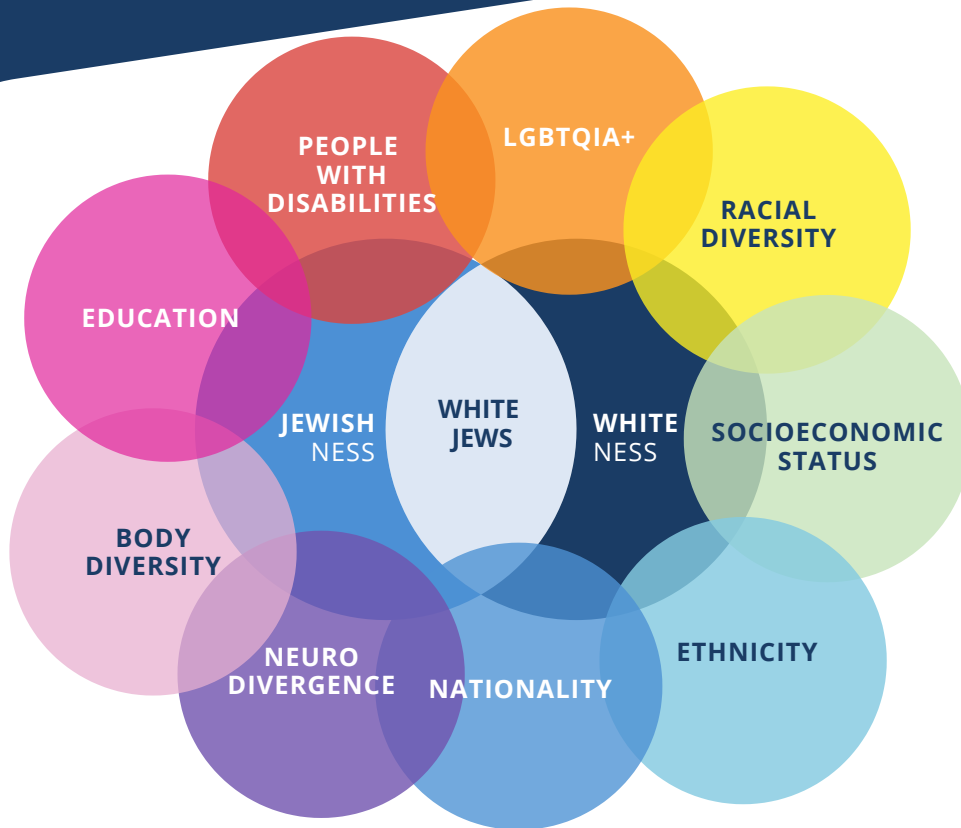
Some are pushing an overly simplistic and harmful narrative about the Jewish people. This narrative leverages binary thinking, dividing the world into the powers of good and evil. **Those who push this false binary want us to believe that the state of Israel, the world's only Jewish state, and all who support its existence, represent evil.** This feeds into the ancient antisemitic lie that Jews are responsible for, or are the prime example of, all the world's wrongs.

**This narrative, and the rhetoric and actions that manifest from it, is incompatible with Jewish inclusion and safety**

In this reductive narrative, Israel is defined as a white, European colony and, **Zionism is defined as racism, colonialism, and white supremacy**, rather than a movement for **Jewish liberation and national self-determination** in some portion of our ancestral homeland and a response to millennia of anti-Jewish oppression. This inaccurate narrative belies Jewish history to **justify the goal of dismantling Israel** rather than changing Israeli government policy or establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

**This narrative relies on the erasure of Jewish identity by flattening Jewish identity into whiteness.**

# JEWISHNESS & WHITENESS



## Why many Jews are racialized as white

Many of us have European ancestry, are racialized as white, and have made choices to gain the safety and privileges associated with whiteness. This level of access is the exception to the rule, though, for the Jewish world today and historically.

## Conflating Whiteness & Jewishness

The problematic assumption that all Jews are white is often compounded by the belief that whiteness and Jewishness are inseparable. Not only does this erase the existence & history of Jews of Color around the world (and the majority demographic in Israel), **people often use this to dismiss antisemitism**

## Accelerating antisemitism

For many, whiteness is associated with power and oppression, and ancient, deeply ingrained anti-Jewish ideas cast Jews as too powerful & untrustworthy. **Flattening our identity into whiteness therefore accelerates antisemitism** by enabling inaccurate narratives to easily spread. This narrative leads to the **demonization, exclusion, and isolation** of most Jews

# THE HARMFUL NARRATIVE

## UNDERMINING JEWISH INCLUSION AND SAFETY

### **This narrative leads to the demonization, exclusion and isolation of most Jews**

Those pushing this narrative **equate concepts like Zionism and white supremacy**, hoping to make it **socially acceptable to argue that the world's only Jewish state shouldn't exist**.

In this binary framework, Jews who simply support Israel's right to exist (aka Zionists), even those who vehemently disagree with Israeli government policy, are considered akin to white supremacists. In this context, **the word "Zionist" is explicitly used as a pejorative, which has the intended targeting effect of placing almost all Jews outside the community of the good**, undeserving of allyship and protection. It then becomes acceptable to demonize Jews in Israel and harass Jews in the diaspora because of their perceived connection to Israel. This dehumanizing framework leads to exclusion, isolation, and ultimately **enables individual & collective violence against Jews**.

### THIS INACCURATE NARRATIVE **NORMALIZES VIOLENCE AGAINST JEWS**

Since this narrative casts Israel as an illegitimate, European colony, its **proponents argue Israel must be fully dismantled** ('decolonize Palestine'). This leads to the justification of horrific violence, where people refuse to hold Hamas accountable for the acts of October 7th.

They see this **violence as justified resistance to white colonial oppression**. Any challenge to this view is treated as an attack on the rights of Indigenous communities. We can assume a future attack intended to "decolonize" the land (destroy the state of Israel) would be justified as well.

THE ONLY WAY  
TO ACHIEVE **LITERAL  
DECOLONIZATION** IS  
THROUGH MASS ACTS OF  
**VIOLENCE**  
AGAINST ISRAELI JEWS OR ROUGHLY  
**HALF THE JEWS  
ON EARTH**

**There is  
no space or  
society Jews will  
feel safe or be safe in if  
violence against Jews is tolerated**

**Normalizing violence also threatens democracy**

We should be wary of the normalization of violence against innocent civilians in pursuit of political goals, which poses a direct threat to democratic societies.



# HOW THESE IDEAS ARE SHOWING UP ON CAMPUS

Its important to view these individual ideas as part of a **single connected story undermining Jewish inclusion and safety**, not disconnected phrases



# Globalize the intifada

"Intifada" means "shake off" in Arabic and is often used to describe social uprisings. Those social uprisings could be, and indeed at times have been, non-violent.

Jews associate "intifada" with the **Second Intifada**— a period of violent terrorist attacks, including bus bombings against civilians in Israel. So, Jews may hear this as a glorification of those terrorist attacks and a call for the replication of such violence.



# Decolonization by any means necessary

"Decolonization by any means necessary" or any variation of that phrase can be viewed as a **justification of the violence of October 7th** and violence against Jews in Israel in general because it characterizes Israelis as colonists who are **legitimate targets** of anti-colonial resistance. This presumes that Jews have no relationship to the land.

So most Jews hear this as both a **threat to collective Jewish safety** and a means of **erasing Jews' connection to their ancestral homeland**.



FROM THE  
RIVER TO  
THE SEA  
PALESTINE  
WILL BE  
FREE



## From the River to the Sea

Not every person who chants this hopes for the elimination of the State of Israel. Some may intend this as simply a **call for equality**. Others, however, when taking this phrase to its literal extreme, describe a **single state of Palestine** existing in all the land of current Israel and Palestine (from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea). This is understood by most Jews as a **call to end the state of Israel**, a future only possible through violence.

## Zionism is racism & colonialism

From the perspective of most Jews, describing Zionism as racism and describing Israelis as (European) colonizers is viewed as an **erasure of Jewish history and diversity**, and **dehumanizes Israelis** – those who fled persecution, the survivors of genocide or refugees of ethnic cleansing in the Middle East, and their descendants. Palestinians understandably have a different perspective on Zionism.



# WHAT THIS SOUNDS LIKE

## and what Jews hear

01 “We need a global movement”

“Globalize the intifada”



02 “To dismantle the world’s only Jewish state”

“Decolonize the land”



03 “Free Palestine from the river to the sea”



“Zionism is racism and colonialism”

04 “Return the land to the *real* Indigenous population”

“Because Israel is a white supremacist, colonial project”

# A CONNECTED STORY

not simply isolated language

It is paramount to see each example not as disparate, disconnected ideas, but as a single, connected story.

**Some people are calling to globalize the intifada, to decolonize the land, and free Palestine from the river to the sea because Zionism is racism & colonialism.**

Therefore, they argue, Zionists are racists, support white supremacy & must be confronted. This excludes almost all Jews from the community of the good. Taken together, this leads to Jews being **demonized**, **dehumanized**, and **excluded**, sowing the seeds of, and tapping into, anti-Jewish sentiment that has historically led to violence.



# THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF HARM

Harm doesn't only come in the form of physical violence. It can also present itself in subtler ways, such as **verbal**, **emotional**, or **psychological harm**. The latter types of harm are **harder to spot and prevent**, so it is imperative we familiarize ourselves with examples of their manifestation on campus grounds so you can disrupt these frameworks.



**Eric Levitz**  
@EricLevitz

Harassing Jewish students for displaying symbols of their faith and holding Jews responsible for the actions of the Israeli government contribute to an environment of insecurity and silencing whereby Jews feel "othered" and that they must suppress their identity as a safety mechanism.

fwiw, my cousin is a student at Columbia. Months ago, he said that other kids knocked the yarmulke off his head as he crossed campus. The

Blocking Jewish students from accessing parts of campus is plainly discriminatory and exclusionary as it inhibits students' ability to participate in or benefit from a school's education program or activity, as guaranteed by the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.

## Jewish UCLA student blocked from entering campus by pro-Palestinian activists

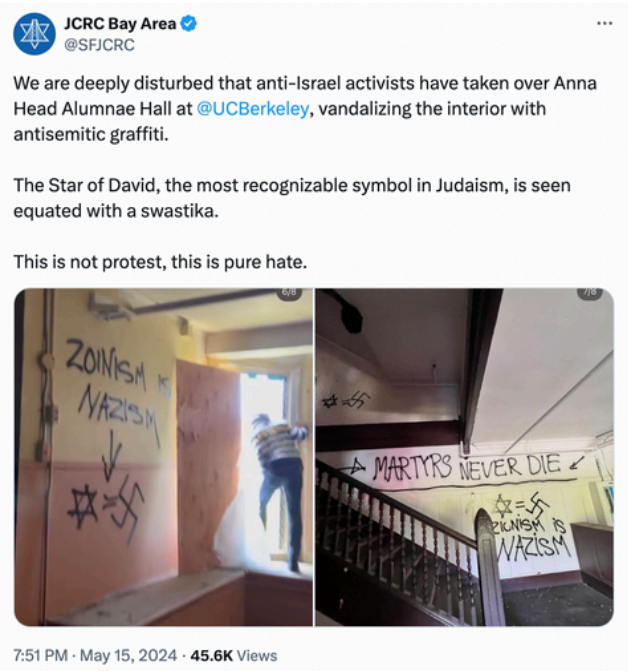
An overwhelming majority of Jews identify as Zionists or have a connection with Israel. **Targeting Zionists is effectively targeting Jews**. Saying 'Zionists don't deserve to live', ostracizing Zionists from campus events or the "community of the good", or using the label as a pejorative is **discriminatory**, **dehumanizing**, and **demonizing**, as it undermines collective Jewish safety. Imposing a litmus test on Jews, when other groups aren't subjected to similar litmus tests, or categorizing them as "good" or "bad," is anti-Jewish bigotry and can easily lead to physical harm.

## *Columbia Bars Student Protester Who Said 'Zionists Don't Deserve to Live'*

# THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF HARM

## Equating Zionism with Nazism

One unique form of demonization we are seeing is the equation of Judaism, Zionism, or Israel with the Nazi regime. Zionism is the belief that the Jewish people have a right to and need for national self-determination in some portion of our ancestral homeland, and the vast majority of Jews consider this a part of their Jewish identity. When this idea - or the world's only Jewish state - is likened to Nazism or white supremacy, the majority of global Jews are portrayed as Nazi-like or evil. This dehumanizing framework is leading to exclusion, intimidation & harassment of Jews.



## Calls for genocide

A sign that calls for the disposal of the Jewish people from the world will be interpreted by many Jews as a call for genocide.



## Calls to violence

“Al-Qasam” is Hamas’s military wing. Standing in front of a group of students with a sign that says they are a terrorist entity’s next “targets” not only condones the events of October 7 and quite literally puts a target on these students, it also demonizes those who express any connection to Israel, which makes it easier to justify or normalize anti-Jewish harm.



# HOW CAMPUS LEADERS CAN ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

## Focus on systemic, long-term change

Addressing these challenges is not the work of one semester or one year; it must be understood as a long-term process to shift the underlying cultural dynamics enabling the normalization of ideas and actions that undermine Jewish safety and inclusion.

## Antisemitism education for key stakeholders on campus

Project Shema can provide antisemitism education, tailored for the following stakeholder groups

- Administrators, DEI professionals, student life staff, and anyone else who is responsible for building and maintaining campus culture and responding to student concerns
- New faculty and staff when hired, and whenever staff receives updated training on forms of bigotry and discrimination
- Incoming students receiving training about other forms of bigotry and leaders of student groups
- Share this resource with other campus leaders

# HOW CAMPUS LEADERS CAN ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

## **Prioritize a healthy civic culture & creating a vibrant, pluralistic democratic society**

**Dialogue across differences** is part of a healthy civic culture and pluralistic democratic society.

Campus leaders can model this behavior by:

- Establishing clubs or groups to empower students to respectfully engage across differences
- Holding programming that models this approach, especially around Israel and Palestine
- Teaching people the skills needed for empathic, depolarized discourse across differences

## **Ensure classrooms are spaces for critical exploration, not harassment or demonization**

Jewish students have reported being silenced, harassed, and demonized inside of the classroom and, too often, instructors push their own ideological perspectives rather than creating space to challenge or explore alternative perspectives.

**University leaders can address this by:**

- Offer pedagogical training in the methods of teaching critical inquiry and cultivating civil discourse to all instructors
- Ensure students have trusted reporting mechanisms, that concerns are taken seriously, and that students are protected from reprisal





# PROJECT SHEMA