
MUSEUMS RESPOND

STRATEGIES FOR COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM & HATE

SUMMIT ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES



INTRODUCTION

The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, released in May 2023, challenges us all to confront the reality that antisemitism is rising, and that it threatens not only Jewish communities, but all Americans.

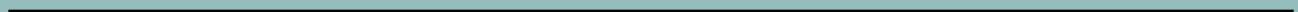
In recent years, incidents of antisemitism across the U.S. have significantly shifted our **understanding** of what's at play, and what's at stake. White nationalists in Charlottesville chanted, "Jews will not replace us" in 2017. In 2018, an attacker in Pittsburgh murdered eleven people at the Tree of Life synagogue on Shabbat. On January 6, 2021, a man wearing a "Camp Auschwitz" shirt was in the crowd that stormed the Capitol building. The following year, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker welcomed a stranger into Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas; the armed man took the rabbi and three congregants hostage for 11 hours that day. The Anti-Defamation League recorded 3,697 **incidents** of antisemitism in year 2022, and 3,291 incidents in just the three months between October 7, 2023 and January 7, 2024. A recent report by the American Jewish Committee **stated** that 46% of American Jews have changed behaviors out of fear of antisemitism.

With so many individuals across different communities afraid to participate in everyday

activities – from shopping at the grocery store, to sending children to school, to going to work, or praying in houses of worship – the work of countering antisemitism and hate is both urgent and sensitive. As part of the *National Strategy*, the Summit, "Museums Respond: Strategies for Countering Antisemitism and Hate," is bringing together more than 100 leaders from museums, archives, and libraries that are committed to making a difference across communities.

This Summit Engagement Guide introduces the themes of the program — offering examples, reference points, and questions we will explore together. We know that participants are bringing with them different starting points and areas of expertise – professional, personal, institutional, communal, and relational. We hope the Summit will provide a thoughtful learning environment that can inform and support your work before, during, and after the convening. Please feel free to use the prompts included throughout the guide to share ideas; these will assist us in creating a more extensive Field Guide in the weeks following the Summit.

Thank you for your meaningful participation as we work together to strengthen the future of our museums, our communities, and our shared democracy.



SUGGESTED PRE-READING

- For an introduction to 21st-century antisemitism, see [Antisemitism Here and Now](#) by Deborah Lipstadt – or listen to a related segment on [NPR](#). Read an [interview with Deborah Lipstadt](#) by Jennifer Rubin from December 26, 2023
- For a discussion on how antisemitism appears in different forms, see Dov Waxman's [Antisemitism isn't Just "Jew Hatred" – It's Anti-Jewish Racism](#)

SHARE WITH US

1

What questions are you bringing with you to the Summit?

2

What difficulties are you facing in your community and at your museum?

3

What would be a positive outcome for you from attending this Summit?

MUSEUMS RESPOND

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EVOLVING NARRATIVES

Museums are keepers of many stories — the ones we hold dear, the ones that inform our traditions and identities, ones that distinguish us, ones we present, those that cause heartache, and those we do not yet understand. Museum professionals explore the complexities of how we can tell different stories over time, and how we might use stories to open up new ideas, questions, and conversations with audiences and historians.

Museums interpreting Jewish history cover a wide range of Jewish experiences, including incidents of antisemitism and Jewish responses to it. Yet most museum narratives around antisemitism focus on events that occurred more than 70 years ago. With recent increases in antisemitic incidents across the U.S., what should we be considering for our next museum narratives, as we attempt to interpret the 21st century?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



How much attention should museums give to acts of hate, as compared to stories of resilience and vibrancy?



Would visitors seeking information about contemporary antisemitism or hate find it within your museum?



What gaps exist in public awareness, and how might museums respond?

ONLINE RESOURCES

These articles by Summit speakers provide additional framings on antisemitism:

- Eric K. Ward's [*Skin in the Game*](#), addresses how antisemitism animates white nationalism
- [*Arguing about antisemitism: why we disagree about antisemitism, and what we can do about it*](#) by Dov Waxman, David Schraub, and Adam Hossein outlines four contrasting approaches to identifying and discussing antisemitism

ONLINE RESOURCES

These resources show a wide range of American Jewish experiences, and help counter stereotypes and assumptions:

- [*Timeline in American Jewish History*](#) by the American Jewish Archives
- The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History's sites for [*Openbook*](#) and [*Jewish American History Month*](#)
- Oral histories by the [*Jewish Women's Archive*](#) documenting ways in which gender, class, place, and identities shape women's lives
- Research [*studies*](#) by the Jews of Color Initiative, showing the multiracial reality of Jewish people
- Jewtia's [*Peoplehood Papers 32*](#), on Latin American Jewish communities
- Lunar Collective's [*video series*](#) with stories by Asian-Jewish Americans
- [*A Mizrahi & Sephardic Education Toolkit*](#) by JIMENA, with resources on Sephardi and Mizrahi heritage

COLLECTIONS AS RESOURCES

Museum collections have long been central to American educational efforts to address antisemitism. From the founding of the American Jewish Historical Society in 1892 in response to antisemitism, to the first Judaica collections at the Smithsonian and the Jewish Museum that built awareness, to the emergence of Holocaust museums that centered the stories of survivors—museums have long played a role in public

understandings of Jewish life, culture, Judaism, and antisemitism.

As we now face new types of antisemitism, what approaches to collecting are best suited to countering it? And how can we better use acquisitions to engage multiple audiences, advance dialog, challenge stereotypes, and encourage new understandings of our neighbors and ourselves?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What do you hope to collect to advance your work in countering antisemitism or other forms of hate?



How might museums work together through collecting campaigns, digital projects, and shared resources?



How are collections enhancing your ability to connect and communicate with different communities?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Artifacts Unpacked**, a collections exploration by the United States Holocaust Museum & Memorial, with accompanying short videos
- **Your Story, Our Story** by the Tenement Museum, featuring student-submitted personal objects relating to immigration
- **Stop the Hate**, digital museum tour by the Maltz Museum, using artifacts to examine the history of antisemitism
- **Stop AAPI Hate**, which documented the rise of anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Ongoing collecting efforts post-October 7, 2023: **History is Now** by the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, and **Time of Turmoil: A Digital Journal** by the Jewish Museum of Maryland
- The **Invisible Histories Project**, which serves as an intermediary between communities and institutions, to build an accessible collection about LGBTQ life in the South

SHARE WITH US

Tell us about the ways collections are helping you to address or counter hate or antisemitism.

HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS

Holocaust museums and memorials are key resources for remembrance and public education about the Holocaust, and the millions of Jewish lives that were lost or forever changed.

Often informed by accounts and evidence from survivors, Holocaust museums preserve Holocaust histories and also lay a foundation for conversations about immigration and human rights, as well as antisemitism, homophobia, racism, and hate. Holocaust museums and memorials build knowledge of the past, empower audiences to

recognize antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories, and help cultivate critical thinking skills and civic participation.

As we move forward into interpreting the Holocaust and related subjects for 21st-century audiences, how are interpretive approaches evolving and shifting? How do Holocaust museums help address changing educational needs and requirements across *different states*, and what are they best positioned to do to help address American antisemitism?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



How has the rise in antisemitism shifted the approaches of Holocaust museums?



What have you seen as transformative in the work of Holocaust museums and memorials in building bridges and understanding?



What's missing in museums to meet new societal needs, and what is possible?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- ***Confronting Hate*** toolkit, by the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's ***Antisemitism Explained*** and ***Series: Antisemitism***, with short videos and articles featuring artifacts, to explore antisemitism and its history
- Holocaust Museum LA's ***augmented reality application*** on primary sources from a survivor of Sobibor, and ***Teacher Guides***
- ***Analyzing Stereotypes and Scapegoating***, curriculum by the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education
- Video by The Jewish Museum, ***The Holocaust as History and Warning***, with Timothy Snyder

MUSEUMS RESPOND

THE ARTS AND CREATIVITY

Museums have long been centers for the arts and records of human creativity, innovation, cultural expression and variety. With their varied textures and vocabularies, the arts create a different language for understanding, and reposition our relationships to ourselves and each other.

Jewish arts express a wide range of Jewish ideas,

variety, diversity, textures, and experiences — and challenge us to see “Jewish” in new ways.

As so many communities experience prejudice, bigotry, and hate – how can the arts help bring communities together, build new understandings, and unite us against shared threats to our safety and our democracy?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- The Jewish Museum’s **Object Lesson** videos illustrate Jewish rituals and holidays with art objects
- Educational **resources** by the Contemporary Jewish Museum use arts to explore antisemitism, Jewish culture, and diversity across Jewish life
- The **Dwelling in a Time of Plagues** public art project was a Jewish creative response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with online resources curated by CANVAS
- **The Jewish Book Council** foregrounds Jewish literature, including writings about antisemitism, October 7, and wide-ranging Jewish ideas
- **Be the Change** art initiative by the Jewish Arts Collaborative invites public engagement and social change
- **Western States Center’s Musician’s Inclusive Practice Toolkit**, offers ways for musicians to work towards a more inclusive democracy
- **LA vs Hate**, includes outdoor **murals** showing cultural diversity and distinctiveness across five counties

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

Museums play a critical role in our educational ecosystems for children — serving schools and teachers, supporting families and caregivers, and encouraging individual exploration in welcoming environments. Museums also create exhibitions that help young children explore their differences and similarities to one other, often alongside each other in galleries.

With many schools caught in contemporary debates about history, culture, identity, and information — museums and libraries are even more essential as centers for learning and ideas.

In seeking to familiarize young children with different cultural stories, and to better prepare them to counter antisemitism and hate — what might museums prioritize now? How can they model new ways of holding complexity as an antidote to narrow thinking and stereotyping?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



How does your museum situate culturally specific material in a way that builds familiarity and empathy?



How is your museum responding to new school needs and requests or debates around curricula?



What museum have you visited with children that made a lasting impression, and why?

ONLINE RESOURCES

Exhibitions for younger children:

- **XOXO: The Healing Power of Love and Forgiveness** traveling exhibition by the Children's Museum Pittsburgh, created after the 2018 murders at the Tree of Life Synagogue
- The **Courage to Act** exhibition at Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, for children age 9+
- The Skirball Museum's **Noah's Ark**, with **educator materials** on the Art of Imagination
- **Museum Resources for Talking about Racism with Children** by the Association of Children's Museums

ONLINE RESOURCES

Guides to children's literature:

- The Association of Jewish Libraries' **Love Your Neighbor** book lists, plus its guide for **evaluating Jewish representation in children's literature**, to assist practitioners in navigating content while centering Jewish stories and avoiding stereotypes
- **The Book of Life Podcast**, about resources for fighting antisemitism
- The Yiddish Book Center's **Teach Great Jewish Books**, with resources on immigration, Jewish content, the Holocaust, gender, queer identity, and activism
- **Mini documentaries** by the Wing Luke Museum for educators, and **reading lists** on Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander histories and stories
- **Books Matter, Children's & Young Adult Literature**, the Anti-Defamation League's online bibliography of books about bias, bullying, diversity, and social justice
- **Recommended Reading: For Children**, by the American Library Association

PARTNERSHIPS

Museum partnerships are more important than ever. They help us see contemporary and historical events from multiple perspectives, build understandings of one another, and incubate new possibilities across communities. Relationships between communities – fostered over time, through consistent engagement – also help build up our defenses against hate and strengthen our abilities to assist one another.

The work of building and maintaining partnerships across communities and cultures has become increasingly complex in a rapidly shifting and highly charged environment. At the Summit, we'll take time to explore potential dynamics, barriers, pitfalls, and approaches to sustaining long-term partnerships, including how we might build – or start to rebuild – long-term relationships for positive change.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What have been your most successful, longstanding partnerships, and why?



What has been most helpful in building and sustaining trust and building understanding?



How have your partnerships helped support or protect communities?

BETTER TOGETHER

PARTNERSHIP TIPS BY *MARSHA L. SEMMEL*

1

KNOW THYSELF!

What are you trying to accomplish, and what are you equipped to take on?

2

HOW CAN ONE + ONE = THREE?

What are your strategic reasons for joining forces with a partnering organization?
How can the partnership fulfill respective missions?

3

CONNECT BEFORE CONTENT

Build relationships over time, brainstorm possibilities, share respective goals.

4

CLEARLY DEFINE THE PARTNERSHIP

And ensure that all agree to its terms and logistics! Remember that partners can contribute different types of support and expertise.

5

IDENTIFY THE "WRANGLER"

Who will have the responsibility to manage the partnership, and do they have the time and resources?

6

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE ONBOARD

Are the necessary people on the partnership team?
Do they have what they need, and are resources distributed equitably?

7

CHANGES WILL OCCUR

Successful partnerships are complex, dynamic, and evolving. Be willing to modify your course. Be open to new opportunities and outcomes.

8

COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Consider the avenues of communication a successful partnership will need, for multiple stakeholders both inside and outside the organizations.

9

TAKE THE PROJECT'S PULSE

Beyond the project activities, explore partner insights, the nature of the relationships over time, and partners' learnings along the way.

10

DOCUMENT, EVALUATE, CELEBRATE

What will success look like?
How are project outcomes defined and documented?
How will you mark and celebrate project milestones?!

CONVENING CONVERSATIONS

As public-facing centers that serve a wide array of visitors, museums invite exploration and conversation about their artifacts, their subject matter, and related topics that shed light on personal and collective experiences.

In times of heightened crisis and polarized discourse, museums provide much needed historical context, well-researched information, and safe spaces. How can museums better inform and convene community dialogs, and serve as trusted forums to help us become generous listeners and informed communicators?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



What can museums bring to community discourse, especially in times of crisis?



How can we best situate our spaces to be safe, welcoming, inclusive, and inspiring?



When relationships become strained, what conversations might start a repair?



What can museums do now, so that we are better prepared for difficult conversations in the future?

ONLINE RESOURCES

- ***Purple***, a short film and guide by Resetting the Table that reveals humanity beneath conflict
- ***Practicing Facilitation*** by the Tenement Museum
- ***Front Page Dialogues*** and ***Toolkit*** by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, designed to move visitors beyond passive learning and access historical themes and contemporary issues
- ***Speaking Out Against Bigoted, Dehumanizing Rhetoric: What We Can Do***, by the Western States Center
- ***Let's Talk About That: Dialogue and Change in Collections Care*** by the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts

SUMMIT CONVERSATIONS

The Summit will include multiple opportunities for attendees to engage in facilitated conversations with other practitioners from different museums, libraries, and archives. To help create an atmosphere of openness and respect, we ask that all come prepared to model and engage in civil discourse, and that conversations be:

- 1 Conducted without partisan advocacy relating to domestic or international issues
- 2 Devoid of intentional biases
- 3 Free of ad hominem commentary
- 4 Respectful of different viewpoints, and use language that is sensitive to cultural differences

DIALOG, RATHER THAN DEBATE

Tips excerpted from *[Sharing the Well: A Resource Guide for Jewish Muslim Engagement](#)* (p. 11), by The Jewish Theological Seminary, Hartford Seminary, and The Islamic Society of North America

1

Listen to understand, rather than listening to counter what we hear.

6

Keep remarks brief and invite others into the conversation, rather than letting stronger voices dominate.

2

Listen for strengths, rather than listening for weaknesses.

7

Concentrate on others' words and feelings, rather than focusing on your next point.

3

Speak from our own understanding and experiences, rather than speaking based on assumptions.

8

Accept others' experiences as real and valid for them, rather than critiquing.

4

Ask questions to increase understanding, rather than asking questions to confuse.

9

Allow the expression of feelings for understanding, rather than expressing feelings to manipulate and deny other feelings.

5

Allow others to complete their communications, rather than interrupting or changing the topic.

10

Honor silence, rather than using silence to gain advantage.

FRAMING TERMINOLOGY

The following terms and phrases are starting reference points regarding our work as part of the *U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism*:

Antisemitism (as defined in the *National Strategy*, p.13):

A stereotypical and negative perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred of Jews. It is prejudice, bias, hostility, discrimination, or violence against Jews for being Jews or Jewish institutions or property for being Jewish or perceived as Jewish. Antisemitism can manifest as a form of racial, religious, national origin, and/or ethnic discrimination, bias, or hatred; or, a combination thereof. However, antisemitism is not simply a form of prejudice or hate. It is also a pernicious conspiracy theory that often features myths about Jewish power and control. When Israel is singled out because of anti-Jewish hatred, that is also antisemitism (as per the National Strategy, p.15). For additional definitions, see those by *IHRA*, *Nexus* and *JDA*, as well as the overview of definitions and spellings by *Western States Center*.

Civil Rights

Personal rights guaranteed and protected by the U.S. Constitution and federal laws enacted by Congress, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Civil rights include protection from unlawful discrimination.

Conspiracy Theory

The belief that some covert but influential organization is responsible for a circumstance or event.

Hate crime

A crime, sometimes one involving violence, that is motivated by prejudice on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, or other grounds. There is a U.S. federal hate crimes statute but individual states in the U.S. also have their own hate crime definitions and laws.

Heritage

Features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance.

Islamophobia

Refers to fear, prejudice, and discrimination against Islam and Muslims. It encompasses a range of negative feelings from anxiety and hostility to outright aggression towards Muslims, or those perceived to be Muslim. This prejudice is often rooted in misconceptions, stereotypes, and ignorance about the Islamic faith and its followers. It can manifest in various ways, including hate speech, social exclusion, physical attacks, discriminatory policies, and the propagation of negative stereotypes in media and political discourse. Islamophobia can also lead to discrimination and prejudice against Christian Arabs and other non-Muslims due to mistaken identity or association, affecting their social integration and personal safety. Anti-Arab sentiment, more broadly, targets individuals of Arab ethnicity — regardless of their religious beliefs — including those who are Muslim, Sikh, Arab (including Palestinian), South Asian Americans, and others. While Arabs are often associated with Islam due to the Arab origins of the religion and the fact that a significant portion of Muslims worldwide are Arab, not all Arabs are Muslim, and not all Muslims are Arab. Anti-Arab prejudice may stem from political, cultural, historical, or racial biases and can manifest in similar ways to Islamophobia.

Prejudice

Judgment or belief that is formed on insufficient grounds before facts are known, or in disregard of facts that contradict it.

Racism

Practice of systemic discrimination, segregation, persecution, and domination on the basis of race.

Solidarity

Agreement and support between people in a group who have similar aims or beliefs (see also the National Strategy, p.48).

White Nationalism/White Supremacy

Systems that uphold the dominant status and superiority of white people over all other people.

Zionism

A movement to establish and support a Jewish state in the Land of Israel. It comes from the Hebrew word Tzion, a biblical name for Jerusalem. Modern Zionism began in the late 19th century and included different ideological branches.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Other glossaries you may wish to consult include:

- The **Translate Hate** glossary, by the American Jewish Committee
- **Education Glossary Terms**, by the Anti-Defamation League
- **Sharing the Well: A Resource Guide for Jewish Muslim Engagement**, by The Jewish Theological Seminary, the Hartford Seminary, and the Islamic Society of North America (see p. 140)
- **Social Justice** definitions, by Brandeis University
- **Our Shared Future**, by the Smithsonian Institution, to support learning about race and racism
- **Glossary**, by the Western States Center

SHARE WITH US

Terms and their usages are dynamic, culturally defined, and received differently. You can use this form to suggest additional terminology for the more expansive Field Guide that will follow the Summit.

DISCLAIMER

Links to public-facing websites and resources are provided in this Guide as a convenience and for informational purposes; they do not constitute endorsement. Summit partner organizations do not bear responsibility for the accuracy, legality, updates, or content on external sites or in subsequent links (please contact the external site for answers to any questions regarding its content.)

SHARE WITH US

Please feel free to send us any additional ideas or feedback, and we look forward to being together in Washington, D.C.

