

MUSEUM INTENSIVE

NEW CONSIDERATIONS ON COLLECTING

ANTISEMITISM

COUNCIL OF AMERICAN JEWISH MUSEUMS
ONLINE SEMINAR
JANUARY 13, 20, AND 27 | NOON-3PM EST



Jewish museums have long been centers for materials that shed light on historical antisemitism. Yet as we face new waves of antisemitism and hate across communities today—what will be our role in documenting, collecting, and interpreting new evidence of antisemitism, as well as Jewish responses?

This three-part seminar is designed for Jewish museum professionals who shape museum collections or interpret them for the public. Join us in active learning sessions—classroom style—that explore difficult issues and encourage cooperative planning for the future direction of our collections. Together as museum professionals we'll explore how to better build and use collections as powerful tools for documenting our own history, understanding prejudice, and promoting diversity.

—Avi Decter & Gabriel Goldstein
Program Co-Chairs

—Melissa Martens Yaverbaum
Executive Director

Our work in this area is made possible with generous funding from the Natan Fund.



DAY ONE | THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022



01.13

12 pm EST | **WELCOME**

12:10–1 PM EST | **INTRODUCTION TO ANTISEMITISM**

This overview with **Gabriel Goldstein** will introduce our three-day program and our considerations of antisemitism and museum collections. It will discuss why and how collections are crucial tools to understand, document, and interpret historical and present-day bias and resilience—and how we can ensure that our collections matter. We'll outline key historical and contemporary dimensions of antisemitism, unpack definitions and terminology, and identify challenges and opportunities for museum collections.

1–2 PM EST | **NAVIGATING ANTISEMITISM**

What do museum professionals need to know as they face and explore contemporary antisemitism? This session will explore some of the sensitivities underlying today's discourse around antisemitism. We'll look at the importance of recording evidence, and help clarify possible roles for Jewish museums as reliable sources.

SPEAKERS:

Stacy Burdett (Former Government Relations Director for ADL and USHMM)

Lori Starr (Independent Consultant)

Jacob Wisse (Yeshiva University)

2–3 PM EST | **ANTISEMITISM AND DIVERSITY ACROSS JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

From Haredi communities to Jews of Color—this session looks at diversity across American Jewish communities, and who is particularly visible and vulnerable to antisemitism. It will look at ways that museums may have gaps in their accounts and collections, and what we can do to address antisemitism that lies outside our areas of fluency.

SPEAKERS:

Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk (Five Oaks Museum)

Jonah Boyarin (New York City Commission on Human Rights)

Kylie Unell (Rooted)

DAY TWO | THURSDAY, JANUARY 20



01.20

12–1 PM EST | **THE MATERIALITY OF EVIDENCE**

This session will consider a range of antisemitic evidence today—from graffiti, to social media, memes, propaganda, and hate speech. We'll explore national and local contexts, different points of view, and complexities inherent in collecting items that are difficult, ephemeral, or digital—as well as potential strategies to collect or use such items.

SPEAKERS:

Sol Davis (Jewish Museum of Maryland)

Zachary Levine (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Judith Margles (Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education)

Mark Mulder (Holocaust Memorial Center)

1–2 PM EST | **BRING AN OBJECT: INTERPRET ITS PAST, IMAGINE ITS FUTURE**

In partnership with Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

For this interactive session, we ask all attendees to bring along an object (or image) of an item dealing with historical or contemporary antisemitism. Presenters will analyze hate objects from their own collections and exhibitions—showing the complicated paths such objects can travel. We'll ask everyone to work together in groups to explore their own objects, as well as interpretive challenges and possibilities.

SPEAKERS:

Josh Perelman (Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History)

Maggie Radd (Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust)

Rainey Tisdale (Independent Consultant)

2–3 PM EST | **JEWISH CREATIVE RESPONSES TO ANTISEMITISM**

As Jewish museums consider contemporary antisemitism, how will Jewish creative responses play a role? How are Jewish artists responding in real time with their own voices, creating alternate narratives, and showing how it feels to be Jewish in the face of antisemitism? What role can Jewish voice, humor, and art play in these times—and in the record we leave behind?

SPEAKERS:

Laura Mandel (Jewish Arts Collaborative)

Adam McKinney (DNAWORKS)

Yosi Sargent (TaskForce)

Ami Weintraub (RAYJ Collective)

DAY THREE | THURSDAY, JANUARY 27



12–1 PM EST | **COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY HATE ACROSS CULTURES**

How do museums representing other cultures deal with objects and incidents of hate in their communities? This session will discuss considerations pertaining to culturally specific collections, and how they contend with materials of hate, prejudice, and persecution.

SPEAKERS:

John Anderies (John J. Wilcox, Jr. Archive at the William Way LGBT Community Center)

Charles Bethea (Chicago History Museum)

Theo Gonzalves (Asian Pacific American Center, Smithsonian Institution)

1–2 PM EST | **NEW PROJECTS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES—WHO OWNS THE NARRATIVE?**

As collecting institutions shift priorities and narratives to represent fuller versions of history, how are issues of narration and ownership being revisited? How are stories of persecution and prejudice established—and by whom? This session will discuss how new and difficult storylines impact museums and their collections.

SPEAKERS:

Mariruth Leftwich (Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation)

Eric Lidji (Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives, Heinz History Center)

Richard Rabinowitz (Independent Consultant)

Tara White (University of North Carolina Wilmington)

2–3 PM EST | **REVISITING THE RECORD—WHAT WILL WE LEAVE BEHIND?**

This session looks at Jewish museum collections as a whole, and revisits what role antisemitism might play in our collections moving forward. It will explore how objects relating to hatred and trauma are considered as part of Jewish narrative, what we might or might not make visible, and how we think about the value of objects.

SPEAKERS:

Michelle Margolis Chesner (Columbia University Library)

John Efron (Magnes Collection)

Jeffrey Shandler (Rutgers University)

3–3:30 PM EST | **DISCUSSION SESSION: WHAT COMES NEXT?**

CAJM and colleagues from member institutions will discuss open questions, next steps for the field, and how we can work together to assess and strategize our role in addressing antisemitism through new collection activities.