

The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's Framework to Confront and Combat Antisemitism

While antisemitic incidents have increased nationally over the last decade, the past year marked an inflection point in the willingness of public figures and individuals to espouse antisemitic tropes. As hatred and the propagation of conspiracy theories against Jews increase, historic public and societal constraints on anti-Jewish hatred have diminished.

***This baseless venom begets violence. We have seen it firsthand.
The Jewish community is concerned — and angry. It is time to channel
our frustration into collective action.***

This moment calls upon us all to collaborate and support one another and to establish a broad alliance to address antisemitism in all its forms. Federation, our Jewish Community Foundation, and our partners, the [Jewish Community Relations Council](#) (JCRC), [Anti-Defamation League](#) (ADL), [American Jewish Committee](#) (AJC), and [Secure Community Network](#) (SCN), **are working to combat hatred and continue to secure our community for the long-term.** In March 2023, Federation's Board approved **an initial \$2 million in funding to combat antisemitism** over the next three years: an important step in a large-scale initiative.

We are grateful to the community members, organizations, and leaders working to combat destructive conspiracy theories and all bigotry and hatred. Federation is dedicated to fighting for our community's safety and security, and to partnering with all those seeking to work together in this vital effort.

We commit to:

1) Convening Jewish communal leadership to work in concert against antisemitism.

Our community is strongest when we work together. We must harness our proven capacity for collaboration, partnership, and transformational change in the face of virulent hatred of Jews.

Our approach

Federation is bringing together Jewish communal leaders — including clergy, agency executives, and lay leaders — to understand the current challenge of antisemitism and articulate a clear, collaborative response. We are providing vital additional resources to organizations including JCRC, ADL, and AJC among others to integrate and elevate our individual and collective efforts. By investing in and convening leaders across geographic, political, and other differences in common purpose, we can leverage the full strength of our vibrant Jewish ecosystem.

2) Empowering community members to address antisemitism.

To effectively combat antisemitism, every member of our community must be able to call it out whenever we see it and encourage others of all faiths and backgrounds to do the same. Federation is committed to disseminating critical tools to community members and organizations to effectively address antisemitism whenever and wherever it arises.

Our approach

Federation's response to rising antisemitism includes a multifaceted approach to building broad awareness of its impact and dangers and equipping members of our community to fight back against it.

We will continue to use **online platforms, press coverage, and social media** to publicly call out local incidents of hate and to elevate supportive, effective responses and efforts by politicians and non-Jewish communal leaders. We will hold leaders accountable for condemning and acting upon antisemitism and partner with those seeking to address hatred in all forms. In addition, Federation and JCRC partnered in early 2023 to offer a reward for information leading to the arrest and indictment of the individual responsible for two antisemitic incidents.

We will provide key resources on how **organizations, families, students, and individuals** can quickly and effectively call out and address antisemitism and hold public gatherings to educate and engage community members on the current situation and what they can do in this critical moment. This work will continue over the coming months as we and our partners develop and distribute toolkits for individuals, families, students, and organizations to effectively respond to antisemitism. Federation is also partnering with the Foundation to Combat Antisemitism on a campaign against antisemitism, elevating this crucial work on a national and local scale.

For the local professional community, Federation and our partners are available to support business leaders as they advocate for the inclusion of antisemitism as part of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging training at their places of business, and as they encourage their fellow leaders to speak out against antisemitic acts in our community.

3) Advocating for Increased Education on Antisemitism.

In late 2022 and early 2023, antisemitic graffiti and sentiments increased exponentially in local schools. At the same time, far too many people of all ages and backgrounds lack understanding of antisemitism, including its history and current manifestations. As we seek to build a broad understanding of antisemitism and reduce the prevalence of anti-Jewish attitudes and beliefs, building early and ongoing comprehension of the link between conspiracy theories and hate is crucial.

Our approach

Federation's partners JCRC, ADL, and AJC have long provided educational programs on antisemitism for students and teachers throughout our region. We are working with each organization to provide resources to help substantially scale their successful strategies, while investigating launching new methods to educate significantly more students and teachers in local public and independent schools.

An expansion of these efforts will require additional advocacy efforts later in 2023, because to work long-term these educational interventions must become embedded in the educational systems themselves.

4) Building Coalitions with Faith, Ethnic, and Other Allied Groups.

No group can or should fight bigotry alone. As our Jewish community combats antisemitic conspiracy theories and increasingly prevalent hatred, we must proactively partner with leaders across faith, ethnic, and other allied groups to speak out publicly against all forms of hatred and work collaboratively to shift mindsets. Our security is inextricably linked to the safety of all, and our shared ability to thrive is dependent on working together to create a world free of all forms of discrimination and hate. These inter-group coalitions — in good times and bad — are essential not only to combating antisemitism and other forms of prejudice, but to investing in and strengthening the Greater Washington community as a whole.

Our approach

Federation partner JCRC has led the charge in bolstering Jewish communal engagement and collaboration with fellow leaders across religious, ethnic, and other differences. As this crucial work continues, Federation's [Jewish Community Foundation](#) and the Greater Washington Community Foundation have also initiated a joint effort to bring together leaders from across the community to address anti-black racism and antisemitism. Recognizing that hate takes many forms and impacts many groups, we will also continue to publicly call out local incidents of hate of all forms across the community and increase the presence of Jewish community leaders at vigils or other public responses to all forms of hate incidents. We will also work to engage an ever-increasing number of leaders in understanding the nature of antisemitism and its current manifestations, including when attacks on Israel and Zionists veer into antisemitism, and to act against anti-Jewish hatred.

Thanks to the leadership of our partners at JCRC, ADL, AJC, synagogues, and other organizations many of these efforts have been underway for years. Today, they must be expanded. Federation will broaden our support of these crucial efforts while exploring a variety of broad and comprehensive strategies to engage the whole Jewish community in strengthening ties with leaders across faith, ethnic, and racial groups for mutual investment and support.

5) Strengthening communal security.

Every member of our community has the right to engage and participate proudly and safely in Jewish communal life. Through our security initiatives, we are [investing in and expanding security efforts across the community](#) to ensure that our communal ecosystem is well-protected.

Our goals include:

- Partnering with each institution to increase their physical security.
- Ensuring each institution has preparedness and crisis response plans in place as well as ongoing training for leadership and participants.
- Prioritizing information sharing, collaboration, and coordination with law enforcement and organizations.
- Engaging local leadership on an ongoing basis to increase awareness of and commitment to providing a safe and secure community.

Our approach

Federation brought Secure Community Network (SCN), the official safety and security organization of the North American Jewish community, to Greater Washington in 2019. Our partnership is designed to strengthen our collective security through enhanced security protocols and safety measures. Over the last several years, Federation and SCN furthered our safety and security by emphasizing emergency preparedness. Community members can encourage their synagogues, organizations, or other communal institutions to subscribe to [SCN Alert](#), and explore our growing list of [safety, security, and preparedness resources](#).

Along with our policy-focused partners, we continue pushing for increased security funding for all faith-based organizations at the local and state levels. With assistance from Federation and SCN, Greater Washington's Jewish community organizations have applied for and received 64 awards from the federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program, totaling \$7.35 million since January 2020.

We have also locally launched [LiveSecure](#), a national initiative of The Jewish Federations of North America. LiveSecure will increase our capacity to provide additional training, tools, and resources to protect those inside our Jewish community centers, synagogues, schools, senior centers, summer camps, and other centers of Jewish life. With generous donor support, we have raised nearly 60% of our goal of \$1.5 million for LiveSecure, which will be matched 50% by JFNA to bring us to a total of \$2.25 million. [Learn more about this effort](#).

6) Bolstering American Democracy.

Upholding democracy and combating antisemitism are intrinsically linked. The rule of law, free and fair elections, and a robust pluralistic system of politics have ensured that members of American society have voice in shaping our country. The credibility of these institutions and their potential to serve as tools for voice and change have been central to the success of the American Jewish community over the past century.

Today, these essential institutions are fraying and even perceived as illegitimate by many across political divides. The breakdown of confidence in democratic institutions allows conspiracy theories, including antisemitism, to grow and fester. The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington — home to the Jewish community of our nation's capital — is poised to help safeguard and bolster a vibrant American democracy now and for the long-term.

Our approach

We must work across the political divide to fight all threats to our democratic institutions. Federation is committed to confronting both the shift in American life that has led people to see those with distinct views as the enemy as well as the willingness of leaders to sacrifice democratic norms and institutions for their own political or economic benefit.

Central to this initiative is connecting our donors through our [Jewish Community Foundation](#) with one another and with the local and national thought leaders and organizations working to strengthen the democratic institutions that have made America a safe home for the Jewish community and others. We must have Jewish communal representation, advocacy, and support at the tables where these conversations are happening. Together, we'll explore models for how we can make systemic, lasting change for generations to come, within and beyond the Jewish community.

Questions or thoughts to share?

Contact us here shalomdc.org/combating-antisemitism.

