

# Majority of American Jews in Full Page New York Times Ad: "Unequivocally: Black Lives Matter."

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### Bend the Arc: Jewish Action (/jewishaction)

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## Majority of American Jews in Full Page New York Times Ad: "Unequivocally: Black Lives Matter."

*Joint letter signed by over 600 Jewish denominations, organizations, and synagogues represents over half of Jewish people in America*

Today, Friday, August 28th, 2020, coinciding with the anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I have a dream" speech, over 600 Jewish denominations, organizations, and synagogues published a full page advertisement in the New York Times with a joint letter affirming unequivocally that Black Lives Matter. The list of signatories includes three Jewish denominations (Union of Reform Judaism, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Reconstructing Judaism and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association) which collectively represent more than half of all Jewish people in America. The full letter and list of signatories is available here (<http://jews4blacklives.us/>).

"We speak with one voice when we say, unequivocally: Black Lives Matter," the letter reads. "The Black Lives Matter movement is the current day Civil Rights movement in this country, and it is our best chance at equity and justice. By supporting this movement, we can build a country that fulfills the promise of freedom, unity, and safety for all of us, no exceptions."

The full-page advertisement will run today in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, the site of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2020

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On this 57th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, institutions representing over half of American Jews publish the following letter.

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**We are Jewish organizations and synagogues from across the racial and political spectrum; from different streams of Judaism; whose members trace their lineages from countries around the world.**

**WE SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE WHEN WE SAY, UNEQUIVOCALLY:**

# BLACK LIVES MATTER

We support the Black-led movement in this country that is calling for accountability and transparency from the government and law enforcement. **We know that freedom and safety for any of us depends on the freedom and safety of all of us.**

There are politicians and political movements in this country who build power by deliberately manufacturing fear to divide us against each other. All too often, antisemitism is at the center of these manufactured divisions.

There is a long history to these attempts: during the Southern Freedom Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, conspiracy theories were used by white supremacists attempting to delegitimize the extraordinary organizing of Black activists. Billboards were erected smearing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a communist, signs and flyers claiming that "communist Jews" were masterminding the civil rights movement were common, and pro-segregation organizations like the John Birch Society popularized these lies.

Black Lives Matter, the recent uprisings across the globe in the wake of the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and so many others, and the decades of political organizing across the country that have led to this moment are movements led by and for Black people. We see through any attempt to suggest otherwise by pointing fingers, scapegoating, or using antisemitic dogwhistles.

As Jews, we know how dangerous this is: when politicians target Jewish people and blame us for problems, it leads directly to violence against us. **When Black movements are undermined, it leads to more violence against Black people,**

Antisemitism is part of the same machinery those politicians use to blame Black and brown people, people who are immigrants, people who are Muslim, and more. But whether they generate division and fear based on our religion, our skin color, or how long we've been here, their goal is to keep us from working together to win the things we all need to survive and thrive.

When Jewish people join together with our neighbors across racial and religious differences, as we have in the past, we can protect each other and build the future of freedom and safety we all deserve.

Jewish tradition teaches us that justice is not something that will be bestowed upon us, it is something that we need to pursue — the pursuit is itself sacred work. We'll show up for each other every time one of us is targeted because of our differences, and reject any effort to use fear to divide us against each other.

**The Black Lives Matter movement is the current day Civil Rights Movement in this country, and it is our best chance at equity and justice. By supporting this movement we can build a country that fulfills the promise of freedom, unity, and safety for all of us, no exceptions.**

including Black Jews.

Paid for with contributions from the organizations listed above. Contact: info@Jews4BlackLives.us

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The joint letter was originally released in June. It was coordinated by a diverse group of Jewish activists from across a range of religious, political, gender, and racial identities who saw emerging attempts among some politicians and media outlets to drive a wedge between Jews and Black-led movements, and efforts to delegitimize those Black-led movements by using antisemitic conspiracy theories and dogwhistles.

The letter spread quickly among Jewish networks, organizations and synagogues and in less than 24 hours, over 400 Jewish organizations and synagogues signed on. The letter has now been signed by a total of 624 Jewish organizations, denominations, and synagogues. The list of signatories ranges from small congregations to major Jewish organizations representing, collectively, millions of Jewish people amounting to at least half of all American Jews.

"Sometimes when you reach out for allies, you find family," said **Jared Jackson, founder and executive director of Jews in ALL Hues**. "There have always been Black Jews in movements for Black liberation and in Jewish communities; we know that racism and antisemitism are connected and we are targeted and harmed by both. For Black Jews, separating our Jewishness and our Blackness is impossible, and the attempts to divide these two intertwined worlds within which we live is particularly painful. If we're going to take care of all our family, we need to take care of all our family."

"This is an important moment in our struggle for collective liberation, and our support for Black lives is unquestionable. I'm proud to represent one of so many organizations joining together to send a clear message that we stand with Black-led movements for liberation," said **Audrey Sasson, executive director of New York-based Jews for Racial and Economic Justice**. "The claim that white "Marxists," "communists," "globalists" or "elites" are the secret puppetmasters behind the Black freedom movement is a tired, old, racist and antisemitic conspiracy theory. All of these terms — "communist," "elite," "globalist," are antisemitic code words for Jews, and they are used in attempts to delegitimize and discount visionary Black leadership. To any politician or pundit who uses these dog-whistles: we will not allow you to divide us against each other based on our religion, our race, or any other aspect of who we are. We stand with Black people, including Black Jews, today and every day."

"It is incumbent upon our Jewish community, especially white Jews, to rise up for Black lives using all of our spiritual, political and intellectual resources," said **Rachèl LaForest, chief program officer at Bend the Arc**. "When we join together across racial and religious differences, when we rise as one, we can build a new America where it is safe to sleep, walk, drive, shop, jog, live, and love while Black. Our Jewish community is committed to Black lives and Black liberation, including Black Jews."

Responding to the letter's original publication in June, **Maurice Mo Mitchell, executive director of the Working Families Party**, tweeted: "We know our enemies and we know our comrades. White supremacists traffic in, benefit from, and advance anti-Black racism and antisemitism. Their desperate attempts to divide us are so intense because we are winning. #DefendBlackLives #BlackLivesMatter #DefundThePolice"

For additional information, please contact Sharon Goldtzvik, +1.202.500.6362 / [sharon@uprisecommunications.com](mailto:sharon@uprisecommunications.com) (mailto:sharon@uprisecommunications.com).

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## ***It takes a Minyan***

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We are a movement of progressive Jews across the country who are fighting for justice and equality for all.