
The
Jewish
Educator
Journal

ANTISEMITISM IN OUR TIME

How can we prepare &
how do we respond?

Spring 2019

ANTISEMITISM IN OUR TIME: How Can We prepare and how do we respond?

THE INTERSECTION OF RACISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM: THE “HOOK”

by Cherie Brown

The work on fighting anti-Semitism cannot move forward effectively without understanding how anti-Semitism intersects with racism, dividing Jews from our natural allies. In this article, this dynamic is explained with several concrete examples.

TEACHING ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE DIASPORA IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

by Bonni Goldberg

As educators, it is our responsibility to teach our students about anti-Semitism, so students learn how to recognize and disrupt it. The author presents three teaching entry points to empower students to understand and address modern day anti-Semitism in the Diaspora and recommends educators create communities of practice to gain more knowledge and refine lesson plans.

PRAY WITH YOUR FEET, LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART: A SOCIAL WORK APPROACH TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE AND ANTI-SEMITISM

by Eli Horowitz

Often, conversations about race and identity can be difficult. Past negative experiences discussing these topics can make sure conversations taboo. Jewish educators, must be able to address these topics in a safe and inclusive way. This article provides a variety of social work tools and best practices for having effective conversations, with a specific focus on race and anti-Semitism.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR: A PROJECT TO PREVENT ANTI-SEMITISM

by Heidi Rabinowitz

The Association of Jewish Libraries has created “Love Your Neighbor,” a series of booklists for youth that aims to stop anti-Semitism before it starts by exposing non-Jewish readers to the beauty of Judaism through literature. This article explores the background and purpose of the project and includes 52 recommended titles for young readers.

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

by Ilyse Muser Shainbrown

The article focuses on why it is so important to teach about the Holocaust and how to successfully start the conversations with children.

ANTI-SEMITISM VS. SHOAH RESISTANCE: COUNTERING SLANDER WITH TRUTH

by Arthur Shostak

Anti-Semites allege Jews went as “sheep to the slaughter” throughout the Shoah, when in fact there was both militant and non-militant resistance. Teachers can refute the slander, and thereby defang it, even while bolstering confidence in our innate altruistic desire to help one another.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

FINDING THE LINE BETWEEN PREPARATION AND FEAR-MONGERING: ANTI-SEMITISM AND JEWISH TEENS

by Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath

Due to the uptick in anti-Semitic incidents nation-wide, and particularly on college campuses, it has become a priority of the Jewish community to prepare teens to face these sentiments when they attend universities. This paper shares best practices for finding a balance between preparation and fear-mongering when it comes to speaking to Jewish high school students about anti-Semitism on college campuses. Its goal is to provide educators with ideas and best practices for engaging with Jewish adolescents on this topic.

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM: A RESOURCE FROM PJ LIBRARY

PJ Library has put together a short list of links and resources that parents may find helpful in discussions on anti-Semitism with their children.

The Intersection of Racism and Anti-Semitism: The “Hook”

by Cherie Brown

Ideally, Jews and other peoples targeted by racism would be natural allies. There have been many historic moments of cooperation between Jews and different groups targeted by racism, particularly people of African heritage. Over time, Black gentiles and Jews, particularly in the United States, have come to recognize that they have many experiences of oppression that link their peoples in a common struggle for social justice.

But there also have been too many moments of mistrust and division between Jewish people and Black African-heritage people — on both personal and political levels. One way to look at the difficulties over the years between Black gentiles and white Ashkenazi Jews is to examine the intersection of racism and anti-Semitism. It can sometimes be talked about as a “hook.”

Jews (white Ashkenazi Jews, in particular) are sometimes scared and panicked as a result of a long history of betrayal and abandonment. This panic has left them, in certain circumstances, wanting to take charge of a situation, exert strong leadership, and even urgently interrupt or take over if it looks to them as if something could go wrong. These behaviors are a result of the history of anti-Jewish oppression, when things going wrong could mean imminent death. However, when these behaviors are acted out in relationships with Black African-heritage people, it is racism.

And that is the “hook”: Jewish panic can lead to acting out racist behavior, and the response to the racist behavior, in turn, can lead to abandoning a Jew, which is anti-Semitism.

Black people have learned over a long history of oppression that when white people get scared, Black people’s lives can be in danger. In the United States, for example, many states have what are called “stand your ground” laws. Under these laws, if a white person is afraid of a Black person, their fear may be considered a justifiable defense for shooting and killing the Black person. As a result, Black people may understandably want to run far away from any white person who is acting out in panic and fear. And yet, running away or abandoning a white Ashkenazi Jewish person because they show their fear is also anti-Semitism.

That is the “hook”: Jewish panic can lead to acting out racist behavior, and the response to the racist behavior, in turn, can lead to abandoning a Jew, which is anti-Semitism.

Here are some examples of the “hook,” where people are caught in the interplay of racism and anti-Semitism:

- A Jewish activist and a Vietnamese director of an advocacy organization are working together to improve the lives of domestic workers. The Vietnamese director fails to meet agreed-upon deadlines. The Jewish activist panics about the possible impact of the

Cherie Brown is the Executive Director of the National Coalition Building Institute. She has led hundreds of workshops on Anti-Semitism and racism for Jews and for non-Jews. She recently launched “Jews and Allies United to End Anti-Semitism,” a project in 19 cities worldwide where Jews and non-Jews are working together in teams to fight anti-Semitism. She is the co-author of a pamphlet, *Anti-Semitism: Why is it Everyone’s Concern*.
nabiinc@aol.com

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

delays and becomes impatient with her colleague, exhibiting racism. The director testily pushes back at the Jewish activist, blaming her for her panic, exhibiting anti-Semitism.

- Several Jewish students at a Midwestern University were distraught when they learned that the organizers of a rally in support of Palestinian rights scheduled the event on the Jewish religious holiday of *Rosh Hashanah*. The Jewish students shared their upset with the rally organizers, but they were oblivious to the racism coming across in their strident, urgent, and demanding tones. The organizers of the rally pushed back at the Jewish students, saying, “This isn’t about you! Don’t tell us when we can or cannot hold a rally!” This response was unaware anti-Semitism. The organizers failed to recognize the legitimate concerns of the Jewish students. By scheduling the rally on *Rosh Hashanah*, the organizers were excluding Jewish students who would otherwise want to participate in the event. The racism of the Jewish students elicited a response of anti-Semitism.
- A Jewish leader in a national organization became troubled

by the unaware anti-Semitism expressed by Black colleagues in a panel discussion. It took the Jewish leader three months to summon the courage to approach one of her Black colleagues to discuss her concerns. When she did so, her Black colleague became upset with her, noting that waiting so long to raise these concerns was racist. The Black colleague felt that the Jewish leader had left her “high and dry” with her anti-Semitism “showing.” The Black leader, however, focused solely on condemning her Jewish colleague for waiting so long, without recognizing how scared her Jewish colleague was to even raise the issue of anti-Semitism. Both the racism and the anti-Semitism need to be acknowledged.

By understanding this intersection of racism and anti-Semitism, white Ashkenazi Jews and People of Color — and people of Black African heritage, in particular — can keep from getting caught in the “hook.” With this greater clarity, they can reach for a stronger alliance.

Teaching about Anti-Semitism in the Diaspora in Twenty-First Century

by Bonni Goldberg

As Jewish educators, we want empowered Jewish people who fulfill their destiny as Jews. It is our job (and a calling for many) to help our students be informed, brave, compassionate, and resilient in the face of reality: Anti-Semitism is as old as Judaism. Throughout history, there have been times when powerful people had the goal of annihilating the Jewish people.

Many of us are afraid or forbidden to bring this to the attention of our students. The belief is that it will frighten them, prompt them to reject their Jewish identity, or encourage them to believe there is something wrong with Jews.

The theory goes that instilling a pride in and love of Judaism and Israel will root our students deeply enough in their Jewish identification that they will value it, maintain it, and pass it on, no matter the anti-Semitism they encounter in their time.

While this hoped-for response is successful with certain people, it fails with many more. Consider the number of Jews who don't embrace their Jewish identity or worse, feel they were tricked or brainwashed by their Jewish education. And in all cases, the strategy does nothing to give students the tools and the time to develop ways to contribute to an

...Jewish panic can lead to acting out racist behavior, and the response to the racist behavior, in turn, can lead to abandoning a Jew, which is anti-Semitism.

important aspect of *Tikkun Olam*: disrupting oppression and promoting equality. Nor does it help our students challenge anti-Semitism.

Failing to address the topic of Anti-Semitism head-on is ineffective and potentially detrimental. There are productive pedagogical strategies to approach the topic and methods such as nurturing communities of practice to further develop and customize these strategies for our students.

In a perfect world, we begin at the beginning, by explaining to students the historical reality of uninterrupted Anti-Semitism. But it is not a perfect world, and some argue the history is too harmful to expose to young children. The question of age-appropriateness is beyond this piece.

Instead, here are three possible entry points from which a Jewish educator can choose, based on personal comfort and your students. Each entry point is comprised of a series of choices in the form of what-if questions. I prefer the form to imperatives, because I think the former invites greater imagination and creativity into the process.

Bonni Goldberg, M.A., is an author and Jewish educator. She served as the Oregon director of The Florence Melton School of Adult Learning and has taught at various Jewish day schools in Portland, OR, and Baltimore, MD. She has presented at NewCAJE. She writes for both adults and children on Jewish subjects that include identity and ritual.
www.bonni.goldberg.com
bonnigoldberg@gmail.com

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

I leave the answers to develop *Chavruta*-style, also known in the non-Jewish world as communities of practice — in this case, self-created groups of Jewish educators that support one another in learning more on the topic and developing and implementing lessons — because we will need many perspectives, options, and answers to be successful in this endeavor.

ANTI-SEMITISM: HISTORICAL FACT AND REALITY FOR JEWS IN EVERY GENERATION

Perhaps pointing out the fact of consistent Anti-Semitism feels too close to normalizing it. But perhaps evading this fact makes us culpable.

- What if we approach Anti-Semitism as a fact, the way we approach the oppression of African-Americans and Indigenous people of America as a fact — as the reality that Jews are one of many oppressed peoples?
- What if, as educators, we use our best techniques to teach our students how to see the reality of Anti-Semitism through a lens of curiosity and educated speculation on the reasons for it?
- What if we explain to our students that the more minds and perspectives we have from multiple generations exploring Anti-Semitism, the better chance we have of disrupting it and possibly providing useful insights for other oppressed peoples in the world?

ASSIMILATION AS BOTH PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

I don't know about you, but I grew up in the Diaspora hearing that assimilation was both the single reason why Jews would disappear as a people and the only reason we hadn't already disappeared as a people.

- What if we start by acknowledging that America is a Christian country and culture, rather than referring to what isn't Jewish as secular?
- What if we unpack the reasons for assimilation with our students?
- What if we examine why and how assimilation works and why and how it doesn't?
- What if we help our students express — in words, images, objects, movement — how assimilation shapes their Jewish identity for better and worse? (Nina Woldin's excellent example¹)

ANTI-SEMITISM 2.0

We can explore our own oppression by borrowing — but not appropriating — concepts, tools, and language developed to address other forms of oppression.

- What if we teach our students about micro-aggressions, help them recognize Jewish ones, and explore what to do about them using methods like the Theatre of the Oppressed's Forum Theatre?
- What if we teach our students to understand intersectionality, to recognize their own intersectionality (economically, as white Jews, Jews of color, etc.), and to have Jewish conversations that acknowledge different experiences of Jewish identity?
- What if we, along with our students, explore how to be an ally to other oppressed people without compromising our Jewish identity or ignoring micro-aggressions from some members of the oppressed groups we support?

Maybe you don't know what the terms micro-aggression and intersectionality mean. Maybe you don't know how to incorporate the questions presented here into your teaching. If either of those situations — or any other — prevents you from giving your students skills to address anti-Semitism, how will you feel? Instead, I invite you to start a community of practice.

If you're new to this method, here is a simple way to begin: Invite one or two colleagues to participate with you. Agree to meet at least three times. Each time, have a different person pick one concept discussed in this article (or any other) and tell the group ahead of time. One week before the meeting, the person who picked the concept will send the others one article or video to review before the meeting. To choose, put the subject in a search engine and spend about ten minutes looking over each of the first three links that come up in the search to decide which one to send. This will lay the foundation for a fruitful discussion that can start with members talking about the material and move on to helping each other develop curriculum or ways to advocate for taking a bolder approach to teaching about anti-Semitism in your organization.

Glossing or avoiding the depth and breadth of Anti-Semitism and how to deal with it is inadequate and arguably harmful. I implore you to use your classrooms to address it. Otherwise, no matter how many Jews there are, Anti-Semitism wins.

Endnotes

1. Woldin, Nina. "Funny, You Don't Look Jewish: *Hanukah* and Jewish Identity," in *The Jewish Educator*, *Hanukah* 2018.

Pray with your Feet, Listen with Your Heart: A Social Work Approach to Conversations about Race and Anti-Semitism

by Eli Horowitz

Jewish educators work with a wide variety of teens, from many diverse backgrounds with political views just as diverse. Our conversations as educators, whether in religious schools, youth groups, day schools, or camps, need to create space for a wide intersection of differing opinions, while serving the overall purposes of the participants' gaining understanding about their own views on sensitive topics, perspective on the views of others, and understanding of how their position relates to Jewish culture, history, and religion.

What can we do to meaningfully engage on topics so divisive they have become almost taboo? How do we make sure our participants leave the room more thoughtful and informed about their own views? How do we make sure they make space in their hearts for others in their community who feel their views and values are not reflected in the larger community? What follows are some of what I have found to be the most helpful tips, tricks, and techniques of the social work trade that I have learned through several years of practice with Jewish youth, as well as exposure to participatory community-building techniques created for use with rural communities. Additionally, you'll find a link to a two-page lesson plan for

Whatever our opinions, as Jewish educators, we must be able to present topics relevant today, that draw real, emotional responses, often as varied as the number of people in the room.

ELI HOROWITZ, MSW, is the Regional Teen Engagement Director for Eastern Canada Region USY (ECRUSY) and Tzafon USY. With experience in different movements over his years as a professional Jewish educator, he brings a unique view and a pluralistic approach to Judaism that is inclusive, holistic, and passionate. With time as a Ramah wilderness educator, a seasoned Hebrew school and *Bar Mitzvah* tutoring teacher, and now through increasing Jewish organizations' capacity in underserved, rural Jewish communities, Eli has the background to speak about cutting edge best-practices in Experiential Jewish Education.
ehorowitz@uscj.org

addressing race, social justice, Israel, allyship, and radical hospitality as a Jewish value. I hope you find this useful, or at least, that it makes you smile.

Whether the conversation is about one difficult topic or another, from Israeli politics to our current political climate, as Jewish educators, we face the increasingly difficult task of presenting an authentically Jewish lens through which to interpret these events to our teens or our communities, while appreciating that many of those to whom we present may not share our personal opinions. Whatever our opinions, as Jewish educators, we must be able to present topics relevant today, that draw real, emotional responses, often as varied as the number of people in the room. And we must do all that without our own views, or disagreements between participants on opposite sides of the political spectrum, derailing the conversation and causing us to feel ever more mired in inescapable division.

STEP 1: MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE AT

People who are coming to your sessions might not be in the same state of mind or care about the same things that you do. Jumping right into content or opinions about controversial topics without understanding where everyone in the room is "at" is a recipe for disaster. "At" means a whole lot more than people's views on a subject. Were they tired when they walked in? How was their week? What struggles are they dealing with on a day-

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

to-day basis? Once we have a baseline for the group, we can make the content specific to the session.

Often, people's minds are focused on the most-talked-about or impactful stories that have happened recently. Making sure content is up-to-date and dealing with issues that people are still actively talking about outside the session will help grab attention and spark meaningful discussion.

It is important to know a little bit about who we are presenting to before we are in the room and, ideally, before finalizing the content of the session.

- Make the content specific to the session, and up-to-date on current events.
- Know your audience.
- Don't push your own agenda.

STEP 2: LISTEN FIRST, AND LEAVE THE TITLE AT THE DOOR

Often, we are constrained by our role as the educator, where we think we have to impart knowledge, by the thought that we have to have the answers to the questions that we propose, and that our answers to the questions we pose in a session matter.

*"So professional methods and values set up a trap. Status, promotion, and power come less from direct contact with the confusing complexity of people, families, communities, livelihoods [...] and more from isolation which permits safe and sophisticated analysis of statistics."*¹

As educators, we are often front-and-center in our interactions with our community, but often not. We need to remember as we present our views from behind our advanced degrees and from our offices – far from the people with whom we are working – that they are the experts in their own experiences with race and other difficult issues. As educators, it is our job to facilitate a conversation, not to be authorities or arbiters of right and wrong within that conversation.

To sum this section up, you can be an incredible professional, you can have the coolest title, you might have gone to the best program for the subject that you work in, and you can still fail to do the work you need done because you neglect to treat everyone you meet through the lens of an "I-Thou" relationship. As Martin Buber explains, in an "I-Thou" relationship, we treat the person with whom we are interacting according to their status as a living being endowed with a rich internal life granted by the divine that entitles them to human dignity. An "I-It" relationship is one in which we are the ultimate subject, and the presence of the other person is regarded merely as a means to whatever

end we happen to be pursuing (professional or otherwise).² Level of education should not affect your interactions with your participants. It does not matter that we have expertise if we don't treat every person we meet, especially the least powerful around, with respect.

STEP 3: BE UPFRONT ABOUT YOUR VIEWS

Part of learning to facilitate is getting used to people challenging your ability to facilitate and your authority to guide a conversation. In the context of difficult conversations about issues close to someone's heart, the facilitator runs the risk of alienating participants by insisting that they (the participants) remain somehow untainted by the impacts of societal issues that are socialized into all of us, that he or she (the facilitator) is unaffected by current events, or that that he or she (the facilitator) is dispassionate and uninvested in the issues being discussed. If it didn't matter to you (the facilitator), you wouldn't have written about it or be teaching about it. Communicate your views when productive. Self-disclosure is warranted only if it advances the conversation and helps those participating gain a greater understanding of their own views and awareness of the spectrum of views within their communities. It should always be done after thorough consideration for the power dynamics at play when a facilitator expresses an opinion one way or another on a topic. Remember that while it's ideal to be informative in our work, our job as educators is to teach people *how* to think, not *what* to think.

STEP 4: USE YOUR OARS

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a very useful, evidence-based technique taught to social work students learning the basics of counseling. This is a set of techniques that is used to help clients determine their underlying feelings and beliefs on complicated issues affecting their lives. OARS is an acronym used to describe one of the primary tools used in MI that I have found especially helpful in framing conversations I facilitate on difficult topics. OARS stands for:

- ♦ Open-ended questions
- ♦ Affirmations
- ♦ Reflections
- ♦ Summaries

Open Ended Questions: Is this an open-ended question? What would an open-ended question look like? Which do you think is more helpful in sparking conversation? Why?

Affirmations: Look for the strengths of the answers participants give you. Find how they add something to conversation, and don't be afraid to recognize people for those contributions.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

Reflections: Sometimes these conversations can be complex, and it can help people to hear important points repeated and emphasized.

Summaries: Every so often in the conversation, taking moments to pause, to reflect and draw together points that illustrate a broader theme, can help highlight consensus and contention among the group and set the expectations for the next portion of the discussion.

STEP 5: GROUND IT IN JEWISH VALUES

Whether it is telling the story of one of your personal Jewish heroes or someone giving an example of exactly what not to do if you want to be a *mensch*, case studies of current events are a great way to spark lively, educational conversations. Remember that the primary purposes for having these conversations are to strengthen Jewish identity and promote healing.

STEP 6: TALK ABOUT IT, TALK ABOUT IT, TALK ABOUT IT

Continue to have the conversation. Don't stop because it is hard. When healing a wound, you often must cause pain before you can truly say healing has begun. Agreeing to

disagree is fine, but agreeing to ignore each other is what can lead to *sinat chinam* (senseless hatred and undue division) within the Jewish community. We must keep the conversation going, because even when we've disagreed, and insulted each other, and condemned each other's views, we still heard each other's views, recorded them in the texts of our traditions, and spent time together. We have to live as a community, and we have to talk to one another.

An example of this format for discussions can be found by viewing this lesson plan:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-JV7AM6Js-BKMeqWpV_Lzoi6tFn-Sl2z1Q37tZOMdTE/edit?usp=sharing

Endnotes:

1. Chambers, Robert. "Us and Them: Finding a New Paradigm for Professionals in Sustainable Development," in *Community and Sustainable Development* (Diane Warbuton, Ed.). London: Earthscan Publications, 1998.
2. Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1937.

Love Your Neighbor: A Project to Prevent Anti-Semitism

by Heidi Rabinowitz

The anti-Semitic act of domestic terrorism at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018 shocked and horrified all of us, but my librarian friends and I responded in the way that librarians always do: We tried to find books that could help us deal with the tragedy. We wanted to be prepared if our patrons needed books to help them cope.

At first, we thought of recommending books on anti-Semitism itself, but, as synagogue librarians, we felt that it was burdensome to ask traumatized Jewish readers to delve further into hate. We decided to take a more proactive route: Instead of trying to understand what had happened, we would try to prevent its happening again. We would reach out to readers with books that model hope, brotherhood, and peace. We felt that this would comfort the patrons in our libraries. Upon further reflection, we realized that non-Jewish readers needed these books even more. After all, research shows that reading builds empathy, so if we could provide “window books” to help others understand Judaism, we could prevent today’s children from growing up to become haters.

...research shows that reading builds empathy, so if we could provide “window books” to help others understand Judaism, we could prevent today’s children from growing up to become haters.

Working through the Association of Jewish Libraries, a professional organization for librarians who work with Judaic collections, we built a team of nine knowledgeable kidlit nerds. These women brought their expertise to the table to name picture books and chapter books that had the right mix of Jewish authenticity, positive message, and great storytelling. Our original idea was to compile a list of children’s books in which Jewish and non-Jewish characters are friends, to show the ideal that we strive for. However, when Vice President Pence was joined at a rally by a Messianic “rabbi,” we realized that we needed to educate as well as inspire. We divided our massive brainstorm into four lists on the themes of alliance (“Standing Up for Each Other”), Jewish religious life (“Synagogues, Clergy and Jewish Ritual”), integration (“The American Jewish Experience”), and our original idea of bridge-building (“Let’s Be Friends”). In the end, we had fifty-two titles to recommend. We wrote up annotations and included links to the IndieBound website so that readers could easily purchase the titles online from independent booksellers. We created PDFs of the booklists to make them easy to print for distribution or to bring to a bookstore or library. Finally, we set to work to promote the series within our professional niche as well as beyond our own Jewish bubble.

The four “Love Your Neighbor” lists were published beginning in November 2018 on the Association of Jewish Libraries website, and we got excellent news coverage on the Jewish web in places such as *Tablet Magazine* and *The Jewish Journal*. The secular kidlit world gave us attention as well, with coverage in book review publications such as *The Horn Book* and

Heidi Rabinowitz is the Library Director at Feldman Children’s Library and Howard Computer Lab at Congregation B’nai Israel of Boca Raton, Florida. She hosts The Book of Life Podcast (bookoflifepodcast.com), an online audio program about Jewish books, music, film and web. She is Past President of the Association of Jewish Libraries, and she led the Love Your Neighbor taskforce for ALL.
Heidi.Rabinowitz@cbiboca.org.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

School Library Journal. To expand our reach, the committee created a template to make it easy for anyone to share the list with their local public library. The template can easily be adapted for use with local schools, churches, mosques, interfaith groups, and other community organizations that care about children and character education. Many organizations were very pleased to be contacted; for instance, the leadership at my local system at Palm Beach County Library in Florida sent this enthusiastic response:

"If it's okay with you, I'd like to do the following:

1. See which books the PBCLS currently owns and create a bibliography with those books.
2. Take a look at the books that we don't own and see which are available for us to purchase through our distributor.
3. I'll request that a web/social media story be posted linking the bibliography and giving credit to AJL and "Love Your Neighbor." Also, since this is Jewish Book Month, posting this seems appropriate."

We at AJL are not alone in thinking that kidlit can make a difference. This is the basis for the "We Need Diverse Books" movement: The idea that children need to see themselves in books and need to learn about others through books. In October 2018, *School Library Journal* published "Can Diverse Books Save Us? In a Divided World, Librarians Are on a Mission," which showed a demand for non-Christian books, among other kinds of desirable "authentic character portrayals." In January 2019, the American Library Association proclaimed the importance of representation by adding three ethnic affiliate awards to their prestigious Youth Media Awards press conference (the "Oscars" of the kidlit world): the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, the American Indian Youth Literature Award, and the Association of Jewish Libraries' Sydney Taylor Book Award for the best in Jewish children's literature.

The time is right for Jewish children's literature to be shared with readers of all backgrounds. Jewish publishing is booming with more titles than ever, and the wider world is showing a growing interest in reading across ethnic borders. At the same time, white supremacy and anti-Semitism are on the rise, making the need ever more urgent to educate non-Jews about Jewish life. Dear reader, please join the Association of Jewish Libraries in promoting the "Love Your Neighbor" series and other Jewish books both within and beyond your Jewish educational setting. Share on social media, share with colleagues, and please share with your local community (feel free to use or adapt our template if you wish). We know that books read in childhood are powerful. You can help us chip away at anti-Semitism, one book at a time.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR: AJL RECOMMENDS JEWISH BOOKS FOR ALL READERS

LIST 1: STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER

PICTURE BOOKS

The Golden Rule

by Ilene Cooper, art by Gabi Swiatkowska
Abrams, ages 4-8

This book is a gentle reminder of a timeless rule for parent and child: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. A boy and his grandfather discuss the rule's universality and how to put it into practice.

Hannah's Way

by Linda Glaser, art by Adam Gustavson
Kar-Ben, ages 4-8

After Papa loses his job during the Depression, Hannah's family moves to rural Minnesota, where she is the only Jewish child in her class. When her teacher tries to arrange carpools for a Saturday class picnic, Hannah is upset. Her Jewish family is observant, and she knows she cannot ride on the Sabbath. What will she do? A lovely story of friendship and community.

Emma's Poem: The Voice of the Statue of Liberty

by Linda Glaser, art by Claire A. Nivola
Houghton Mifflin, ages 4-8

In 1883, Jewish Emma Lazarus, deeply moved by an influx of immigrants from eastern Europe, wrote a sonnet that gave a voice to the Statue of Liberty. The statue, thanks to Emma's poem, came to define us as a nation that welcomes immigrants. A true story.

Never Say a Mean Word Again: A Tale from Medieval Spain

by Jacqueline Jules, art by Durga Yael Bernhard
Wisdom Tales Press, ages 4-8

Inspired by a powerful legend of conflict resolution, *Never Say a Mean Word Again* is the compelling story of a boy who is given permission to punish an enemy. A surprising twist shows how an enemy can become a friend.

As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom

by Richard Michelson, art by Raul Colon
Knopf, ages 6-9

Here is the story of two icons for social justice, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, how they formed a remarkable friendship, and turned their personal experiences of discrimination into a message of love and equality for all.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

The Whispering Town

by Jennifer Elvgren, art by Fabio Santomauro
Kar-Ben, ages 7-11

The dramatic story of neighbors in a small Danish fishing village who, during the Holocaust, shelter a Jewish family waiting to be ferried to safety in Sweden. Worried about their safety, friends devise a clever and unusual plan for their safe passage to the harbor. Based on a true story.

CHAPTER BOOKS

Vive La Paris

by Esme Raji Codell
Hyperion, ages 9-12

Paris has come for piano lessons, not chopped liver sandwiches or French lessons or free advice. But when old Mrs. Rosen, who is Jewish, gives her a little bit more than she can handle, it might be just what Paris needs to understand the bully in her brother's life...and the bullies of the world.

Refugee

by Alan Gratz
Scholastic, ages 9-13

A Jewish boy in 1930s Nazi Germany, a Cuban girl in 1994, a Syrian boy in 2015 — all three go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

The Inquisitor's Tale, or,

The Three Magical Children and Their Holy Dog

by Adam Gidwitz, art by Hatem Aly
Dutton, ages 9-15

France, 1242. Three children: a Christian peasant girl, a Moorish boy raised as a monk, and a Jewish boy. On the run to escape prejudice and persecution and save precious and holy texts from being burned, their quest drives them forward to a final showdown.

The Hired Girl

by Laura Amy Schlitz
Candlewick, ages 10-14

Fourteen-year-old Joan's 1911 journey from the muck of the chicken coop to the comforts of a Jewish society household in Baltimore takes readers on an exploration of feminism and housework; religion and literature; love and loyalty; cats, hats, and bunions. Readers should be aware that *The Hired Girl* has engendered some controversy. On the one hand, the quality of writing and storytelling was recognized with conferral of the National Jewish Book Award, the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, and AJL's Sydney Taylor Book Award. At the same time, it has been criticized for reinforcing stereotypes

of Native Americans. Please take advantage of this teachable moment when introducing the book to young readers.

Lauren Yanofsky Hates the Holocaust

by Leanne Lieberman
Orca, ages 13-18

Jewish teen Lauren is sick of Holocaust memorials. But when she sees some of her friends — including Jesse, a cute boy she likes — playing Nazi war games, she is faced with a terrible choice: betray her friends or betray her heritage.

Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba

by Margarita Engle
Henry Holt, ages 12 to adult

Daniel has escaped Nazi Germany with nothing but a desperate dream that he might one day find his parents again. But that golden land called New York has turned away the ship full of refugees, and Daniel finds himself in Cuba. The young refugee befriends a local girl with some painful secrets of her own. Yet even in Cuba, the Nazi darkness is never far away.

LIST 2: SYNAGOGUES, CLERGY & JEWISH RITUAL

PICTURE BOOKS

The Bedtime Sh'ma: A Good Night Book

by Sarah Gershman, illustrated by Kristina Swarner
EKS Publishing, ages 3-6

This beautifully illustrated adaptation of a traditional good night blessing is a wonderful introduction to one of the oldest and most fundamental of Jewish prayers.

Bubbe's Belated Bat Mitzvah

by Isabel Pinson, illustrated by Valeria Cis
Kar-Ben, ages 4-8

When Naomi convinces her 95-year-old great-grandmother that it's not too late to participate in Jewish communal ritual by becoming a *Bat Mitzvah*, all the cousins pitch in to help *Bubbe* (Grandma) study with the rabbi and celebrate her big day at the synagogue. Based on a true story.

Drop by Drop: A Story of Rabbi Akiva

by Jacqueline Jules, illustrated by Yevgenia Nayberg
Kar-Ben, ages 5-8

Second-century sage Rabbi Akiva learned to read at the age of 40 with the encouragement of his wife, and went on to become a great scholar. This is an inspirational tale of perseverance and loyalty.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

In God's Hands

by Lawrence Kushner and Gary Schmidt illustrated by Matthew J. Baek

Jewish Lights, ages 5-8

The rich man's hands bake the bread and place it in the synagogue, and the poor man's hands receive the bread. But it's God's hands that created the connection between them. Based on a traditional folk tale.

New Year at the Pier: A Rosh Hashanah Story

by April Halprin Wayland, illustrated by Stephane Jorisich Dial, ages 5-8

Izzy's favorite part of *Rosh Hashanah* is *Tashlich*, a joyous ceremony in which people apologize for the mistakes they made in the previous year and thus clean the slate as the New Year begins. The rabbi and cantor accompany their congregation outdoors to symbolically toss their sins into the water.

How It's Made: Torah Scroll

by Allison Ofanansky, photographs by Eliyahu Alpern Apples & Honey Press, ages 6-9

More than 100 full-color photographs and interviews give a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at scribes, artists, and craftspeople who work with parchment and gallnut ink to hand-create *Torah* scrolls, Judaism's holiest text. The newest book in the series is *How It's Made: Hanukkah Menorah*.

What You Will See Inside a Synagogue

by Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman and Dr. Ron Wolfson, photographs by Bill Aron, Skylight Paths, ages 6-10

Full-page photos and informative descriptions explain what happens in a synagogue, the ritual objects used, and the roles played by clergy. This comprehensive primer makes understanding this aspect of Judaism easy.

Regina Persisted: An Untold Story

by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, illustrated by Margeaux Lucas Apples & Honey Press, ages 8-12

In 1935, after years of hard work and struggle, Regina Jonas became the first woman ever ordained as a rabbi. Her story inspires us to pursue our dreams and to persist even in the face of great challenges.

CHAPTER BOOKS

Wise and Not So Wise: Ten Tales from the Rabbis

by Phillis Gershator

The Jewish Publication Society, ages 7-11

These folktales use the teachings of ancient rabbinic sages to answer questions and teach moral lessons, using humor, wonder, and magic.

All Three Stooges

by Erica S. Perl Knopf, ages 10-13

Middle schooler Noah deals with the suicide of a beloved adult, the estrangement of his best friend, and his upcoming *Bar Mitzvah* all at the same time. A kindly rabbi and supportive Hebrew School help him learn to cope in a genuine and even humorous way.

Confessions of a Closet Catholic

by Sarah Darer Littman Dutton, ages 10-13

Justine's family gives her confusing messages about how to be Jewish, so she sets out on an exploration of Catholicism, Judaism, and the meaning of religion. When *Bubbe* (Grandma) has a stroke, Justine worries that God is punishing her for breaking the rules, but frank discussions with a priest and a rabbi, as well as with *Bubbe*, finally set her on the road to finding her Jewish spiritual self.

Tough Questions Jews Ask

by Rabbi Ed Feinstein

Jewish Lights, ages 11+

With insight and wisdom, and without pretending to have all the answers, Rabbi Feinstein encourages young people to make sense of the Jewish tradition by wrestling with what we don't understand. He respectfully and humorously tackles questions like "Why does God let bad things happen?" and "What is the meaning of life?"

Playing with Matches

by Suri Rosen

ECW Press, ages 12-18

In this hip and funny Orthodox Jewish story, 16-year-old Raina accidentally gets swept into the secret role of matchmaker in her close-knit Toronto community. Readers will be vastly entertained while learning a lot about Jewish marriage traditions.

Strange Relations

by Sonia Levitin

Knopf, ages 12-18

Teenage Marne visits her uncle, a Chasidic rabbi. His Orthodox practices are foreign to Marne, who was raised in a more liberal Jewish tradition. As she settles into her newfound family's daily routine, she begins to think about spirituality, identity, and finding a place in the world in a way she never has before.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

LIST 3: THE AMERICAN JEWISH EXPERIENCE

PICTURE BOOKS

Hanukkah at Valley Forge

by Stephen Krensky, illustrated by Greg Harlin
Dutton, ages 5-10

A soldier tells George Washington the miraculous story of how a ragtag army of Jewish soldiers defeated a much larger force of powerful Greeks, providing just the kind of inspiration the General needs. Based on a true story.

The Legend of Freedom Hill

by Linda Jacobs Altman, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright Lee & Low, ages 6-9

During the California Gold Rush, Rosabel, an African-American Christian girl, and Sophie, a white Jewish girl, team up and search for gold to buy Rosabel's mother her freedom from a slave catcher who returns escaped slaves to their owners

The Yankee at the Seder

by Elka Weber, illustrated by Adam Gustavson, Tricycle Press, ages 7-10

A Jewish Yankee soldier joins a Southern family's Passover meal, showing how common values can overcome even the most divisive differences. Gathered around the seder table, the group discusses what it means to be free — a subject as relevant today as it was during the War between the States and during the Exodus. Based on a true story.

Brave Girl: Clara and the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909

by Michelle Markel, illustrated by Melissa Sweet
Balzer + Bray, ages 5-9

Clara Lemlich, a young Jewish immigrant, led the largest strike of women workers in U.S. history to protest mistreatment and terrible working conditions.

God Bless America:

The Story of an Immigrant Named Irving Berlin

by Adah Nuchi, illustrated by Rob Polivka
Hyperion, ages 4-9

This is the true tale of how a Jewish former refugee gave America one of its most celebrated patriotic songs.

Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman

by Marc Tyler Nobleman, illustrated by Ross MacDonald
Knopf, ages 8-12

Cleveland Jewish teens Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created the all-American character of Superman for comic books during the Depression. This picture book biography mixes comic panels with fascinating facts.

Big Sam: A Rosh Hashanah Tall Tale

by Eric A. Kimmel, illustrated by Jim Starr
Apples & Honey, ages 4-8

A new Jewish folk hero, Big Sam, joins the likes of Paul Bunyan for a tall tale that incorporates the American landscape into a story of fixing your mistakes and protecting the environment.

Fascinating: The Life of Leonard Nimoy

by Richard Michelson, illustrated by Edel Rodriguez
Knopf, ages 7-10

A moving biography of the late Leonard Nimoy, the Jewish actor who played the iconic Mr. Spock on "Star Trek," whose story exemplifies the American experience and the power of pursuing your dreams.

A Poem for Peter: The Story of Ezra Jack Keats and the Creation of The Snowy Day

by Andrea Davis Pinkney,
illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher
Viking, ages 7-10

In lovely verse, Pinkney dives into the life and work of Jewish author Ezra Jack Keats, focusing on his classic picture book *The Snowy Day* and his creation of the African-American main character, Peter.

I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark

by Debbie Levy, illustrated by Elizabeth Baddeley
Simon & Schuster, ages 4-10

Jewish Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's life story is told through the lens of her many famous dissents, or disagreements.

CHAPTER BOOKS

All-of-a-Kind Family

by Sydney Taylor
Yearling, ages 8-12

This first book in a classic series lovingly depicts a turn-of-the-century Jewish family on the Lower East Side, experiencing universal American institutions like the public library, the Fourth of July, and Coney Island alongside their unique religious practices.

Viva, Rose!

by Susan Krawitz
Holiday House, ages 8-14

Rose and her family are Russian Jewish immigrants living in El Paso, TX, in the early 1900s. Rose's brother Abraham runs away to join Pancho Villa's army, and her sisterly rescue attempt goes awry in this exciting novel based on the author's family history.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

Dreidels on the Brain

by Joel Ben Izzy
Dial, ages 10-14

In 1971, Joel, a dorky 12-year-old Jewish Californian, aspires to be a magician. His tumultuous *Hanukkah* is the worst and best of times in this heartwarming story.

This Is Just a Test

by Wendy Wan-Long Shang and Madelyn Rosenberg,
Scholastic Press, ages 9-13

It's 1983, and David's got worries: his impending Bar Mitzvah, his constantly competing Chinese and Jewish grandmothers, the cute girl who makes him nervous, and his popular new friend, who dislikes David's longtime best friend — plus, it's the height of the Cold War, and nuclear annihilation could hit at any second.

When Hurricane Katrina Hit Home

by Gail Langer Karwoski, illustrated by Julia Marshall
The History Press, 8-12 years

White Jewish Chazz and African-American non-Jewish Lyric share courage and compassion as they help each other make it through the chaos in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Queen of Likes

by Hillary Homzie
Aladdin, ages 9-13

Jewish 7th grader Karma is a social media celebrity until her parents confiscate her phone. She struggles to learn how to live unplugged in this timely and funny novel.

LIST 4: LET'S BE FRIENDS

PICTURE BOOKS

Chik Chak Shabbat

by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Krysten Brooker
Candlewick, ages 4-8

Jewish Goldie is too sick to make *Shabbat cholent* (Sabbath stew) so her multicultural neighbors pitch in and save the day. Recipe included.

A Hat for Mrs. Goldman: A Story About Knitting and Love

by Michelle Edwards, illustrated by G. Brian Karas
Schwartz & Wade, ages 4-8

Mrs. Goldman (Jewish) is so busy knitting for everyone in the neighborhood that she neglects herself. Little Sophia (Latina and non-Jewish) learns to knit just so she can keep her friend's head warm. Knitting pattern included.

A Moon for Moe and Mo

by Jane Breskin Zalben, illustrated by Mehrdokht Amini
Charlesbridge, ages 4-8

Moses Feldman (Jewish) lives at one end of Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, while Mohammed Hassan (Muslim) lives at the other. One day, they meet at the market while shopping with their mothers. A friendship is born, and the boys bring their families together to share *rugelach* and date cookies in the park as they make a wish for peace.

The Sundown Kid: A Southwestern Shabbat

by Barbara Bietz, illustrated by John Kanzler
August House, ages 4-8

A Jewish family is lonely in their new home on the Western frontier until they invite the non-Jewish sheriff, blacksmith, and storekeeper's families to come over and share a delicious dinner of chicken soup.

Across the Alley

by Richard Michelson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis
Putnam, ages 5-8

Abe (white Jewish) and Willie (African-American non-Jewish) are best friends at night, when they lean out their bedroom windows to talk, play catch, and share music. When their secret comes out, their families proudly support both boys, despite mid-century social prejudices.

The Trees of the Dancing Goats

written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco
Simon & Schuster, ages 5-8

A Jewish family discovers that their Christian neighbors have scarlet fever and can't prepare for Christmas. They cheer their friends with surprise trees, decorated with the wooden animals Grampa had carved for *Hanukkah* presents. See also Polacco's tales of Jewish/Gentile friendship in *Mrs. Katz and Tush* and *Tikvah Means Hope*.

CHAPTER BOOKS

Paper Chains

by Elaine Vickers, illustrated by Sara Not
HarperCollins, ages 8-12

Jewish Ana's family is adjusting to life without dad while her best friend Katie, who's Christian, deals with health issues and curiosity about her birth parents. An endearing story of the power and comfort of friendship.

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster

by Jonathan Auxier

Abrams, ages 9-14

Warm-hearted historical fantasy brings us a non-Jewish chimney sweeping girl in Victorian London and her *golem*, a magical giant from Jewish folklore created to protect the underdog... and to be her friend.

Armstrong & Charlie

by Steven B. Frank

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, ages 10-14

1970s school desegregation brings together a white Jewish and an African-American non-Jewish boy, who despite their initial distrust end up as true friends. A heartfelt and funny book.

Lucky Broken Girl

by Ruth Behar

Penguin/Nancy Paulsen, ages 10+

Cuban-Jewish immigrant Ruthie is adjusting to life in the U.S. when she ends up in a body cast after a car crash. Bedridden, she relies on connections with Belgian, Indian, and Mexican friends and teachers, and her newfound love of art. Based on the author's experiences.

READY FOR MORE JEWISH BOOKS? VISIT THESE WEBSITES!

SydneyTaylorBookAwards.org

The best Jewish children's books of the year, preschool through teens

Tabletmag.com/tag/childrens-books

Jewish children's book news and reviews from Tablet Magazine

BookofLifePodcast.com

Interviews with authors, illustrators, and publishers of Jewish books for kids and adults

Jewishbookcouncil.org/books/reading-lists

The Jewish Book Council's adult and children's reading lists

The Love Your Neighbor taskforce included Barbara Bietz, Kathy Bloomfield, Elissa Gershowitz, Marjorie Ingall, Rachel Kamin, Susan Kusel, Chava Pinchuck, Heidi Rabinowitz, and Lisa Silverman. *The Love Your Neighbor* lists are reproduced here by permission of the Association of Jewish Libraries.

Teaching Children About the Holocaust

by Ilyse Muser Shainbrown

Similar to many mothers (maybe many fathers as well), I have always tended to shelter my children from the horrors that exist in the world. Yet, as an educator, a historian, and a Holocaust and genocide expert, I will tell anyone about the multitude of books they should read; the abundance of articles they need to sift through; and the programs, museums, and speaking engagements they should attend to learn about and be as well-versed on the subject as possible. These two personas of mine have, at times, come in conflict with one another.

As my children have grown, I am pleased with myself that the side of me that is Holocaust expert has oftentimes won out over the protective mother side of me. My own children and, by association, many of their friends, are extremely knowledgeable about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism and aren't at all afraid to broach the subject, dig deeper, and learn more. And as I tell them often – with the Holocaust, there is always more to learn.

The Holocaust is an issue that many parents do not want to discuss with their children. In my role as the Director of Holocaust Education for Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, I have met with frequent pushback from parents, teachers, and administrators. But this is 2019, and we live in a world where acts of anti-Semitism are rising. We live in a world in which there is not just violence against Jews in the Middle East, but there also are attacks against Jews in Paris, London, and a multitude of other European cities. This is 2019, and we

Our Jewish children are going to be the last generation to have met Holocaust survivors; sadly though, they are not going to be the last ones to meet Holocaust deniers and anti-Semites.

live in a nation in which Nazis openly march in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia, and 11 Jews are murdered in a Pittsburgh synagogue simply for worshipping on Shabbat. We live in a world of anti-Semitism.

And so, while we may want to shield our children and keep from them the horrors of the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust – this is purely making the matter far worse. Our Jewish children are going to be the last generation to have met Holocaust survivors; sadly though, they are not going to be the last ones to meet Holocaust deniers and anti-Semites. I encourage you not to shy away from it; use it as a way to teach open-mindedness and respect for all.

I am acutely aware that this is not and never will be a simple topic to teach. When tackling this, I often stop and remind myself that there was never a time that I was “introduced to the Holocaust.” It was just something I simply always knew about. It was ever-present in my life, even though I was not the child or grandchild of survivors. When starting to educate your children at a young age, here are some points that I encourage.

Ilyse Muser Shainbrown is the Director of Holocaust Education and Newark Initiatives at the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ. Her work focuses on the best and most constructive way to teach the next generation about the Holocaust.
ishainbrown@jfedgmw.org

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

If possible, raise the issue yourself: Do not wait for children to start asking about the Holocaust. If they hear about the Holocaust somewhere else, you may have to unwind some information and work backwards. Here's how to bring it up with them:

- On *Yom HaShoah*, light a *yahrtzeit* candle and gently provide an explanation of why you are lighting this candle.
- Tie the Holocaust into a discussion about another holiday that surrounds Jewish persecution, be it *Hanukah*, *Purim*, or *Passover*. Be honest with children; it was not smooth sailing once the Jews left Egypt.
- Use the number six million (and five million others), but also stress the fact that there were many who did survive and many of those survivors went on to build incredible lives. And if you know any survivors or children or grandchildren of survivors, tell young people about them and their stories.

If children start asking on their own about the Holocaust, here are some tips on how to answer their questions:

- Do not lie. It's very important for children to understand that this is something horrible that did happen. You can certainly make them feel safe, but do not deny what took place.
- Guide their questions toward the points above and let them know that you want to talk to them about the Holocaust.

- Know that it is okay to say there are points of the Holocaust that they do not need to know yet, depending on their age, but that as they get older, you will teach them and guide them further.
- If asked directly about how the Nazis killed their victims, tell them that there were many ways that the Nazis enacted the murder of 11 million people and leave it at that for the time being.

I encourage you to make use of books and films to help with education, but make sure that they are age-appropriate and current. There are so many resources out there to help with this. Reach out to your own local Holocaust resource centers or, if need be, look nationally or even globally. The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City; the United States Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Washington, D.C.; and Yad Vashem in Israel are all excellent resources. As Jewish educators and parents, we need to teach our youth about the Holocaust in a way that doesn't frighten them. In almost 25 years, we will be at the 100-year anniversary of the end of the Holocaust. It's up to us to determine whether this next generation will see the Holocaust as a blip in history that is often overlooked or if they will deeply understand it as the atrocity that it was and ensure that it never happens again. Let's choose correctly.

Anti-Semitism vs. Shoah Resistance: Countering Slander with Truth

by Arthur Shostak

Teachers cannot do enough to build firewalls between their students and loathsome anti-Semitic representations of Jewry, especially now that social media speeds the circulation and vastly expands the scope of pernicious material.

Prime among malevolent anti-Semitic misrepresentations is the notion that, throughout the *Shoah*, six million Jews went passively to their death, much as if “sheep to the slaughter.” This lie can undermine the self-esteem of gullible young Jews and exacerbate the disrespect of gullible non-Jews, even as it egregiously misrepresents the actual 1933-1945 experience of European Jewry.

Teachers, to their credit, have much with which to refute this perfidious Sheep/Slaughter Slander. Specifically, middle and/or high school teachers can draw on two extensive bodies of reputable academic material. Best-known is what can be called the Hurt Story, as it salutes Jewish “strike back” militancy, the very antithesis of abject and passive behavior.

Validated data offers “chapter and verse” regarding many ghetto uprisings, the existence of a resistance underground in every Nazi camp of which we have record, attempts at mass escapes from Nazi camps, and the considerable toll taken on the Third Reich by forest guerrilla groups. Incredibly brave men and women in these violent resistance efforts knew

Two-of-the-three stories ... can provide an effective firewall against, and also a persuasive refutation of the Sheep/Slaughter Slander, one of the most vicious of all anti-Semitic assaults.

the odds of success were slim, but concluded that the ethical and strategic worth of their tactics overrode the risk.

Since 2000, teachers have been able to ask the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation (JPEF) for free downloads of high-quality documentary films, lesson plans, study guides, and other proven educational aids (www.jewishpartisans.org) with which to rebut the Sheep/Slaughter Slander. Likewise, similar aids can be had from such major educational organizations as Echoes & Reflections (www.echoesandreflections.org) and also Facing History and Ourselves (info@facinghistory.org).

Less well-known, though no less valuable for refuting the Sheep/Slaughter Slander, is the Help Story. It focuses on life-risking non-militant resistance, a type of high-risk behavior. Jewish Care Sharers carefully hid from sight throughout the *Shoah* (see www.stealthaltruism.com). It calls to mind a guideline prescribed in *Pikot Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers): “In a place where there are no men, strive to be a human being.”¹

In 24 countries under Nazi occupation, hundreds of ghettos, and thousands of camps (concentration, slave labor, etc.), certain Jewish victims secretly engaged in caring acts to aid the survival of strangers and kin alike. Stealth was necessary because SS officers

Arthur Shostak is a Holocaust Scholar who attends Temp[e] Israel in Alameda, CA. He taught college sociology courses for 43 years (1961-2003); authored or edited 34 books; and has spoken about the *Shoah* in Australia, Israel, New Zealand, and South Africa (see www.stealthaltruism.com). arthurshostak@gmail.com

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

fiercely punished Jews who violated SS orders against the *Untermensch* (sub-humans) helping one another.

To be sure, in the Nazi camps there were shooting walls and torture cells. But there were also secret smuggling systems by which Care Sharers could secure life-saving food from bribed jackboots (camp slang for guards) and sympathetic gentile civilian co-workers. There were desperate Jewish informers who betrayed others to curry favor with the Gestapo and the SS. But there also were others who dared to prop up weak comrades during incredibly long mass assemblies, a violation of strict rules that could have cost supporters their own lives. There were merciless work assignments that killed exhausted prisoners. But there also were men and women who, at risk of their own lives, would secretly substitute for those too ill to survive another day at their slave labor job.

Jewish Care Sharers were a special breed, and their memory warms the soul. For example, Agi Rubin, in her 2006 memoir, recalls that during a Death March she became delirious and began to hallucinate from the effects of exhaustion, starvation, and the recent loss of blood drained from her for battlefield transfusions to German troops: "One of the soldiers was about to shoot me for wandering toward him out of line. Someone pulled me back and shoved a piece of sugar in my mouth. Somehow I gained energy. They hid me in the line [of marchers], and we went on walking."² Later, Agi and two friends wound up desperately supporting each other – "While three walked, one slept, being dragged along by the others. We took turns, walking and sleeping."³

Survivor Ruth Kluger explains that "in a rat hole, where charity is the least likely virtue, where humans bare their teeth ... [even there in] the perverse environment of Auschwitz, absolute goodness was a possibility, like a leap of faith, beyond the humdrum chain of cause and effect."⁴

Yale Professor Nicholas Christakis contends in his 2019 book, *Blueprint*, that it is time we brought the bright side of our biological heritage forward. He believes humans are transcendentally good – that we're genetically wired for it, thanks to a process of natural selection that has favored people prone to constructive friendships, teaching, love.⁵ Contemporary youngsters are eager to have just such ideas brought forward in school classes ... and the Help Story is much to the point. (See *Light from the Darkness: A Ritual for Holocaust Remembrance*, by Deborah Fripp and Violet Neff Helms⁶).

Not coincidentally, the Holocaust continues to challenge us "to remember it in new ways that remain meaningful for a new generation ..."⁷ Accordingly, teachers can draw on

survivor memoirs for new examples of Care Sharer behavior. Over 10,000 such books are available in English, many as rewarding as the outstanding works of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel. Especially noteworthy are paperbacks published by Valentine Mitchell and also by The Azrieli Foundation, details of which can be found online. (See also my 2017 book, *Stealth Altruism: Forbidden Care as Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust*⁸)

Survivor memoirs beckon with an honest mix of the Horror Story (crimes committed by perpetrators against victims), the Hurt Story (blowback by victims against perpetrators), and the Help Story (efforts by victims to aid one another), an inseparable trilogy that keeps faith with ghetto and camp realities. Two-of-the-three stories – Hurt and Help – can provide an effective firewall against, and also a persuasive refutation of the Sheep/Slaughter Slander, one of the most vicious of all anti-Semitic assaults.

Better still, teachers who draw on the two stories indirectly "teach" as well about ethical choice-making *in extremis*, much as is expected of us by core Judaic values. (See www.teachtheshoah.org/#optin). For as the late Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis maintained, our effort to memorialize the Shoah is best understood as "a sacred act that elicits a double mandate – to expose the depth of evil and to raise goodness from the dust of amnesia."⁹

Endnotes:

1. *Pirke Avot*, 2:6.
2. Rubin, Agi and Henry Greenspan. *Reflections: Auschwitz, Memory, and a Life Recreated*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2006, p. 50.
3. Op. Cit. page 52.
4. Kluger, Ruth. *Still Alike: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*. New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2001, p. 109.
5. Bruni, Frank. March 20, 2019. "A 'Disgusting' Yale Professor Moves On." *New York Times*, p. A27.
6. Fripp, Deborah and Violet Neff Helms. *Light from the Darkness: A Ritual for Holocaust Remembrance*. Millburn, NJ: Behrman House, 2017.
7. Rees, Laurence. *Auschwitz: A New History*. New York: Public Affairs, 2005, p. 42.
8. Shostak, Arthur B. *Stealth Altruism: Forbidden Care as Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust*. Milton Keynes Park, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2017.
9. Schulweis, Rabbi Harold M. *For Those Who Can't Believe*. New York: New York: Harper Collins, 1994, p. 157.

Finding the Line Between Preparation and Fear-Mongering: anti-Semitism and Jewish Teens

by Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath

“I want to be prepared for what’s coming on college campus.”

“I know that there’s a lot of anti-Semitism out there, and when I get to college I want to know how to combat it.”

“I heard there’s a BDS presence at the school I’m going to, and I want to learn how to respond.”

These are just a few of the responses that I get every year when I ask the latest crop of high school students why they registered for the fellowship that I lead on Israel engagement. While the program is advertised as a chance to be empowered to tell one’s own Israel story; to grow as a leader; and to explore Israel’s past, present, and future, the underlying theme that flows throughout is less of a proactive exploration of Israel and

But when it comes to the programs, the fellowships, and the platforms for engagement, there needs to be a shift from the language of preparation for a scary reality and future to a proactive curriculum that embraces key questions and issues.

more of a reaction to the pervasive concerns about anti-Semitism that Jewish high school students are feeling today. This reality, where Jewish high school students are citing concerns about anti-Semitism as the catalyst for their participation in Jewish leadership opportunities, is one that is cause for deep inquiry as to how these adolescents are being educated, how they perceive the world, and the steps that educators can take to develop more nuanced ways of connecting with our young students.

The evidence exists when it comes to anti-Semitism facts on the ground today. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in 2017, there was a 60% uptick in anti-Semitic incidents from the previous year, the largest single-year increase on record.¹ Coupled with the anecdotal evidence seen on social media and in local communities, with stories coming from outlets from the left and the right, the undercurrent of concern about anti-Semitic sentiments has come above-ground, with parents, educators, and the teens themselves becoming anxious about how Jewish students will be received in a world that is increasingly polarized. With questions of anti-Semitism coming from platforms as diverse as the Women’s March, Facebook, and the halls of Congress, all with the accompanying chorus of social media outcry, it stands to reason that high school students are feeling overwhelmed by the world that they are about to inherit.

As a Jewish community, we have a collective tendency toward teaching and preparation.

Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath is the Senior Program Officer for Jewish Life and Learning at the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, where she oversees teen engagement and adult Jewish learning. Samantha is an alumna of the University of Pittsburgh (BA), the Jewish Theological Seminary (MA), and the Pardes Experiential Educators Institute. She is currently pursuing her EdD in Educational Leadership at Gratz College, where her doctoral research focuses on Jewish identity development in post-*B’nai Mitzvah* teens. svinokor@gmail.com

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

An example as ubiquitous as the Passover *seder*, the most widely participated-in Jewish ritual each year, demonstrates this proclivity. According to the 2013 Pew Research survey of Jewish Americans, 70% of American Jews report having participated in a Passover *seder* in the past year.² The *seder*, which itself is a pedagogic exercise meant to teach the participants, is regularly preceded by a plethora of model and mock *seders*, meant to teach the rituals and stories that are then adapted and implemented by each family. So, it's no wonder that our collective instinct when it comes to a new challenge, in this case that of preparing our teens for the cold realities of independence and adulthood in a world that is increasingly plagued with anti-Semitism, is to model, to teach, and to learn. It is the instinct that has led to the abundance of training and advocacy programs for high school students, each one with the same core goal: To buoy high school students with enough Jewish content, pride, and networks so that if and when they face backlash, they are ready to respond.

While this lofty and legitimate goal is a starting point, in order to ultimately empower teens, there needs to be a slightly more nuanced approach. While responding to anti-Semitism is important and critical, in order to meaningfully do so, teens and emerging adults need to have a comprehensive understanding of their Jewish journeys, stories, and "whys." To be clear, this is not to say that anti-Semitism cannot be countered with swift facts and hard answers. But when it comes to the programs, the fellowships, and the platforms for engagement, there needs to be a shift from the language of preparation for a scary reality and future to a proactive curriculum that embraces key questions and issues.

BEST PRACTICES FOR TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM

1. Create a space where they are able to share their fears, anxieties, and lack thereof – if teens are existentially concerned about anti-Semitism, part of the role of Jewish educators is to provide an environment for them to process those feelings. At the same time, if this is not something that teens are actively concerned about, we do not need to foster fears or exclusively focus on the specter of hate.

Not every conversation about Jewish life on campus needs to be about threats or intimidation, and not every session on Israel should be tinged with the need to defend. Jewish life is thriving – let's explore that.

2. anti-Semitism should not be a partisan issue – unfortunately, there are sources of Anti-Semitic sentiment on both the left and the right of the political spectrum. Acknowledging this reality is critical for having nuanced, holistic conversations about anti-Semitism. Wherever teens are politically, there may be parts of movement-wide messaging and branding that concern them. We need to be able to explore those feelings without discounting their broader allegiances and beliefs.
3. Don't laugh it off – it's uncomfortable for high school students to admit to being bullied, or victimized, or in any way made to feel different. So sometimes they'll sugarcoat the realities that they're facing, or laugh about them, or otherwise downplay the real fears and issues that they are dealing with. Don't laugh along with them. Instead, be the space where they can share the existential issues that they may not yet have words for, but instinctively know are there.
4. Foster an affinity for Judaism and a connection with Jewish Peoplehood – just as not every conversation about Israel should be about the conflict and not every history lesson about the Holocaust, not every session about Jewish life on campus should be about preparing for the alleged onslaught of anti-Semitism. Instead, focus on the strengths of Jewish life and identity, so that teens will be more inclined to seek out community, wherever they end up.

Endnotes:

1. "Anti-Semitic Incidents Surged Nearly 60% in 2017, According to New ADL Report." www.adl.org, 27 Feb. 2018, www.adl.org/news/press-releases/anti-semitic-incidents-surged-nearly-60-in-2017-according-to-new-adl-report
2. "A Portrait of Jewish Americans." Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., (October 1, 2013). <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

How to Talk to Children About Anti-Semitism: A Resource from PJ Library



Let's face it, no one wants to have to tell their child that there are nasty people in the world who will try to hurt them just for being themselves. We raise our kids to be good people, *mensch*s, to help and accept others, and to do the best they can to treat those around them fairly and with respect.

Research shows that one of the best ways that we can help prepare our children to cope with discrimination and intolerance is by being open about it. When we show our children that these topics, though tough, are not taboo, we let them know that they can always come to us with questions or thoughts about [life's scary situations](#).

Part of growing up and getting older will mean that our kids come face to face with some of the ugliness of the world. Given recent events, like a rise in [anti-Semitic acts](#) and bias crimes, [a mass shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh](#) as well as [waves of bomb threats against Jewish Community Centers](#), we may have to have these conversations sooner than we'd like.

We've pulled together a short list of links and resources that parents may find helpful in discussions with their children. This can be used as a starting point along with our post,

Research shows that one of the best ways that we can help prepare our children to cope with discrimination and intolerance is by being open about it.

[How to Talk to Your Kids About Scary Situations](#) as well as [Videos to Help Talk to Kids About Violence](#).

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

Many sources recommend being direct with kids about difficult topics, while also tuning in to gauge how much your kids can handle.

The American Psychological Association (APA) stresses that for children in groups that are likely to be targets of discrimination, it's vital for parents to have ongoing, honest discussions with their children rather than shying away from the subject. The [APA also recommends](#):

- Let the discussion be ongoing.
- Keep talking. Yes, even — and especially — when it gets hard.
 - It's also ok to say "I don't know."

NOTE: This article originally appeared on the [PJ Library website](#). To learn more or enroll in PJ Library, visit [pjlibrary.org](#).

THE JEWISH EDUCATOR

- Be age-appropriate. Keep things basic. Young children especially need simple information balanced with reassurance.
- Encourage your children to ask questions.
- Help kids learn how to deal with being the potential target of discrimination.
- Develop healthy comebacks or responses to hurtful discriminatory statements. For example: "What an unkind thing to say." "Excuse me? Could you repeat that?" "I disagree with you, and here's why..."
- If you catch your child using insensitive language, use the moment as a teaching example.
- Model good behavior for your child.

MORE RESOURCES:

Resource Round-up: How to Talk to Kids About Pittsburgh via JewishBoston
Education & Outreach: Confronting Anti-Semitism via The Anti-Defamation League
Jewish Education in a Scary World via The Jewish Education Project
Talking About Tough Topics via PBS Parents

BOOKS AND STORIES CAN HELP

The Bible features many stories about the Jewish people facing oppression and persecution, especially as a minority group. The important theme in stories like Exodus, the *Purim* story, and the *Hanukkah* story, though, are that small groups of brave individuals band together to triumph over adversity. If you are looking for age-appropriate versions of these stories, you can visit our Books section, or click the links below.

- The *Hanukkah* Story for Kids Ages 5 and under
- The *Hanukkah* Story for Kids Ages 6+
- The Passover Story for Kids Ages 5 and under
- The Passover Story for Kids Ages 6+

BOOKS ABOUT OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

The characters in these stories face intolerance and discrimination, but triumph nonetheless.

- *Across the Alley*, by Richard Michelson
- *Baxter, The Pig Who Wanted to Be Kosher*, by Laurel Snyder
- *Jumping Jenny*, by Ellen Bari
- *The Legend of Freedom Hill*, by Linda Jacobs Altman
- *The Littlest Pair*, by Sylvia Rouss
- *The Mysterious Guests*, by Eric A. Kimmel
- *The Wise Shoemaker of Studena*, by Syd Lieberman

The following PJ Our Way titles deal with anti-Semitism and discrimination head-on:

- *The Time Tunnel 2: The Dreyfus Affair*, by Galia Ron-Feder-Amit
- *Penina Levine is a Hard Boiled Egg*, by Rebecca O'Connell

- *Quake!: Disaster in San Francisco, 1906*, by Gail Langer Karwoski
- *OyMG*, by Amy Fellner Dominy

BOOKS ABOUT STANDING UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT

- *A Time to Be Brave*, by Joan Betty Stuchner
- *Brave Girl*, by Michelle Markel
- *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark*, by Debbie Levy
- *Jean Laffite: The Pirate Who Saved America*, by Susan Goldman Rubin
- *Like a Maccabee*, by Barbara Bietz
- *Queen Esther Saves Her People*, by Rita Goldman Gelman

BOOKS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

While PJ Library does not send books about the Holocaust, we have compiled a list of high-quality children's books that address the subject in an age-appropriate fashion. View the list at <https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/february-2016/books-for-families-about-the-holocaust>.

As [PJ Our Way](#) is geared towards older children, ages 9-11, some of the selections do involve storylines and themes associated with the Holocaust. For older children, ready for the material, we recommend the title, [When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit](#) by Judith Kerr. You can learn more about individual titles on the [PJ Our Way Parent's Blog](#).

MORE ON THIS TOPIC FROM OTHER SOURCES

- [4 Steps for Talking to Kids About the Pittsburgh Synagogue Shootings](#) via kveller.com
- [5 Tips for Talking to Children About What Happened in Pittsburgh](#) via ADL
- [Confronting Anti-Semitism: If I Don't Respond, Who Will?](#) via Interfaithfamily.com
- [Our Kids and Anti-Semitism](#) via St. Louis Jewish Light
- [Discrimination: What it is, and How to Cope](#) via The American Psychological Association
- [Why I'm Teaching My Kids That Anti-Semitism is Not the New Normal](#) via kveller.com