



# Critical Social Justice Ideology and Antisemitism

Assessment and Strategy

White Paper

September 1, 2021



Jewish Institute for Liberal Values

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# Introduction

## Increase in antisemitism under Critical Social Justice.

If not a deliberate feature, antisemitism is a reliable consequence<sup>1</sup> of Critical Social Justice (CSJ) ideology<sup>2</sup>. CSJ, which encompasses Critical Race Theory (CRT) and other theoretical perspectives, is a specific approach<sup>3</sup> to addressing issues of discrimination due to race, sex, or other specific characteristics through the examination of power and privilege. The purpose of this White Paper is to summarize the various ways Critical Social Justice ideology fuels antisemitism and propose a set of strategies to counter it.

CSJ propagates antisemitism. Even though many of those who advance the ideology do not intend to participate in or advance antisemitism, the rapid proliferation of this ideology portends an increase in antisemitism<sup>4</sup>.

### Not held in check

While there are differing perspectives within CSJ, the more radical and anti-Jewish ideas are not being held in check and there is evidence that the more extreme versions are gaining ground and influencing public discourse<sup>5</sup>. To be clear, we are

not discounting that racism exists and needs to be addressed; rather, we are concerned about how this particular ideology is in practice enabling new forms of antisemitism.

Much more research into how CSJ propagates antisemitism is needed, as are ideas about how to counter it.

# How CSJ Fuels Antisemitism



Much more research into how CSJ propagates antisemitism is needed, as are ideas about how to counter it. We have identified seven ways in which CSJ ideology contributes to the rise of antisemitism.



## The canard of Jewish privilege

A fixed hierarchy of privilege easily lends itself to notions of Jewish privilege.



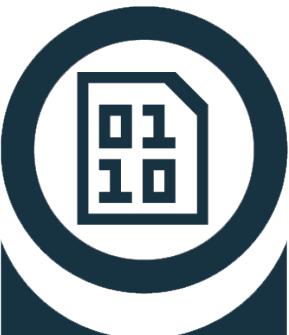
## The erasure of Jewish identity

Jews are not afforded the status of a distinct people worthy of self-determination.



## Intersectionality & Antisemitism

Multiplies a false view of “Jewish power” in the US and other Western countries.



## The Anti-Israel binary

Treats Palestinians as the perennial victims and Israel the perennial victimizer.



## Marginalizing Jews in politics

While not explicitly antisemitic, CSJ may render many Jews politically homeless.



## Jews & Equity

Jews and other economically successful minorities are deemed complicit in white supremacy.



## Undermining Enlightenment principles

Unmoored from its enlightenment values, society will become more totalitarian and hostile to Jews.

## 01

# The canard of Jewish privilege.

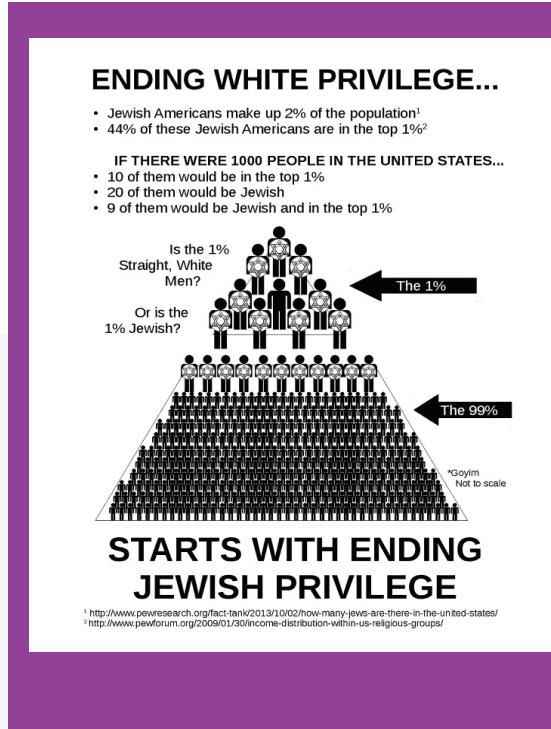
Antisemites have always promulgated the canard that Jews secretly control the levers of power. CSJ invites such antisemitic imagery by legitimizing notions of “Jewish privilege<sup>6</sup>.”



As if lifted straight out of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, some CSJ proponents resurrect the age-old stereotype of the Jew as power broker secretly running the show. Moreover, CSJ lacks the subtlety or nuance to think outside the simplistic terminology of power or power politics, so it necessarily squeezes relatively successful groups like Jewish Americans into the Procrustean bed of the oppressor class.

CSJ ideology implies that Jews comprise a self-contained cabal or lobby and doesn't take into account the innumerable differences within the Jewish community. This kind of thinking caused the hashtag [#Jewish-Privilege](#)<sup>7</sup> to trend on [Twitter last summer](#)<sup>8</sup>. Recently, [Clubhouse](#)<sup>9</sup>, another social media app, shut down several rooms after there were at least two virtual rooms dedicated to the subject of “Jewish privilege,” one of which was described as “nearly 200 people talking about how Jews control the federal reserve, Jews were behind the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and minorities are pawns for the Jews to destroy whites.”

When Haredi Jews were [victims of violent attacks](#)<sup>10</sup> in New York in 2018, a year before another spike in bloody attacks, the executive director of the Black Movement Center in Crown Heights, Mark Winston Griffith, told [The Forward](#)<sup>11</sup> that some black Americans see Judaism as “a form of almost hyper-whiteness.”



# “Ending white privilege starts with ending Jewish privilege“

Fliers claiming that “Jewish privilege” is the key to social injustice in the United States were found posted on bulletin boards on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2017. [Similar fliers<sup>17</sup>](#) were posted at the University of Colorado at Denver, Kansas State University, Princeton University and California State University at Northridge, as well as in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

02

## The erasure of Jewish identity.



### Erasive Antisemitism

Daphna Kaufman of Reut coined the term [erasive antisemitism<sup>12</sup>](#) for the designation of Ashkenazi Jews from Europe as “white.” This racialization of Jewish identity erases Jewish identity in favor of the CSJ binary of oppressed “person of color” or “white” oppressor. In this ideological framework, Jews are not afforded the status of a distinct people worthy of self-determination.

The erasure of Jewish identity also denies antisemitism its unique quality and historicity by falsely equating it with other forms of bigotry. This was seen in May 2021 when the chancellor of Rutgers University-New Brunswick issued a statement condemning an-

tisemitism, only to absurdly [retract<sup>13</sup>](#) it days later with an apology for not simultaneously condemning Islamophobia.

Fewer than two months later, the Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer at the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, April Powers, a Black Jew, was forced to resign her position after [publically condemning<sup>14</sup>](#) the rise in antisemitic attacks this year. In the fall of 2020, a Holocaust museum in Florida featured an [exhibit<sup>15</sup>](#) about racism in America, using the Holocaust to depict Black victimhood. Other commentators have [trivialized<sup>16</sup>](#) the Holocaust entirely by dismissively categorizing it as “white-on-white crime.”

## 03

# Intersectionality & Antisemitism.



(The Democratic Reformists within Fatah Movement/FaceBook)

Intersectionality is the theory that various identities interact in ways that create compounded discrimination or disadvantage, constituting an intersecting system of oppression.

Groups with “critical consciousness” have a strong incentive to stand in solidarity<sup>18</sup> and agree to designate the same groups as oppressor and oppressed.

The binary nature<sup>19</sup> of CSJ ideology, which holds that those who are presumed to be powerful are the cause of suffering of those who are presumed to be powerless, can fuel antisemitism. In Europe and North America, Jews are perceived to be an integrated part of the dominant class (“White”) and thus, a source of oppression.<sup>20</sup>

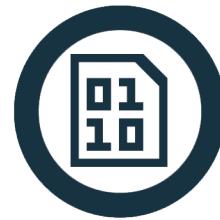
Proponents of Intersectionality often apply the concept to determine who has standing to speak, at what time, and on what topic. Jews, seen as white and oppressors, are at the

bottom of the hierarchy, which can result in Jews being silenced and their victimization ignored.

Within the “whiteness” paradigm, those Jews who are conceived of as white are definitionally (using the CSJ definition of racism) oppressors. Some CSJ proponents even argue that Jews “became” white at the expense<sup>21</sup> of and “on the backs of” other minorities. Because antisemitism is a form of bigotry, claims of antisemitism are often seen as illegitimate attempts on the part of the oppressor to “play victim.” Jews who accept a “white” identity are required to admit to being an oppressor. In order to reject the role of oppressor, Jews must claim non-white, oppressed status.

## 04

## The Anti-Israel binary.



The CSJ ideological framework serves to multiply a false and antisemitic view of “Jewish power.”<sup>22</sup>

The binary nature of CSJ ideology not only divides human beings into either the oppressor or the oppressed, it permits and even encourages violence against perceived oppressors<sup>23</sup>. This binary extends to Israel<sup>24</sup>, treating Palestinians as the perennial victims and Israel the perennial victimizer. It relies on simplistic and crude notions of the conflict between Israel and Palestinians. This was most apparent during Israel’s recent war with Hamas. In the United States, prominent progressive politicians vilified Israel<sup>25</sup> for its military response to Hamas’ rockets by attempting

to radicalized the conflict, describing it as “murdering black and brown bodies” and calling Israel an “apartheid state.” Black Lives Matter tweeted its support for “Free Palestine<sup>26</sup>,” while referring to Israel as “settler colonialists.” Predictably, the number of antisemitic incidents<sup>27</sup> both in the US and worldwide surged to alarming levels. The CSJ approach to Israel reinforces the antisemitic view that violence against Jews<sup>28</sup> across the globe is a legitimate form of protest.

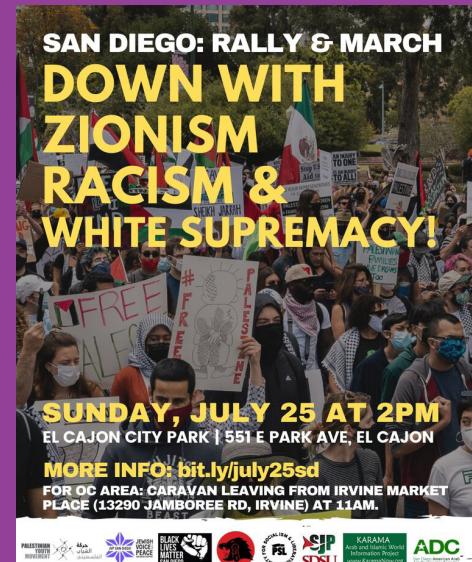


(Jewish Voices for Peace/Twitter)

Jewish Voices for Peace posted Nakba Day rally pictures on Twitter: “Though the most visible and powerful Jews may prop up Israel’s settler-colonial, apartheid regime, remember that the Jews in the streets want Palestine to be free.” -May 16, 2021

## 12 organizations found common cause to call Zionism white supremacy

In addition to the usual suspects like Palestinian Youth Movement of San Diego, Jewish Voice for Peace of San Diego, and Party for Socialism and Liberation, groups such as Black Lives Matter of San Diego and Union del Barrio lent their names to an event with this incendiary title.



(Palestinian Youth Movement /palestinianyouthmovement.com)



(Jews for Racial & Economic Justice/Twitter)

U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (L) helps light a candle at a Hanukkah celebration in 2018 at an event organized by Jews for Racial and Economic Justice in Queens, New York. Ocasio-Cortez defended fellow congressional colleagues Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan after making antisemitic statements in critiquing U.S. policy in the Middle East.

05

## Marginalizing Jews in politics.

While not intentionally or explicitly antisemitic, Critical Social Justice has rendered and may further render many Jews politically homeless.



Large majorities of Jews have historically voted for Democrats, yet the growing number of party officials, platforms, and policies supporting critical race ideologies stands to alienate a significant segment of American Jewry, especially as the connections between the ideology and antisemitism become more apparent. Inasmuch as the ascendency of the ideology also undermines Democratic support for Israel, many traditional Democratic Jewish voters may find

themselves alienated<sup>29</sup> from both an increasingly ideological Democratic party and a populist Republican party.

It has been widely documented that many younger progressive Zionists, particularly on campus, have been instructed to "check their Zionism at the door<sup>30</sup>" if they wish to participate in social justice coalitions. This is not, however, a phenomenon limited to students. Jewish LGBTQ+ activists, for example, were forced out of gay rights

parades<sup>31</sup> in both Chicago and DC for donning a rainbow flag with a Jewish star. The publicity for the 2021 Chicago "Dyke March" portrayed a woman burning both the American and Israeli flags<sup>32</sup>. If such trends continue, many American Jews might find themselves in a similar boat as British Jewry did during the rise of Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour party, when numerous British Jews felt disenfranchised and considered leaving the country.

06

## Jews &amp; Equity.



Critical Social Justice insists that the only reason there is disparity among racial and ethnic groups is white supremacy. If white supremacy is responsible for some people being held down, then it is also responsible for others being propped up.

In this framework, Jews and other economically successful minorities are deemed “conditionally white” or “white adjacent.” One “critically informed” [social-work curriculum](#)<sup>33</sup> teaches that the notion of Jews pulling themselves up by their bootstraps “is a myth.” Instead, having “become white,” Jews benefited from federal programs that allowed “Jews and other European immigrants to be recognized or rewarded.” Indeed, a revamped notion of [“equity”](#)<sup>34</sup> is already being

used to “level the playing field” by insisting that [all disparities are caused by discrimination](#)<sup>35</sup> and that underrepresented minorities must immediately replace overrepresented groups in order to achieve proportional representation. Because Jews are overrepresented in many professional and academic spheres under this radical notion of equity, Jews are considered among the worst white supremacists (“hyper-white”) and thus especially susceptible to displacement.

07

## CSJ undermines Enlightenment principles.



Jews have historically thrived in societies undergirded by Enlightenment principles of rationalism, reason, logic and debate.

Critical Social Justice is explicitly anti-Enlightenment. It delegitimizes these principles as manifestations of “white supremacy.” This serves to [stifle debate, and curtail academic freedom](#)<sup>36</sup>. Unmoored from its enlightenment values, society will become more totalitarian and hostile to Jews.

Because countering antisemitism is difficult if not impossible within the current ideological environment of CSJ, we believe we must change the environment itself.

## Countering CSJ-inspired Antisemitism.

To effectively counter CSJ-inspired antisemitism, the Jewish community must comprehend how CSJ has metastasized<sup>37</sup> and spread, and understand its roots and its applied forms.

### **CSJ emerges from theories of post-modernism in the academic world.**

The writings of Herbert Marcuse, a German scholar, have been particularly influential, such as his doctrine of “repressive tolerance”<sup>38</sup>, which holds that to realize the true goals of tolerance, society must demonstrate intolerance to the ideas of the majority and tolerance to the ideas of the minority

**This requires internal education in the Jewish/philanthropic communities.**

**We must understand how extremist groups are using CSJ ideology to fan the flames of antisemitism.**

**This requires that we gain intelligence, particularly from systematic monitoring of social media.**

**We must understand the degree to which this ideology has penetrated the popular imagination and among which segments.** There is a great deal of what social scientists call “preference falsification,” people pretending to believe (“prefer”) something they don’t.

**Public opinion research is required in order to learn what proportion of Jews oppose this ideology but are unwilling to publicly reveal their true views.**

We believe it is impossible to contain the antisemitism emerging from CSJ without rejecting the imposition of CSJ.

As long as CSJ grows, so too will antisemitism, and combating antisemitism will be like a game of whack-a-mole. While we applaud those who try to address specific acts of antisemitism from within the CSJ framework, ultimately we believe such efforts will fail to contain a problem with such deep ideological roots. We therefore propose more general strategies.

**Embolden supporters of liberal values.** There is a new field emerging opposing the imposition of CSJ<sup>39</sup>. A central strategy must be to embolden those who quietly oppose CSJ to speak out publicly. Most critics of the ideology hold back for fear of losing their jobs and social status. Only when a critical mass of people come forward will the ideology be exposed as representing the views of a small percentage of the population and will institutions rethink their ideological commitments.

**Deter the imposition of CSJ.** Many companies, governments, and nonprofits have embraced CSJ diversity initiatives, in part to reduce legal liability in discrimination lawsuits. Those concerned about the spread of CSJ should initiate lawsuits to fight “diversity” initiatives that engage in coercive or discriminatory conduct. This should shift the balance of risks over time and force institutions to take a **more well-rounded approach to diversity**. Such an initiative may, in turn, weaken the hold of this ideology in society and reduce its resultant antisemitism.

**Organize the Field.** There is a new field emerging opposing the imposition of CSJ. David Bernstein, the Founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, is also the founder of the newly minted Institute for Liberal Values (ILV), a consortium of organizations representing different constituencies devoted to fighting against the imposition of ideology and for liberalism. Stay tuned for announcements of ILV activities. New, smaller organizations are popping up everyday. National organizations like FAIR play an important role. We are just beginning! Such a network will be increasingly crucial in strengthening the liberal project in America and keeping dangerous ideologies in check.

**Create a New Centrist Coalition.** For many years, the Jewish community has focused on engaging ethnic and religious communities (e.g. young Black activists) it deems at risk of antisemitism and an-

ti-Israelism. We have believed that engaging “fence sitters”<sup>40</sup> on issues like BDS would effectively check efforts to delegitimize Israel. As CSJ has grown and further radicalized the left on Israel, these efforts have increasingly fallen short.

The mainstream Jewish community should shift gears and place the lion’s share of its efforts on building a new coalition on the center-left to center-right spectrum, which includes such groups as Asian Americans, Latino business leaders, African American reformers (as opposed to BLM activists), etc. Our bigger battle is not over individual BDS initiatives on campus or at food co-ops, but against the promulgation of a dangerous ideology that gives rise to antisemitism and anti-Israelism.

**Conduct focused advocacy campaigns aimed at specific institutions.** There are numerous institutions that need change, from corporations that have embraced coercive DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) practices to universities that lack viewpoint diversity to public and private schools to the accrediting bodies for private schools. Groups that support liberal values need to take stock of these institutions, develop specific strategies, and coordinate efforts. As we move forward, we will learn what works and what doesn’t, and develop a community of best practices that allows us to succeed and bring change over time.

**Advance alternative models of diversity.** It is not enough to oppose CSJ-inspired “diversity.” We must build alternative models of diversity that incorporate viewpoint diversity alongside representational diversity and to otherwise advance an inclusive vision of Western societies that allows for open discourse, addresses the legacy of racism and bigotry, and reduces disparities over time. Such a vision would highlight what unites us rather than what divides us.

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# About

## Jewish Institute for Liberal Values

### JILV.ORG

**JILV was founded in May 2021 to counter the imposition of illiberal ideology in the Jewish world.**

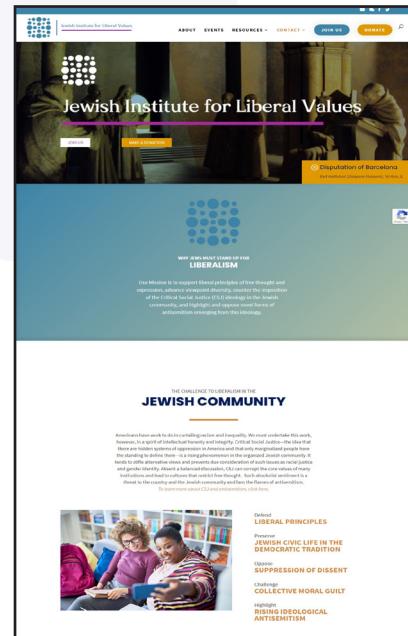
Our Mission is to support liberal principles of free thought and expression, advance viewpoint diversity, counter the imposition of the Critical Social Justice (CSJ) ideology in the Jewish community, and highlight and oppose novel forms of antisemitism emerging from this ideology.

#### Key activities for JILV

- Enable, empower, and equip Jews who support liberalism and oppose the imposition of CSJ to come forward
- Raise awareness in mainstream Jewish organizations on the complexities of social justice and encourage deliberation
- Educate the Jewish community on how CSJ fuels antisemitism
- Organize key constituencies (e.g. Rabbis, Jewish day school parents, academics, etc.) within the Jewish community to support liberal values
- Build connections and alliances with non-Jewish groups similarly opposed to CSJ and supportive of liberal values
- Issue discussion guides, articles, and videos and other educational materials

In the first four months of our existence, JILV has held five livestream events with key constituencies supporting liberal values, authored more than a dozen opinion pieces in major media outlets, released more than 20 podcasts, issued a major White Paper on CSJ and antisemitism, created a Rabbinical Council, and launched an outreach initiative to other ethnic communities on supporting liberal values and opposing antisemitism. And we are just getting started!

Please visit us at [jilv.org](http://jilv.org) or reach out to us at [info@jilv.org](mailto:info@jilv.org) to discuss how you can support this important work.





Jewish Institute for Liberal Values

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