

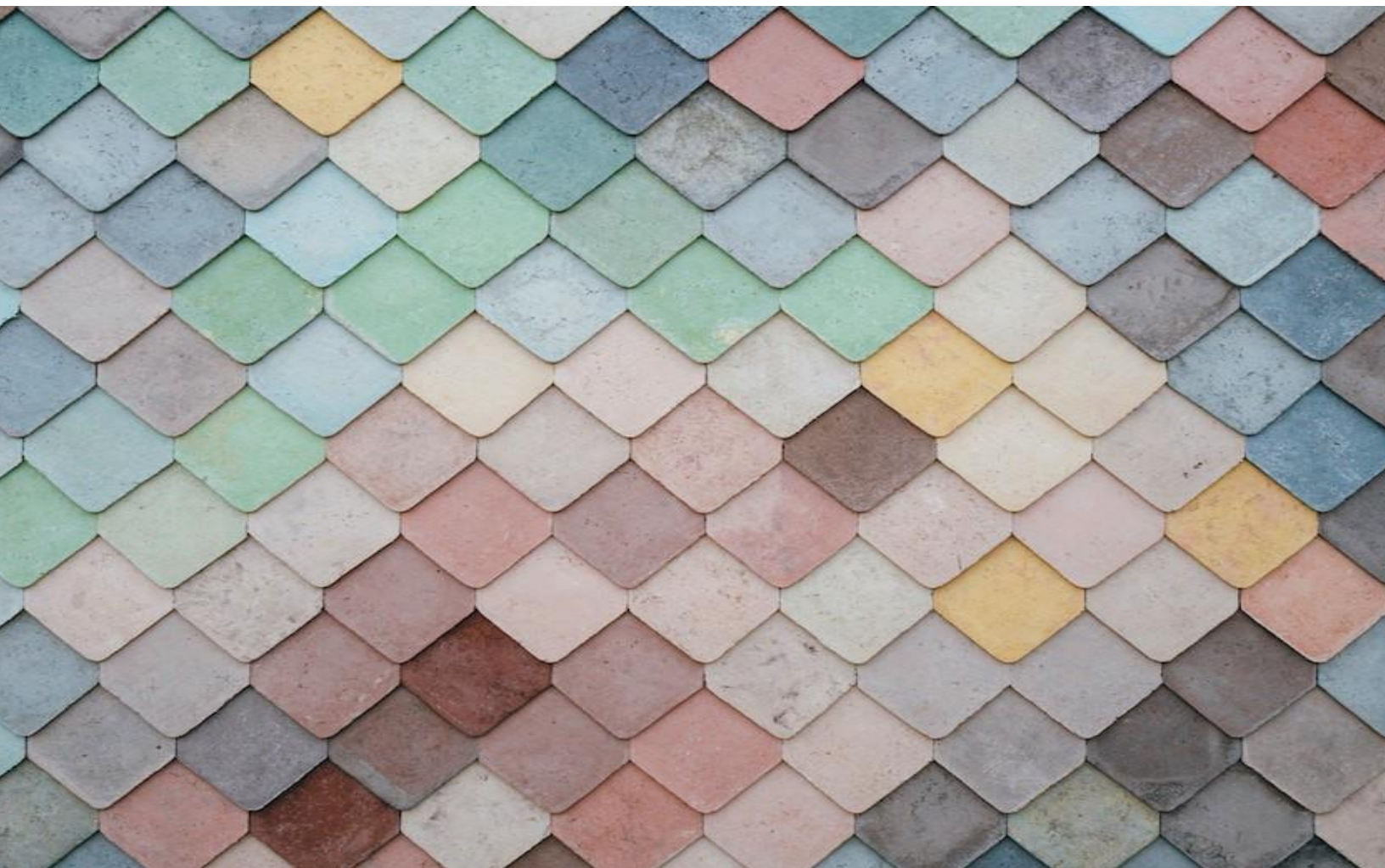
# A Call to Action

Taking on Antisemitism with a  
Coalition Building Approach: A  
Leadership Initiative for  
College Campuses

National Coalition Building Institute

Cherie Brown & Stephanie Low

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# Acknowledgments

## Project Directors

**Cherie R. Brown** is the founder and executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI). Cherie has decades of experience leading training programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion on hundreds of campuses. She has led pioneering work on antisemitism, internalized antisemitism, and the intersection of antisemitism and racism for many campuses (e.g., Brown University, Michigan State University, University of North Carolina, Vassar College) and organizations (e.g., Anti-Defamation League, Hillel International, If Not Now, J Street, Jews United for Justice, National Council of Jewish Women, Truach, Union of Reform Judaism). Cherie Brown has been an adjunct faculty member at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, teaching courses for rabbis on antisemitism and the intersection of antisemitism and racism. She is the author of several manuals, including *Leading Diverse Communities: A How-To Guide for Moving from Healing into Action*; *Working it Out: Blacks and Jews on College Campuses*; *Antisemitism: Why Is It Everyone's Concern*; and *The Art of Coalition Building*. For the past three years, Cherie has been the co-director of the NCBI Campus Antisemitism program: Taking on Antisemitism on College Campuses with a Coalition Building Approach.

**Stephanie Low** is an educator who worked in public school systems for more than 30 years, first as a special education teacher and then as a youth advocate. She has helped schools address issues of inclusion, bullying, prejudice and discrimination, and conflict. Although raised with a Jewish cultural identity, Stephanie Low's understanding of the history of systemic Jewish oppression and its impact on Jews and non-Jews has expanded through her decades-long collaboration with NCBI. She serves on the board of directors of NCBI and leads the Jewish Affinity group in the organization. Stephanie has led diversity, equity, and inclusion workshops in schools, on campuses, and in work environments. She has worked with Jewish students on college campuses and has led trainings on antisemitism for community organizations dedicated to social justice. For the past three years, Stephanie has been the co-director of the NCBI Campus Antisemitism program: Taking on Antisemitism on College Campuses with a Coalition Building Approach.

## About NCBI

The **National Coalition Building Institute** (NCBI) has been working with organizations, campuses, and communities since 1984. NCBI grew out of a two-year project in the early 1980s, when the American Jewish Committee hired Cherie Brown to lead bridge-building sessions between Black and Jewish college students on five East Coast campuses in the U.S. The success of these bridge-building workshops led to a recognition of the need for a new leadership training organization, one that could train leaders from all disciplines and identities in bridge-building, intergroup conflict-resolution skills. Since its founding in 1984, NCBI has become one of the leading organizations promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the U.S. NCBI has trained thousands of students, faculty, and staff on hundreds of campuses to institutionalize programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion. NCBI has had a strong commitment in all its programs to take on antisemitism alongside all other oppressions.

## Evaluator

Michelle HaynesBaratz is a Managing Associate at Community Science. She conducted an evaluation of the leadership training program and, in collaboration with Cherie Brown and Stephanie Low from NCBI, produced this report. Michelle is an organizational psychologist who brings two decades of experience researching, developing, and implementing evidence-based interventions to create more equitable and inclusive environments. Prior to joining the private sector, she spent 16 years as a Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. She has authored 24 peer-reviewed publications and presented at over 55 international and national conferences related to equity. Community Science, founded in 1997, is an internationally renowned research and development organization whose mission is to strengthen the science and practice of community and systems change to build healthy, just, and equitable communities.

## Supporters

The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation provided generous backing for the Campus Antisemitism Leadership Training Program. Ben Binswanger from the foundation provided invaluable support. NCBI wishes to acknowledge the important contributions of Joyce Shabazz, the director of overall affinity work at NCBI and the director of the Black African Heritage caucus, which is in partnership with NCBI, who lent her thinking and support to this project, and, Michelle Rogers, the NCBI office manager who gave generously of her time to this project.

## Executive Summary

In response to the alarming surge of antisemitism on college campuses in recent years, the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) launched a transformative program to empower both Jewish and non-Jewish students, faculty, and staff to recognize and combat antisemitism effectively. Employing a leadership development and empowerment paradigm, the program emphasizes building relationships with others to take on antisemitism, promote intergroup understanding, and increase solidarity between Jews and all other groups.

Initiated in August 2020, with funding from the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation, NCBI recently delivered its third comprehensive program in October 2023. The program involves an intensive three-day training, followed by monthly follow-up support meetings provided by NCBI leaders. Campus rabbis and university staff collaborate with Jewish students in these sessions, as participants become equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify and address antisemitism, including understanding antisemitism as a form of systemic oppression. The training teaches specific criteria for evaluating what constitutes antisemitic incidents. The training also encourages participants to embrace their Jewish identity, learn how to work through difficult conversations with others and foster collaboration between Jews and other groups. The training addresses antisemitism and the intersection of antisemitism and other “isms,” particularly racism, with a goal of learning how to be better allies to each other’s peoples.

NCBI’s innovative program offers a vital solution to combat antisemitism on college campuses through a strategy of unity and collaboration; to date, it has been delivered to over 100 students and staff across 11 campuses.<sup>1</sup> The program encourages the forging of connections and inviting dialogue and understanding, rather than perpetuating narratives that divide. It empowers stakeholders to create a safer, more inclusive educational environment for taking on antisemitism and contributes to the broader campus mission of building an inclusive environment of learning for all students. This initiative provides a powerful model for campuses nationwide, promoting unity, understanding, and positive change in higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Campuses include Middlebury College, Williams College, University of Massachusetts, Macalester College, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Iowa, Washington and Lee University, Dickinson College, Bard College, Georgetown University, and Swarthmore College.



## Why Now?

Recent years have seen a disturbing increase in antisemitic incidents on U.S. college campuses, with the Anti-Defamation League reporting a notable uptick since 2016.<sup>2</sup> By 2021, over one-third of Jewish college students surveyed experienced antisemitism firsthand during the 2020-2021 academic year; that percentage rises to 43% when considering both direct experiences and witnessed incidents.<sup>3</sup> The story of Aaron, a Rutgers University student, illustrates the climate of fear: after an attempt by another student to forcibly remove his kippah, Aaron has since felt compelled to wear a baseball cap for his safety. He, along with many peers, is apprehensive about openly displaying Jewish symbols.<sup>4</sup>

Antisemitism on campuses is not a recent development; it is a historical constant. From quotas that limited Jewish enrollment<sup>5</sup> to the tacit acceptance of anti-Jewish rhetoric,<sup>6</sup> academia has often been complicit in marginalizing Jewish students and scholars.<sup>7</sup>

While this is not a new phenomenon, incidents of hatred and discrimination against Jewish students have reached alarming levels amidst recent political events.<sup>8</sup> Since the Israel-Gaza war erupted, reports of antisemitism on college campuses and beyond have surged, reaching levels of hostility not witnessed in recent history.<sup>9</sup> In the first 16 days after the war broke out, there was a staggering 388% increase in the number of reported antisemitic incidents in the United States compared to the same period in the previous year.

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<sup>2</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2018,” April 22, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-anti-semitic-incidents-year-review-2018#themes-and-trends>.

<sup>3</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “The ADL-Hillel Campus Antisemitism Survey: 2021,” October 26, 2021, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/adl-hillel-campus-antisemitism-survey-2021>.

<sup>4</sup> NJ Spotlight News, “New survey sheds light on antisemitism on college campuses in America,” PBS, December 16, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/exploring-hate/2021/12/16/survey-sheds-light-on-antisemitism/>.

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Pietsch, “Stanford limited Jewish student admissions in 1950s, university admits,” The Washington Post, October 13, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/10/13/stanford-jewish-students-admissions-apology/>.

<sup>6</sup> Valerie Strauss, “A brief history of antisemitism from U.S. higher education,” The Washington Post, November 13, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/11/13/how-restricting-jews-created-modern-college-admissions/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jack Stripling, “Colleges braced for antisemitism and violence. It’s happening.,” The Washington Post, October 31, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/10/31/antisemitism-college-campuses-jewish-hamas-gaza/>.

<sup>9</sup> Center for Antisemitism Research, “Campus Antisemitism: A Study of Campus Climate Before and After the Hamas Terrorist Attacks,” Anti-Defamation League, November 29, 2023, <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/campus-antisemitism-study-campus-climate-and-after-hamas-terrorist-attacks>.

Recent instances of antisemitism have rocked college campuses with Jewish students facing verbal harassment, threats, and even physical violence.<sup>10</sup> At a pro-Palestinian event near Tulane University, violence erupted, leading to the assault of at least two students amid an attempt to burn an Israeli flag.<sup>11</sup> On a message board at Cornell University, one post menacingly stated, “If you see a Jewish ‘person’ on campus, follow them home and slit their throats,” and another threatened to “bring an assault rifle to campus and shoot all you pig Jews.”<sup>12</sup> The proliferation of such alarming events has brought university leaders under intense scrutiny, as evidenced in a congressional hearing in December 2023 where the presidents of MIT, University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard were questioned about their handling of antisemitism on their campuses, highlighting the seriousness and complexity of this pressing issue.<sup>13</sup> The events of the past few months are a stark reminder that antisemitism remains an urgent problem that must be addressed, now more than ever.

## Antisemitism Is Everyone’s Concern

Antisemitism is not a small, isolated problem; rather, it is a pervasive issue with profound and far-reaching consequences that extend well beyond the Jewish community. At its heart, antisemitism acts as a corrosive force, obscuring and undermining the collective endeavor to dismantle other forms of systemic oppression. In its most harmful manifestation, antisemitism is strategically employed to create rifts between Jewish communities and many other groups. This divide-and-conquer mechanism often takes advantage of the complex history between Jewish people and other non-dominant communities in the United States. Instead of fostering an environment where these groups can discover and reinforce their shared struggles against oppression, antisemitism is used to perpetuate separation and division.

Many within the Jewish community are dedicated to aligning with diverse racial and ethnic groups, women, and LGBTQIA+ communities in a shared struggle for equity and justice. Yet, paradoxically, Jewish individuals often find themselves on the periphery of broader dialogues about oppression. This exclusion is rooted in a complex dynamic where they are perceived as either oppressors or as experiencing comparatively lesser degrees of discrimination or both. Such misperceptions not only undermine the experience of Jewish pain and the impact of thousands of years of Jewish oppression and resulting trauma but also hinder the progress toward a truly inclusive and empathetic understanding of antisemitism in its many forms.

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<sup>10</sup> Jack Stripling, “Colleges braced for antisemitism and violence. It’s happening.,” The Washington Post, October 31, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/10/31/antisemitism-college-campuses-jewish-hamas-gaza/>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Treisman, “Lawmakers grill the presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn over antisemitism on campus,” NPR, December 5, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/12/05/1217459477/harvard-penn-mit-antisemitism-congress-hearing>.

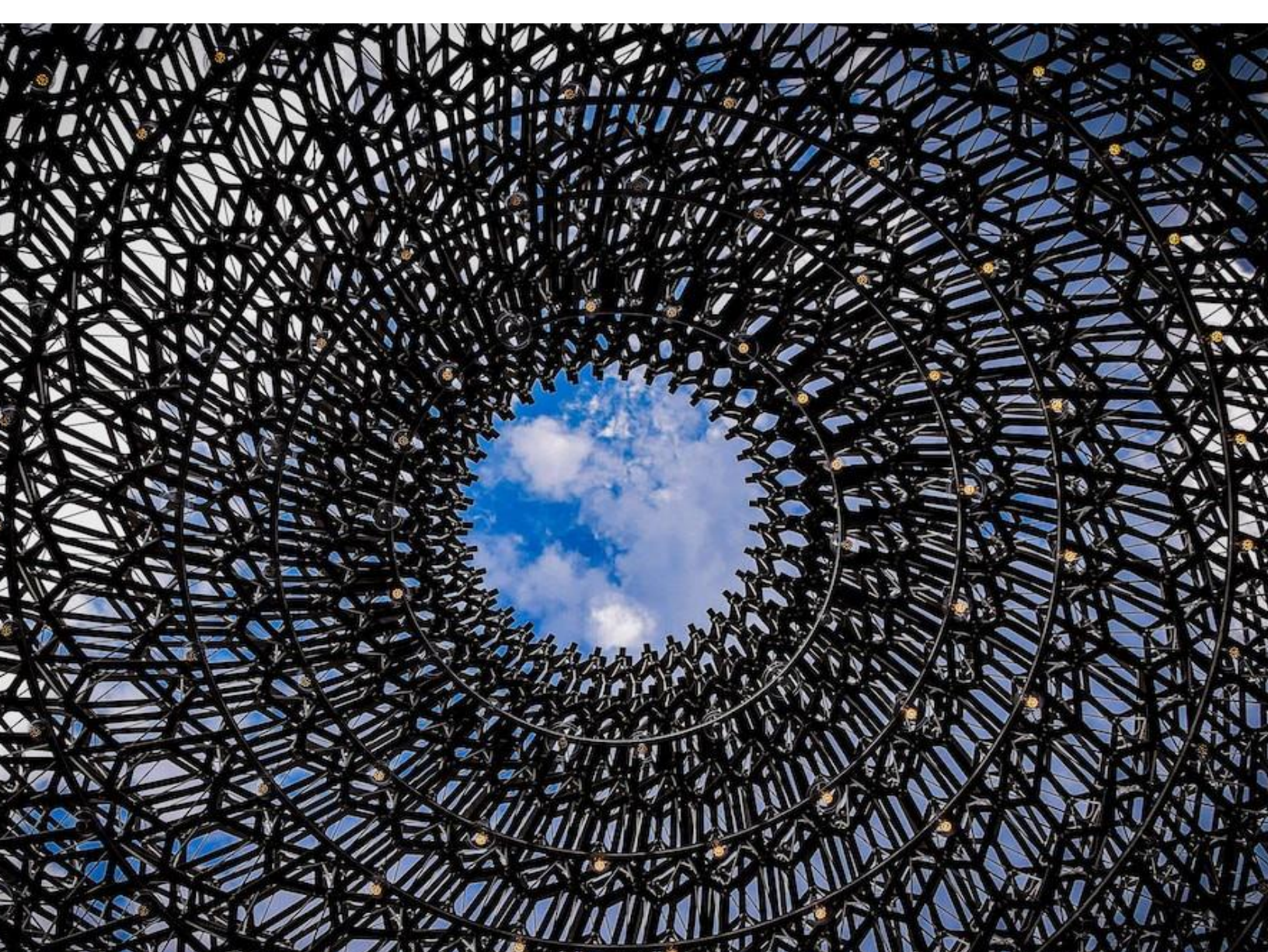


## Why This Approach?

Amid a landscape of seemingly endless organizations offering diversity, equity, and inclusion training on college campuses, including those focusing on antisemitism, NCBI's initiative, ***"Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses,"*** stands out as particularly effective and innovative.

The program is notable for:

- I. NCBI's established expertise in the field;
- II. a theory of change rooted in ***"changing hearts, not minds"*** through personal narratives and relationship building; and,
- III. a unique approach, in both its analysis of - and methodology USED to address- antisemitism.





## I. Why NCBI?

Since 1984, the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) has been a leader in delivering effective diversity, equity, and inclusion programs on college campuses across the United States. As an organization that is not rooted in a specific group identity, NCBI can bring a perspective that transcends the perception of a singular identity-based agenda. Their four-decade-long commitment to addressing various forms of oppression on college campuses equips them with a profound understanding of the complexities of combating racism, sexism, gay oppression, antisemitism, and other identity-based oppressions within the collegiate context. Furthermore, NCBI makes an important distinction between “advocacy” and “coalition building” in their work. NCBI leaders firmly believe that advocacy alone is not enough to address these issues, a bridge-building component is critical to move forward.

The U.S. Department of Education has endorsed NCBI’s programming as one of five “promising practices” in the nation; specifically, the Gender Equity Expert Panel wrote:



*“While many workshops that address diversity on campuses exist, NCBI is the only known organization that has built a model, replicated it on 65 campuses and tested it extensively... [ the program] has a flexible design with core tools that are easily adapted to individual campuses.”<sup>14</sup>*

***Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses***, first delivered in 2020, evolved from NCBI's decade-long efforts to assist campus communities in navigating the challenging terrain of antisemitism alongside all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming.<sup>15</sup> This period saw a disturbing rise in antisemitic incidents - swastikas on campus walls and derogatory comments about Jews appeared in student housing, classrooms, and university bathrooms.

Campus presidents sought NCBI's guidance amid these tensions, challenged by the task of appropriately responding to such antisemitic incidents while distinguishing them from legitimate discourse critiquing the policies of the Israeli government or advocating for Palestinian liberation. Furthermore, Jewish students engaged in broader social justice movements also sought to reconcile their Jewish identity and support for Israel with their solidarity against racism.

Meanwhile, an influx of national organizations, both Jewish and non-Jewish, coming onto campuses now can inadvertently escalate tensions by training Jewish students to

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Education, “Exemplary & Promising Gender Equity Programs,” *Gender Equity Expert Panel*, no. 1 (2000): 1-48, [https://ncbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SKM\\_558e18040418560.pdf](https://ncbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/SKM_558e18040418560.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Cherie Brown and Stephanie Low, “A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses,” *Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach*, no.1 (2021): 3-28, <https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:cb168c2e-ed3b-4467-9298-c67e15d9aef5>.

confront antisemitism without fostering essential coalition building skills. In some instances, this has led to defensive attitudes and increased divisiveness, particularly in interactions with Palestinian rights groups. Ultimately, this can preclude building relationships with allies to take on antisemitism and only serve to isolate the Jewish students even further.

Recognizing the need for a nuanced approach, NCBI began conversations in November 2019 with the Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation. In August of 2020, NCBI launched the first year of ***Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses*** to help Jewish campus members understand antisemitism as systemic oppression, distinguish it from legitimate criticism of the policies of the Israeli government, and build alliances between Jews and other groups on campus.

Having successfully concluded its third year of the project, with over 100 participants across 11 campuses collectively, NCBI has demonstrated meaningful results and is ready to scale this evidence-based model to a wider audience and make a larger impact.

## II. Theory of Change

NCBI's theory of change pivots on the conviction that meaningful transformation stems from ***“changing hearts, not minds,”*** with personal stories and relationships as the cornerstone of this shift. Furthermore, understanding one's Jewish identity and confronting internalized antisemitism are seen as vital steps before one can effectively ally with other groups. The goal of this programming is to foster close connections and build coalitions both amongst Jews and with members of other groups to powerfully counteract systemic injustices together.

Central to NCBI's methodology is the emphasis on empowerment and sustained engagement. The three days of intensive collaborative training associated with ***Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses*** is followed by ongoing support, such as monthly phone calls and a support network, to reinforce the work on campuses. Participants are encouraged to develop their own initiatives to address antisemitism once they return to their own campuses to extend the reach of this work. This continuous backing is crucial for cultivating the resilience and capacity necessary for enduring change within college communities.



### III. A Unique Approach: Analysis and Methodology

There are two unique aspects of NCBI's approach to addressing antisemitism. The first is the distinctive **analysis** it offers of antisemitism – simply, what it is and what it isn't. The second is the specific **methodology** facilitators employ throughout the training, the skills imbued to the participants throughout, including bridge-building techniques and skills and processes to deal with difficult issues. Below we provide a synopsis of each of these facets; a full review of the program is available on the NCBI website.<sup>16</sup>

#### A) Analysis of Antisemitism



*Antisemitism is the systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of Jews. Over their long history, the Jewish people have been the target of both violent and subtle forms of persecution, including discrimination, expulsions, and genocide. For centuries, antisemitism has divided Jews from other groups and set up Jews as a buffer to protect those in power.<sup>17</sup>*

While overt acts of antisemitism, such as defacing a synagogue with swastikas, are unequivocally recognized, it's the subtler, less obvious expressions that often cause confusion and need to be deciphered. Given that antisemitism often thrives on creating confusion about Jews, or about Israel, having a framework to determine whether an event or incident is antisemitic is essential to be able to differentiate between legitimate critique about the policies of the Israeli government and divisive, harmful rhetoric about either Israelis or Jews. Specifically, we teach **three criteria** for determining when an event *is* antisemitic:

- **Are Jews (or Israel) being singled out for blame?**

*Example: In 2020, the local chapter of a young adult climate organization in Washington, DC, pulled out (noisily) of a coalition for voting rights. They refused to be in a coalition with Jews who belong to Jewish organizations with strong connections to Israel.*

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Cherie R. Brown and Amy Leos-Urbel, *Anti-Semitism: Why Is It Everyone's Concern*, (Shoreline, WA: Rational Island Publishers, 2018).



- **Are liberation movements being diverted by confusion about antisemitism?**

A central function of antisemitism is to embroil members of progressive movements into arguments about antisemitism, thereby diverting their liberation work. Indeed, antisemitism has repeatedly been weaponized by the right to disrupt the efforts of other liberation movements (e.g., Women's Liberation, Gay Liberation, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Labor Movement, and the Climate Justice Movement).

*Example: In January 2017, following the election of Donald Trump, a powerful movement of women came together and launched the Women's March to rally together and stand against sexism and other forms of oppression. The efforts continued in many cities after the initial Women's March. As the work grew in strength, there were accusations of some of the leadership of the Women's March, claiming they were antisemitic. Internal fighting and disagreement erupted and ultimately created confusion, a weakening of solidarity, and drew the public's focus away from women's issues. Keeping people confused about antisemitism or debating whether something is or is not antisemitism is one of the least understood but key ways that antisemitism operates. Antisemitism can derail important liberation work and can divide Jews from other peoples.*

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A recent New York Times article<sup>18</sup> named this dynamic around current events:



*For years, conservatives have struggled to persuade American voters that the left-wing tilt of higher education is not only wrong but dangerous... For Republicans, the rise of antisemitic speech and the timid responses of some academic leaders presented a long-sought opportunity to flip the political script and cast liberals or their institutions as hateful and intolerant.”*

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The record of many of these conservative politicians demonstrates that they do not always care about antisemitism, particularly when the antisemitism is on the right. But they are finding that weaponizing antisemitism on campuses now is a convenient way to undermine all DEI programs on campus.

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Confessore, “As Fury Erupts Over Campus Antisemitism, Conservatives Seize the Moment,” The New York Times, December 10, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/10/us/universities-antisemitism-conservatives-liberals.html>.

- **Are Jews being isolated from other peoples?**

Isolating Jews from other peoples is a central and historic component of antisemitism. A fundamental litmus test is whether Jews are being isolated or distinguished from other groups in a way that no member of another identity group experiences – a “different” standard of entry for participation.

*Example: At an East Coast University campus, there was a speaker at a campus event who said: “I want everyone to be a part of my coalition! I want Black people and Latinx people and Native Indigenous and Asian heritage and LGBTQ people, and women and progressive Jews.” The assumption is that all the other groups are oppressed and, therefore, get to be at the table, but Jews must pass an additional level of scrutiny to be included.*

## B) Methodology



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*Over decades of doing anti-oppression work, we have learned that it is the stories that open people’s hearts... If you have ever been in a situation where you have been engaged in a dialogue with someone and you don’t like their position or you can’t reach them, you perhaps have noticed that trying to out-argue someone is not always effective. I know from my own experience that when there are people I find challenging, hearing their stories of pain and mistreatment helps me see their humanity, and my heart starts to open. I am more willing to listen to their positions on many issues.*

Stephanie Low, Oct 2023 Training, Day 2

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NCBI’s methodology is rooted in relationship building - with oneself, with other Jews, and with all peoples. Towards this end, the training approach is highly interactive and dynamic. Throughout the three-day workshop, ample time is allocated to foster connections and facilitate mutual learning among participants. The training is carefully designed so that each segment builds upon the previous one, with a substantial portion of the program dedicated to active discussions both in small groups and in the larger group. While there are brief lessons, traditional lectures are minimal. This creates an environment where participants engage in interactive exercises and create connections with one another. This hands-on approach emphasizes observation, modeling, and practical application over passive reception of information. Furthermore, in addition to Cherie’s and Stephanie’s serving as primary facilitators, a team of experienced NCBI leaders plays a crucial supportive role throughout the program. The presence of these seasoned facilitators is particularly beneficial during the numerous breakouts and small group exercises. They offer guidance through challenging discussions, provide insightful

answers to tough questions, and offer encouragement during emotionally charged conversations, ensuring a comprehensive and supportive learning environment.

Broadly speaking, the training is organized such that:

- ⇒ **DAY 1** focuses on [one's Jewish identity](#) and [Intra-Jewish unity](#).
- ⇒ **DAY 2** focuses on an understanding of [antisemitism](#), [personal experiences with antisemitism](#), and [skills](#) for dealing with antisemitic jokes, comments, and slurs in a bridge-building way.
- ⇒ **DAY 3** focuses on [teaching skills to bring about change using NCBI's Controversial Issues Process](#) (listening to heartfelt concerns underneath divisive issues) and then giving participants an [opportunity to apply the skills](#) learned to address concrete campus scenarios involving antisemitism.

**DAY 1:** The first part is designed to establish connections with one another for the journey ahead.

Antisemitism work, especially that which takes a relational approach, must ensure everyone feels acknowledged and valued. A significant portion of the first day focuses on **exploring Jewish identity**, where participants engage in activities to reflect on the strengths and challenges associated with their Jewish identities. This introspection is seen as a foundational step in coalition building, influencing how relationships are formed and maintained.

**Addressing unconscious bias** is another critical component, with exercises designed to uncover and address underlying prejudices. This is a pivotal step to breaking down barriers that could hinder effective coalition work. Participants also **address the internalization of antisemitism** and its divisive impact on the Jewish community. Participants engage in an exercise where they explore internalized messages of antisemitism by completing the phrase, “*what I can't stand about the impact of antisemitism on my people is...*”. Participants also reflect on their pride associated with their Jewish identity and complete the phrase “*what I love about being Jewish is...*”. Through personal reflection and group discussions, participants confront negative stereotypes and messages they have absorbed, learn to release these, and embrace positive aspects of their Jewish identity. This understanding is crucial for fostering unity amongst Jews and then forging strong coalitions with all other groups.

Finally, in a compelling **caucus exercise**, participants gather in small groups aligned by intersecting identities—such as Jewish women, Jewish men, LGBTQ+ Jews, Jewish elders, young Jews, mixed heritage Jews, and Jewish people of color—to respond to the prompt, “*things I never again want people to say, think, or do towards my group ...*”. The insights garnered from this session, once shared with the larger group, are both vulnerable and profound, providing a window into the pain other Jews have



experienced. This powerful conclusion to the day not only fosters empathy but also cements a commitment to intra-Jewish unity.

**DAY 2:** The second day of the training is focused **on delving deeper into Antisemitism and listening to personal stories of antisemitism.** Following a lesson defining antisemitism and establishing a framework for identifying it (see above, analysis of antisemitism), the facilitators share their own encounters with antisemitism, setting the stage for a deeply moving session. Participants are encouraged to share their stories, creating the freedom to express vulnerability and emotional truths. The facilitators allow individuals to express and release their pain with the goal of participants feeling heard and validated as part of the healing process.

The session progresses to explore the **principles of coalition building**, by teaching how to interrupt antisemitic jokes, comments, and slurs in a way that builds bridges and maintains good relationships. A key aspect of coalition building is to stay in relationship with others - even in the face of transgressions - to be willing to teach when affronted or learn if you offend. Recognizing that missteps are inevitable given our socialization is essential; NCBI teaches that coalitions thrive when we can use missteps as teachable moments to become stepping-stones for collective progress.

Participants also learn a technique for dealing with these oppressive antisemitic comments that emphasizes maintaining a connection with the person making the comment instead of offering immediate, and often harsh, corrections. NCBI teaches skills such as using a caring tone, inquiring with curiosity about their concerns, and putting “your ouch” aside temporarily. In other words, creating a space for dialogue involves managing one’s own emotions, to allow for a more profound exchange. Crucially, the program also teaches the value of “venting” as a preparatory step for these intense conversations. Feedback from various cohorts highlights the benefit of venting in a safe space away from the immediate person making the oppressive comment. This process allows individuals to release intense emotions related to these comments, which clears the way to effectively employ the bridge-building techniques imparted by NCBI. Multiple participants are then encouraged to practice these skills in response to a hurtful slur or joke while being coached about their efficacy. Practicing how to respond to hurtful comments with compassion instead of reactivity in a safe place with expert facilitators builds participants’ capacity to take on hard conversations about Jews or Israel when they occur in real life.



Said of the shifting attitudes technique: *“We must learn to listen to the things that are hard to listen to because that is where change happens. And this isn’t easy. We don’t have you here for 3 whole days for the things you already know how to do. We are teaching you things that may initially be hard to do - but they do work.”*

Cherie Brown, Oct 2023 Training, Day 2

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**DAY 3:** The last day of the training introduces the **NCBI Controversial Issues Process** which is a concrete approach to navigate and constructively engage with the challenging conflicts that are often at the heart of antisemitism debates. This structured approach encourages an open and honest exchange by allowing individuals on both sides of a divisive issue to articulate their views, actively listen to opposing positions, and then collaboratively reframe the issue in a way that builds bridges.

To practice this, participants brainstorm potential contentious antisemitism-related topics and select one, in which two participants then model the process within the group, with coaching from the facilitators. Briefly, the NCBI Controversial Issues Process involves each person: **1)** actively listening to the other person's position and repeating it back, **2)** inviting and valuing personal life stories that underly the person's position, **3)** finding common concerns that both sides acknowledge, and **4)** reframing the issue in a way that integrates the concerns of all parties involved. This method not only fosters understanding and empathy but also enhances participants' skills in transforming potential conflicts about antisemitism into opportunities for dialogue and resolution.

In the culminating phase of the training, participants are divided into small groups for a **final exercise**, a practical application of the comprehensive skills they've acquired over the three-day period. In this module, they are given actual incidents of antisemitism that have occurred on each other's campuses, and each group must brainstorm strategies based on all the things they have learned over the past three days. This hands-on approach ensures that the knowledge gained over the past three days is transformed into practical strategies for addressing real-life challenges of antisemitism in their campus environments.

**An important note:** The Israel-Palestine conflict is frequently the proverbial 'elephant in the room'. This complex issue consistently surfaces during the three-day training and in ongoing efforts to address antisemitism, posing a significant challenge to constructive dialogue. ***Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses*** doesn't shy away from these complexities; instead, it embraces an approach to navigate them in a bridge-building way. NCBI encourages participants who represent a range of diverse views to participate in the training. Participants in cohorts 1, 2, and 3 have included members from Chabad and advocates from Jewish Voice for Peace. NCBI states clearly that the essential criterion for involvement in the program is an eagerness to listen and learn, rather than only advocating for one's own positions.

Participants engage deeply with contentious questions, such as "Does the Israeli government have a primary role in initiating peace efforts with Palestinians?" or "Is calling for a boycott of Sabra Hummus on campus an effective strategy for change?"

Typically, conversations around these contentious topics have led to silence or defensive reactions, often resulting in participants leaving when they disagree. This training focuses on the importance of staying engaged, even when conversations

become challenging. This approach encourages a deeper understanding and respect for different viewpoints. Ultimately, we are teaching people to stay even when antisemitism is present; not to stay silent but learn how to take on the antisemitism in a bridge-building way.

## IV. Continuous Learning and Improvement

NCBI's commitment to continuous learning and improvement is a cornerstone of its effectiveness. The program is dynamic, consistently integrating new, evidence-based practices and insights from each training session. This dedication to evolution ensures that their strategies remain cutting-edge and relevant to the shifting landscape of political issues. For instance, feedback indicated the importance of young people hearing from their peers in leadership roles. Consequently, NCBI is now incorporating young leaders into the program delivery from the start. This approach will not only enhance the relevance and impact of the training for campus participants but also serve as a pathway for new facilitators to join the team. Such integration is key for NCBI's scalability and lays the groundwork for a robust succession plan for the program's future. Another example: it became clear after cohort 3 that involving the university's administration, in addition to Hillel staff, would be helpful from the outset to solidify a relationship between NCBI and each campus and to have the whole campus make a commitment to work on antisemitism; as such, moving forward with cohort 4, this will now be a requisite practice to ensure the most significant impact.

NCBI diligently refines its approach by actively soliciting feedback and assessing outcomes, ensuring alignment with the latest research and participant experiences. This responsive methodology enables NCBI to help campuses adeptly confront antisemitism integrating it into the broader context of diversity, equity, and inclusion work on campus. The commitment to continual enhancement reflects NCBI's practical and deliberate strategy for driving social change, promoting personal development, and generating a wide-reaching community influence.



## V. Evidence of Efficacy

The efficacy of the NCBI's leadership development program is substantiated by more than just personal accounts. Detailed assessments of its full impact are available,<sup>19,20</sup> but a brief overview of the outcomes is telling of its practical benefits. Participants leave the program equipped with actionable skills tailored for real-world scenarios and enhanced leadership abilities. Furthermore, participants are clearly moved by their experience within the program. The following is a sample of participant endorsements from Cohort 3:



*“I learned so much about how you held this space at this moment (Israel-Gaza War). You didn’t even try to suggest that we could hold every single possible way that people are feeling at this moment. You just acknowledged that we are here together and that matters. There is something about ‘not trying to do the impossible’, that I found really inspiring... While frankly you are trying to do the impossible... I just learned so much. Thank you.”*

*“It is so visceral ... your love for all Jews... it really opens the door for everything else to be possible.”*

*“I’m incredibly impressed by the decades of experience that you have doing this and how you have distilled lessons from it that can help us ...and just the incredible resilience to keep doing this in situations that can feel totally demoralizing. I remember you saying at one point with relaxed confidence ‘we’ve got a lot of work to do. And that’s OK’... And I want to learn to have that reaction [over despair].”*

*“I just appreciate [learning about] antisemitism with all the nuances that are often never discussed. You gave it vocabulary, you gave it context that never gets spoken about, and I realize it's something I'm going to have to keep learning over and over to integrate so I can actually see it myself. But just offering a framework to understand what gets talked about.... both of you gave wonderful explanations and examples.”*

*“I appreciate how rare it is to have a short period of time where we could hold the whole Jewish community experience together and experience all the different nuances of all the different identities that exist within the community, but within a sphere, a space, where we're trying to learn, appreciate, understand and be allies for each other and within it, [we found] unity.”*



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<sup>19</sup> Brown and Low, “A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses,” 3-28.

<sup>20</sup> Cherie Brown and Stephanie Low, “Developing and Hosting on Campus Workshops”, *Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach*, no. 1 (2022): 5-15, <https://ncbi.org/publications/>.

The program's support persists well after the initial training, with a six-month follow-up through monthly leadership clinics that provide ongoing coaching and mentorship. This extended guidance helps participants integrate what they've learned into their campus communities effectively. The list below is a sample of impactful actions undertaken by participants after completing the three-day training. Note: cohort numbers are listed only to highlight that the program's effectiveness is not limited to a specific cohort; rather, it is generalizable:

- **Cohort 1:** As a result of the NCBI training, two co-presidents of Hillel from a Cohort 1 campus decided to approach members of SJP (Students for Justice in Palestine) to initiate a dialogue session. Given that SJP has an organizational policy of no dialogue with Jews or Israelis (they call it no normalization), the two Hillel co-presidents were totally surprised that their NCBI coalition-building skills worked! Several SJP members agreed to an off-the-record dialogue with the Hillel presidents.
- **Cohort 1:** A participant excitedly shared with her rabbi back home all that she was learning in the campus antisemitism program. He was so moved by her new understanding about antisemitism that he asked her to present her learnings in a sermon delivered to her congregation during the High Holiday services.
- **Cohort 2:** NCBI trained participants in cohort 2 to reach out and invite students, faculty, and staff to a program on antisemitism co-led by NCBI staff with lots of leadership from the members of cohort 2. This event, which attracted 100 students, faculty, and staff included a panel and small group discussions led by cohort 2 participants, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in training Jews to take leadership on their campuses around antisemitism.
- **Cohort 2:** A Jewish commencement speaker made a speech on campus that contained racist remarks. The Jewish participants in cohort 2 brought this challenge to their monthly training meeting and were coached by NCBI on how to constructively address these racist remarks while not feeding antisemitism towards the Jewish speaker.
- **Cohort 2 and 3 Interaction:** a year after their initial training, cohort 2 recently facilitated a program for faculty and staff on their campus to process their feelings about the Israel-Gaza war, focusing on healing rather than positions. This initiative was shared with cohort 3, exemplifying how cohorts support and inspire each other, enhancing the program's collective impact.
- **Cohort 3:** After this most recent training, a participant reached out to the leader of a pro-Palestinian organization on campus. In spite of initial hostility from the members of the pro-Palestinian group, the participant used the bridge-building skills she'd learned in her NCBI training and was pleasantly surprised at how effective she was in creating a genuine opening for dialogue.

While far from exhaustive, these examples collectively underscore the program's success in fostering a long-term, tangible impact as participants apply their learning to real-world scenarios, effectively addressing antisemitism and fostering inclusivity on their campuses and beyond.

## A Call to Action

NCBI's ***Taking on Antisemitism with a Coalition Building Approach: A Leadership Initiative for College Campuses*** is an innovative and effective way of addressing antisemitism on college campuses through its comprehensive and empathetic approach to dialogue and conflict resolution. This program not only equips individuals with the tools necessary to foster understanding and coalition building but also provides the scaffolding for campus leaders to take these skill sets back to their campuses to impact their communities for the better. The skills participants gain are crucial in these challenging times where honest conversation and mutual respect are sorely needed in service of liberation for all.

We stand at a critical juncture where the need for such impactful programs is undeniable. Your support can extend the reach of this transformative work. By funding this initiative or bringing this program to your campus, you contribute to the cultivation of leaders who are adept at navigating and reconciling the challenging conversations that need to take place about Jews, Israel, antisemitism, and the intersection of antisemitism and racism. Moreover, bringing this program to your campus is a step towards nurturing a more inclusive and compassionate academic environment for everyone. It's an opportunity to become part of a movement that not only confronts antisemitism head-on but also weaves the rich tapestry of diversity into the strength of your institution.