

Antisemitism and the Attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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President Donald Trump has effectively utilized the unresolved conflict among Israelis and Palestinians to fracture one of the remaining barriers to authoritarianism here at home: the Civil Rights Movement. By exploiting these divisions, his administration is weakening the alliances that have historically defended democracy, equal justice and belonging in America.



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This divide-and-conquer wedge strategy doesn't just create discord. It clears the way for a broader assault on civil rights. By stoking confusion and backlash against diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, President Trump's policies have prevented civil rights organizations from mounting a united front against his attack on the 14th Amendment. This portion of the US Constitution is the bedrock of citizenship and equal protection under the law. Undermining diversity, equity, and inclusion also disrupts the teaching of Black and Jewish histories side by side, weakening public understanding of how racism and antisemitism reinforce each other.

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Since his election, President Trump has disparaged and systematically dismantled DEI initiatives through coordinated policy changes. The president [blamed a plane crash](#), which killed 67 people, on DEI. Members of his administration [use DEI](#) to compare Jewish students' experiences to so-called reverse-racist attacks on white students. In March, President Trump [signed an executive order](#) removing DEI from the Foreign Service. He has removed [Women's](#) and [LGBTQ+ resources](#) from government offices, including information on transgender identity and women's health. And he certainly doesn't show any signs of stopping soon.

With this fragmentation in place, President Trump has also faced little resistance in [reframing](#) birthright citizenship as a racial slur and launching a policy attack on the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965 – the very law that dismantled antisemitic immigration policies. These were the same policies that once barred Jews fleeing pogroms and the Holocaust from seeking refuge in the US. Now, those policies continue to be under attack by the Trump administration.

The irony is glaring: some Jewish leaders are now being drawn into dismantling a law that, had it existed in the 1930s, might have saved Anne Frank and her family. But this is not just a historical lesson, it is a warning.

WHY THIS MATTERS – FOR JEWS AND BEYOND

This strategy has direct, real-world consequences. State laws [banning](#) so-called diversity, equity and inclusion explicitly forbid teaching that racism is embedded in American society. At the same time, these laws [mandate](#) Holocaust education while prohibiting discussion of the systemic racism that shaped it. This contradiction forces educators into an impossible position: teaching about Nazi policies without acknowledging how they were influenced by Jim Crow laws in the US. Even more broadly: teaching about systemic hatred without recognizing the system itself.

Imagine a history teacher teaching about the Holocaust. In attempting to show how the leaders of Nazi Germany studied US Jim Crow laws, they would risk violating these new state restrictions. If they further connected this history to modern voter suppression efforts in those same states, they could find themselves punished with dismissal or civil litigation – much like pulling the Monopoly "Go to Jail" card.

There's nothing new about these divide-and-conquer tactics. One of the oldest antisemitic strategies is to position Jews as a buffer between the ruling class and marginalized communities – ensuring that public frustration is redirected toward Jewish communities rather than those in power.

This played out in Tsarist Russia, where pogroms were unleashed to deflect economic grievances away from the monarchy and onto Jewish villages. A similar pattern emerged during the McCarthy era in the US, when Jewish intellectuals and activists were disproportionately

targeted as alleged communist threats. By singling out Jewish figures in leftist movements, the government created a wedge between Jewish and non-Jewish organizers, in the process weakening multiracial resistance to state repression.

Today, President Trump and his enablers are deploying the same strategy: using Jewish fears, some deeply valid, to push Jewish leaders into a reactionary stance that isolates them from other communities still battling racism and bigotry, their most natural allies.

It is a cynical ploy, but hardly a surprising one. After all, the president [has boosted the claim that some Jews view him as "The King of Israel"](#) while simultaneously laying claim to [Gaza](#) as his next real estate venture. Fulfilling campaign promises, Trump has called for the arrest and deportation of students involved in pro-Palestinian protests and has threatened, sometimes successfully, to pull federal funding from universities accused of failing to protect Jewish students. But state surveillance and censorship do not equal safety. What would protect Jewish communities is the same thing that protects all communities: real, sustained, accountable partnerships across lines of race, faith, and identity. The president will never build those partnerships because they would threaten his power.

Antisemitism doesn't wait for democracy to collapse. It accelerates it. And no single community can hold the line alone. Protection, real and lasting protection, comes when no group is left to face hate in isolation.

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The Jewish community must recognize when its leadership is being weaponized against the community's own long-term interests. This means resisting reactionary impulses and reaffirming the historical alliances that have safeguarded Jewish communities, rather than undermining them. The same movements that fought for the Civil Rights Act, for fair housing, and for voting rights, are the movements that helped ensure equal Jewish inclusion in American public life. Weakening these movements does not strengthen Jewish security. It endangers it.

To be clear, antisemitism does exist on the left, particularly when legitimate critiques of Israel cross into demonization of Jews or the denial of Jewish peoplehood. It must be condemned. But President Trump seeks to exploit both real and exaggerated instances of left-wing antisemitism, framing them as defining traits of progressive and racial justice movements. His goal is not to combat antisemitism but to drive a wedge between Jewish and non-Jewish communities, weakening the collective power of the Civil Rights Movement.

If the medical system has flaws, we don't dismantle hospitals. We work to fix them. The same must be true for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Jewish community can and should critique aspects of these initiatives, movements, and organizations when they fail to adequately

address antisemitism, but dismantling them outright only serves the interests of those seeking to erode civil rights for all.

History has shown what happens when Jews are left isolated, convinced that assimilation or hyper-isolation is their only defense. But the path forward is not retreat but rather solidarity. The survival of democracy, like the survival of Jewish communities, depends not on isolation, but on strong alliances rooted in multiracial inclusion and civil rights.

That means taking action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:



- ① **Oppose state laws that ban diversity, equity, and inclusion** and restrict how racism and antisemitism are taught by contacting state legislators
- ① **Supporting lawsuits challenging these bans** and backing organizations fighting for inclusive education.
- ① **Push back against attacks on birthright citizenship** by urging members of Congress to defend the 14th Amendment and reject any legislative or executive actions that strip citizenship rights.
- ① Most importantly, **do not allow these divide-and-conquer tactics to succeed**. Stay engaged, stay at the table, and refuse to let fear drive our communities apart.