

# COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

CAJM 

A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE  
COUNCIL OF AMERICAN JEWISH MUSEUMS  
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## COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

**T**he Council of American Jewish Museums recognizes that its members are on the front lines in the fight against antisemitism. Whether through programs, exhibitions, collecting, or educational efforts, our organizations are public and symbolic centers for deterring hate and promoting diversity, understanding, and respect. Recent events compel us to confront hatred with heightened urgency and new insight, and our organizations must be prepared to lead. At the same time, we must also be prepared to respond to acts of violence in our own facilities and communities.

This two-day program will bring us together to face such topics. The sessions made possible by the Leon Levy Foundation will explore the programmatic implications of contemporary antisemitism on our work. Our sessions and trainings made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities will focus on protecting our visitors, buildings, and artifacts from acts of hate. Together we will consider new insights and approaches for facing the immediate future.

—Gabriel Goldstein & Judy Margles  
*Program Co-Chairs*

—Melissa Martens Yaverbaum  
*Executive Director*





8:45 AM | REGISTRATION WITH COFFEE & BAGELS

9 AM | **WELCOME**

9:10 AM | **MUSEUMS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HATE**

How have museums played a role in addressing longstanding prejudicial attitudes and societal trends? Where has the needle moved over the years—in ways we had hoped for and in ways we had never imagined?

10:10 AM | **IN CONVERSATION WITH MELISSA HILLER**

**Melissa Hiller**, Director of the American Jewish Museum in Pittsburgh talks with **Melissa Martens Yaverbaum** about how her museum re-defines the notion of “neighbor” and serves as a center for kindness and healing. She’ll reflect on ways her institution prepared for hate crimes even prior to October 27, 2018, how it has responded to realities since the shootings at Tree of Life Synagogue, and how it works to create new kinds of community.

11 AM | **ANTISEMITISM: HISTORY, DEFINITIONS, TERMINOLOGY**

This overview will outline key historical and contemporary dimensions of antisemitism. It will look at variances in the definitions and terminology, and will identify challenges that have special applicability for our institutions.

11:40 AM | **WILL TELLING AND RETELLING OUR STORIES IMPROVE SOCIETY?**

We have often assumed that telling and retelling stories of prejudice, hatred, and violence will make society better—that an awareness of past injustice will lead to a better present. This session will explore narrative and its potential to shift attitudes and group culture.

12:45 PM | LUNCH WITH CONVERSATION GROUPS

1:45 PM | **CASE STUDIES FROM THE FIELD**

Looking at the work within Jewish museums and like organizations, this lightning session will show how colleagues have evolved their approaches and responded to new demands and questions about antisemitism in society.

3 PM | **AS MUSEUMS, WHAT SOCIAL INFLUENCE CAN WE EXERT?**

What does the work of changing a culture of hate look like? What are the limits of influence of museums and cultural organizations? This session will consider our potential impact and social influence, and will ask how we might re-envision our work as change agents.

4 PM | **TRAINING SESSIONS**

Small groups will work with experts to learn new strategies and techniques in:

- Collecting items from conflict scenarios
- Protecting artifacts from human threats
- Lessons from community organizing



9 AM | COFFEE & PASTRIES

9:15 AM | **WELCOME**

9:20 AM | **FEATURED SPEAKER: ERIC WARD**

Eric Ward is Executive Director at Western States Center and a long-time civil rights strategist. In 1992, he documented his first white nationalist rally, and since then has been working to respond to bigoted violence. Ward emphasizes that in order to understand the threat posed by the white nationalist movement, we must come to terms with the centrality of antisemitism to white nationalist ideology.

10:15 AM | **ANTISEMITISM: NEW REALITIES**

Eric Ward and **Steve Wasserstrom** will discuss conditions and realities giving rise to American antisemitism today, and will address questions from attendees.

11:10 AM | **DISCUSSION SESSION**

All participants will work in small groups to discuss challenges they are facing in their home communities, new institutional responses, and positive outcomes.

NOON | LUNCH

1 PM | **NEW INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES**

Over the past year, Jewish organizations and museums have been implementing new measures to protect human lives. What are the realities at hand, and what are appropriate approaches for contending with them? This session will explore approaches available for increasing security and protecting facilities while still maintaining a welcoming atmosphere.

2 PM | **TRAINING SESSIONS**

Small groups will work with experts to learn new skills and strategies in:

- Situational awareness
- Exploring Homeland Security options
- Responding to vandalism
- Audacious/Safe Hospitality

3 PM | **SECURING OUR MATERIAL HERITAGE**

Jewish museums protect unique assets—historic buildings, collections, and important evidence of the past. Although many of us have taken steps to prepare for natural disasters, how can we better protect our historic resources against violence, vandalism, protest, and aggression?

4 PM | **COMMUNITY RESOURCES, COMMUNITY RESPONSES**

In the face of new threats, Jewish communities and funders have stepped up to offer assistance and response. This session will provide information on priorities and resources, and will shed light on how the culture of giving is shifting.

5 PM | **CLOSING REMARKS**