

SPEAK OUT AGAINST ANTISEMITISM IN THE WORKPLACE:

Why addressing Jewish concerns as a part of DEI is essential, now more than ever

With antisemitism rising precipitously all around the world, DEI professionals must ensure that addressing antisemitism and cultural competency on Jews and Jewish issues is part of a workplace DEI strategy.

In order to build a more inclusive workplace, DEI efforts must take into account the experiences of all employees and do so intersectionally. Otherwise, we risk failing to address the gaps and inequities that keep us from creating truly inclusive workplaces where all people can thrive. One of the areas to build upon current efforts is by incorporating antisemitism and other issues impacting Jewish employees into DEI strategies.

With events like Charlottesville or the shootings in Pittsburgh making headlines, 75% of Jews say that there is more antisemitism than there was five years ago, and 53% feel less safe, according to the Pew Research Center's Survey of Jewish Americans. ADL's 2021 Survey on Jewish American's Experiences with Antisemitism found that 63% of Jews had experienced or witnessed an antisemitic incident in the past 5 years, and that business establishments were the 4th most frequent location where antisemitic incidents take place.

WHY SHOULD A WORKPLACE DEI STRATEGY INCORPORATE ADDRESSING ANTISEMITISM AND UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF JEWISH EMPLOYEES?

- 1. DEI work is built on a belief in inclusion.** Inclusion means that every employee feels safe, welcome, embraced, and empowered in their organization. As antisemitism rises globally, Jews' perceived and real safety declines. This impacts Jews mentally on a daily basis. This is especially the case when they do not feel safe inside of workplaces, which is more likely when these workplaces do not proactively address antisemitism. All groups targeted by hate need the support of their organization to address the underlying causes of that bigotry. This is true regardless of their perceived status in a society or organization.
- 2. Jews are subjected to bias in the workplace.** Bias and discrimination against Jews is far too common. It can manifest in the workplace in myriad ways, including:
 - Microaggressions around Jewish culture or the way people look. For example, one employee telling their Jewish coworker “oh, you don't look Jewish.”
 - Tensions and hostility around geopolitical issues. For example, Jewish coworkers being held accountable, demonized, and harassed during conflagrations in the Middle East, or Jewish employees being seen as indistinguishable from Israeli.
 - Pervasive stereotypes about Jews (such as Jews having power) that go unchecked
 - Denial of advancement opportunities

- Inequitable out-of-office policies and holiday observances
 - Philosemitic remarks intended to be complimentary. For example, “give this task to David since Jews are good negotiators.”
- 3. Antisemitism can erode workplace culture and cohesion.** Allowing any kind of bias to go unchecked in the workplace, including antisemitism, will inevitably affect employees and lead to a non-inclusive work culture that normalizes bias. This results in psychological harm, unhealthy interpersonal interactions, inequitable workplace policies and procedures, diminished employee productivity, and lack of accountability across the organization.
 - 4. Stereotypes of Jews have led indirectly to Jews not being included in most DEI strategies.** Antisemitism is based on conspiracy theories about Jews being in power, which has resulted in Jews being excluded from DEI strategies despite facing growing rates of antisemitism in the workplace and beyond.
 - 5. Frequently, Jewish identity and antisemitism are misunderstood.** Jews are not simply a religious community, and antisemitism is not simply religious bigotry. Jews are an ethnic community, a people, a culture, and a religion; antisemitism is often a racialized form of bigotry. Understanding these dimensions is key to making Jews in your organization feel seen.
 - 6. Antisemitism impacts all communities.** Addressing other forms of bias while not addressing antisemitism will inevitably harm members of all marginalized groups. Since bigotry and oppression function as a system, DEI work must proceed from a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of all forms of hate. Antisemitism tends to foment and fuel other forms of bigotry and oppression.

7. Jews are a diverse and multiracial community. While there is no official count on the racial diversity of the Jewish community, [research](#) by the Jews of Color Initiative estimates that Jews of Color represent somewhere between 12% and 15% of the American Jewish population. As a result, we need an intersectional lens to address the needs of Jews of color, Jewish women, LGBTQIA+ Jews, and Jews with disabilities.

Educating yourself on antisemitism is critical for all DEI professionals, so that you can ensure that it is adequately addressed in your workplace. Whether it is through conducting training in your organization, developing employee resource groups for Jewish staff and allies, reviewing internal practices, policies, language, manuals, or updating your internal calendar with important Jewish dates, *now is the time to act*.

Support your Jewish employees through this time of rising anti-Jewish hate. Make a strong stand against antisemitism, inside your organization and beyond.