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TRACKING DEVELOPMENTS IN
THE 'PROGRESSIVE FIELD'

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WRITTEN BY: DAPHNA KAUFMAN

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INTRODUCTION

This product summarizes developments that affect the positioning of Jewish and pro-Israel communities within the U.S. progressive left. Spanning a two-week period, July 26 – August 8, and relying solely on open-source information, the document covers events and highlights ‘weak signals’ with potential for developing significance.

This product is part of the ‘Grand Pivot of the Pro-Israel Network Project,’ for which the Reut Group received the Genesis Prize as part of “Speak Out for #Israel,” a global initiative in honor of 2019 Laureate Robert Kraft to combat anti-Semitism and efforts to delegitimize Israel, both of which are on the rise again in confluence with the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

KEY CHALLENGES

Main themes emerging from developments in this time period (July 26- August 8) focus prominently on the Black-Jewish relations arena, and specifically the growing prominence of the 1619 framework. Additional developments indicate a state of flux in the Democratic Party, marked by a progressive surge and the systemic disequilibrium injected by increasingly mainstreaming traditional anti-Semitism. Amidst this turbulence, generational and ideological shifts in the Jewish community – which are coming to a head in the onset of potential Israeli annexation – are exposing deep fissures within Jewish communities. In the background, societal influences that have changed both how Jewish and pro-Israel communities can get their message out, and the environmental receptivity to those messages, are garnering increased scrutiny.

Growing prominence of the 1619 Project

The 1619 Project¹ is evolving to become an ideological anchor of the current anti-racist struggle, a role that far transcends its New York Times’ platform. The project lays out a conceptual framework for a kind of ‘Black exceptionalism,’ which posits the uniqueness of the American Black experience stemming from the exceptional suffering of Blacks and from the foundational role Blacks have played in making the country what it is today. Its underlying ideas are significant for Jews in part because they shift the broader progressive conversation from rooting in an intersectional logic, which emphasizes universalistic solidarity and not individual groups’ struggle, to one with a more laser-like focus on the anti-Black racism struggle.

¹ The 1619 Project is an ongoing initiative from The New York Times Magazine that began in August 2019, the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery – an eclectic collection of essay and poems tell the story of slavery’s enduring legacy from a variety of angles. The Project comprises: special edition of Sunday magazine (100-page spread), a section of the newspaper, a kids’ section, and a five-part podcast. It is becoming a school curriculum in school systems nationwide, and has been promoted through broad publicity campaigns. Recently, Oprah Winfrey and Lionsgate Productions announced a collaboration to adapt 1619 for television and film formats.

Two central arguments anchor the 1619 Project conceptual framework and are a basis for its proscriptive approach. The first is that the existing system is rotten from its inception and to its core – that anti-Black racism is embedded in U.S. society’s very DNA; the second calls for fundamental systemic change to address the original sin of slavery and acknowledge an economic reality built on the plundering of black wealth.

The 1619 project is inspiring comprehensive defenses of its premise from diverse sources (see in [Ms. Magazine](#), for example). It is also serving as the [lightning rod](#) ‘relevant other’ for conservative opposition to the anti-racist struggle.

Black anti-Semitism still in the spotlight

Black anti-Semitism adds a volatile factor to the mix when looking at Jewish and pro-Israel positioning in the progressive sphere because of its direct effect on the larger picture of Black-Jewish relations. It influences the potential for inclusion of Jews in progressive circles, and also serves as a barometer of sorts measuring the tolerance of progressive communities to anti-Semitism when it is issued forth from minorities. Examples of high-profile black anti-Semitism in recent weeks have brought to the fore two notable characteristics:

- **The prominence of a type of ‘replacement theology’ framing Jews as usurpers of Black people’s rightful historical narrative** (see [this Tablet piece](#) describing a new “viral emphasis on a particular conspiracy theory – that Black people are the ‘real Jews’ while white Jews are impostors who falsify biblical history in order to demoralize Blacks”). Notably, Louis Farrakhan, who the [ADL recently called](#) the most popular anti-Semite in America, espouses themes aligned with this Black-Jewish replacement theology. Most recently, Rapper Jay Electronica in a [series of tweets](#) relayed versions of [this message](#): “WE are INDEED THE TRUE Children of Israel. And you are an imposter and birthright stealer as described in the scriptures.”
- **The danger of the non-apology**: When high-profile anti-Semitism is enabled to fester in the absence of a public reckoning and expression of regret, the result may be a creeping normalization of its blatant manifestations. Recent examples include Rapper Jay Electronica pronounced [lack of repentance](#) – and, indeed, his hostility to the notion of dialogue; Larry Johnson’s pride at the outrage that his anti-Semitic [tweet blaming Jews](#) for involvement in sex trafficking, pedophilia, and more provoked [tweeting](#), “I angered ‘Rabbis’ from here to Israel”); and [the perceived tepidness](#) of the statement of regret that Philadelphia chapter of the NAACP civil rights organization President Rodney Muhammad released in response to outrage provoked by his recent anti-Semitic tweet, and [his refusal](#) to answer calls for his resignation.

Strengthening role of progressive politics on Democratic Party

Indicators continue to amass pointing to changing tides towards more progressive politics in general, and to the potential for a subtly shifting status quo on Israel. Tellingly, the [Washington Post](#) draws attention to left-wing candidates “racking up victories in Democratic primaries, presenting both an opportunity and challenge” to Biden, as well as inside the House Democratic Caucus next year, in which – given a recent wave of victories alongside those garnered in other open-seat primaries earlier this year – progressives will have a larger presence. Notable recently in this context for the pro-Israel community:

- **Rep. William Lacy Clay [defeat](#) in the Democratic primary in Missouri to Cori Bush** – The upset of the 10-term Member of Congress by Bush – an activist who “tapped into the recent energy of the

Black Lives Matter movement” – reflects, according to a Washington Post [piece](#), a broader “leftward lurch and generational change inside Democratic Party.”

Bolstered by allies that included Justice Democrats, a major progressive political influence organization, Bush built on unprecedented funding momentum to thrust societal fringes that have been labelled in the past as “radicals, terrorists” to the fore, creating a “multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multigenerational, multi-faith, mass movement.” In her victory speech, Bush [thanked](#) a list of far-left groups for supporting her bid, including the Democratic Socialists of America (which recently [affirmed](#) its support for BDS), saying, “An incremental approach isn’t going to work any longer. We’ve decided that we’re not going to wait any longer for change.” Bush was [endorsed](#) by Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Campaign literature for Clay, cited as a friend of the local Jewish community and a pro-Israel ally, [highlighted](#) anti-Israel elements of Bush’s record, including her past support for the BDS movement as well as her work alongside Palestinian-American activist Linda Sarsour. According to St. Louis-area Jewish educator and technologist [Russel Neiss](#), the related campaign mailing went mostly to an area with large concentrations of Jews.

- **Former President Obama [endorsement](#) of Jamaal Bowman**, who defeated Rep. Eliot Engel in the June 23 primary in New York, came, [according to Bowman](#), as a result of a public correspondence he had with a local rabbi, in which Bowman [reflected](#) a moderate, nuanced, and constructive approach to Jewish relations and Israel that impressed the former president. While Bowman touts pro-Israel credentials, he remains a noted departure from the stalwart Israel ally, Eliot Engel, that he defeated, in the past [railing](#) against “American taxpayer... subsidizing the detention of Palestinian children” and for the need for the U.S. to “stand up to far-right authoritarian leaders rising across the world... whether that’s in Saudi Arabia, Europe, India, or Israel.” In a recent [interview](#), Bowman spoke of the U.S. needing “to be more involved to say more about what’s happening... in Palestine with the Palestinians,” adding that, “one stark contrast between myself and Congressman Engel is I’ve been critical of occupation, annexation, and detaining Palestinian children.” Pro-Israel PACs [had spent](#) \$1.5 million into a bid to defeat Bowman.
- **Progressive outrage at the Democratic Party’s platform failure to take harsh stances towards Israel**, notably in a Washington Post [opinion piece](#) by Huwaida Arraf, Sam Hindi, and Zeina Ashrawi Hutchison, lambasting the Democratic Party’s platform on Israel. The piece cites the July signing of more than 200 Democratic delegates on a statement calling for the conditioning of U.S. funding to Israel, claiming that these individuals “represent the base of the party and where it is headed in the future. They are a reflection of a sea change in the views of Democratic voters in recent years when it comes to Israel and Palestine, as evidenced by polls showing more Democrats support imposing sanctions or stronger action against Israel over settlement construction.” Tying the Palestinian issue to the American anti-racism struggle, the authors posit that, “At this critical moment in our country’s history, when millions are mobilizing in demand of racial justice, equality and accountability, the

DNC's failure to advocate policies that guarantee the same to Palestinians is deeply troubling, and inconsistent with the wishes of most Democratic voters.”

Also, James Zogby's editorial on the Democratic Party platform in the [New York Daily News](#) makes the case for the potential for progressives to increase impact upon the Democratic Israel agenda, focusing on conditioning aid to Israel based on its human rights performance and warning of consequences for Israeli annexation of Palestinian land or continuation of “the settlement enterprise.”

More general indicators of growing progressive influence in Democratic Party politics were reflected in:

- **The defeat of Democratic establishment-backed candidate James Mackler**, a Jewish veteran, who [lost](#) Tennessee's Senate primary – placing third of five candidates and behind two progressive opponents – to activist Marquita Bradshaw, who tweeted, following her victory, that “The progressive movement is undeniable!”
- **A progressive wave in local elections to [prosecutor's offices](#)**, in which in the last two weeks three candidates representing the most progressive positions upended their Democratic opponents, joining a wave of progressives who have already won prosecutor's offices this year. Said newly elected Eli Savit of Washtenaw County (Ann Arbor), Michigan, “This is an alliance nationwide, but it has to be one county at a time and I'm so excited the movement is growing.”
- **Biden's ‘stealth progressive shift’** – In [the Atlantic](#): “Despite embracing an agenda that is further to the left than that of any Democratic nominee in decades, Biden benefits from stereotyping in a similar way. His race, gender, and age incline voters to view him as moderate. But race, gender, and age don't explain everything.” According to Waleed Shahid, the communications director for Justice Democrats, Biden's agenda is “the most progressive platform of any Democratic nominee in the modern history of the party.”

Thus far, Biden has consistently held firm in Israel (see, for example, [here](#) on Biden's role in ensuring that the Democratic Party platform not denounce Israel amid reports that prior to his intervention, for example, the party had secured agreement to include the word “occupation” for the first time), but it seems clear where the winds are blowing with the next iteration of Democratic leadership.

Traditional anti-Semitism influences the left field

Disequilibrium on the right provokes systemic effects – Israel's status as a bi-partisan and consensus issue in the U.S. is a pillar of Israeli national security; as is Jews' related politically empowered status, which is a pillar of U.S. Jewish communities' security. These statuses are maintained through a delicate equilibrium – a shift on one side of the political map will affect dynamics throughout the ecosystem. In recent decades, system dynamics have predominantly incentivized both sides to ‘out-support’ each other on Israel and against anti-Semitism. Today, anti-Semitism in Republican ranks affect the constraints that have played a part in holding back anti-Semitic expression on the left. Additionally, Republican partisan exploitation of left-wing anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel further divides Democratic moderate and progressive wings, contributing to making Jewish and Israel ‘political football’ in a partisan game; moreover, Republican

amplification of the issue ensures its prominent placement in national conversations and accompanying debates about what constitutes anti-Semitism that are driven by a divisive and destructive agenda.

- **Mainstreaming traditional anti-Semitism from the right:** A Republican Party that is not a viable candidate for U.S. Jewish support cancels the competition for Jewish support that has been a driver of bi-partisan support for Jews and for Israel. In the context of growing presence of white supremacist ideologies on the right, see [this discussion](#) of “how white supremacy infected Christianity and the Republican Party,” and also the rising role of conspiracy theories, often centered on Jewish and pro-Israel influence, and prominently far-right conspiracy theory QAnon [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- **Left-wing anti-Zionist anti-Semitism is serving Republicans effectively as they seek to plunge a wedge more decisively into the Democratic center.** This attack strategy is prominent in the [messaging featured](#) in a recent video from The Exodus Project – an organization “committed to educating and assisting those who have yet to make their Exodus from the Left.” – and presents a threat of accelerating polarization by framing a false set of choices.

Jewish cracks: Mounting threats to Jewish communal cohesion

Developments in recent weeks reflect growing obstacles to constructive dialogue between and among Jewish communities in Israel and in the U.S.:

- **Seth Rogan [exposes](#) Jewish cracks:** Seth Rogan’s negative comments about Israel and Israel education (also covered in the [New York Times](#), featuring approving quotes from an IfNotNow representative) exposed cracks between an increasingly vocal segment of the Jewish population that applauded Rogan for his bravery and identified with his sentiments, and those that experienced his public comments as an ungrateful betrayal.
- **Missed opportunity to open a door to Israeli-Jewish world dialogue:** Following Jewish Agency Chair Isaac Herzog’s public disclosures of a seemingly positive conversation between him and Seth Rogan, Rogan [expressed](#) a feeling of betrayal at being quoted on what he thought was an off-the-record call and being misrepresented.
- **Coming ruptures between Jewish institutions and American Jews on the left over the two-state solution** – Contradictions inherent in Jewish institutional support for Israeli policies that counter core values held by left-wing American Jews, which pursuit of a two-state solution covered over for decades, are becoming more and more exposed. For many, annexation represents a red line; they are becoming disillusioned with the Jewish institutions seen as failing to meaningfully oppose such a move (see, for example, [here](#)).
- **A distancing feedback loop** – Beinart’s inversion against support for Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state represents diminishing potential for robust Israel-world Jewry dialogue: See Brett Stephens in the [New York Times](#), “For decades, the opinions and advice of American Jews mattered to Israel. But if the views of a significant segment of American Jewish opinion are soon to harden into a moralizing anti-Zionism, it will only persuade Israelis to reciprocate with indifference and contempt. Whatever

else advocates of a one-state solution think they are doing, they are withdrawing from any meaningful dialogue with Israelis about the future of a Jewish homeland.”

Brave new influence environment, social media, and anti-Semitism

Growing attention to the role of social media platforms as showcases for anti-Semitism, and their uneven treatment of the sources of anti-Semitism, is resulting from [increased pressure](#) applied to social media companies to address hate speech on their platforms:

Importantly, **social media platforms are much better at fighting right-wing anti-Semitism**, e.g.: Facebook and Twitter [banning](#) QAnon-related material; Twitter [permanently banning](#) David Duke; whereas **recent weeks showed again where social media platforms are not so good at fighting other forms of anti-Semitism**. This is specifically true for forms of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel expression that the left side of the political map has proven more tolerant of: prominently, controversy surround Philadelphia NAACP Chapter President Rodney Muhammad [exposed](#) the multitude of anti-Semitic posts prominently posted on the Facebook page of the mosque where Muhammed is minister; and Twitter’s [defense](#) of its decision to flag President Trump’s tweet about violent demonstrations but not Iran’s calls for violence against Israel.

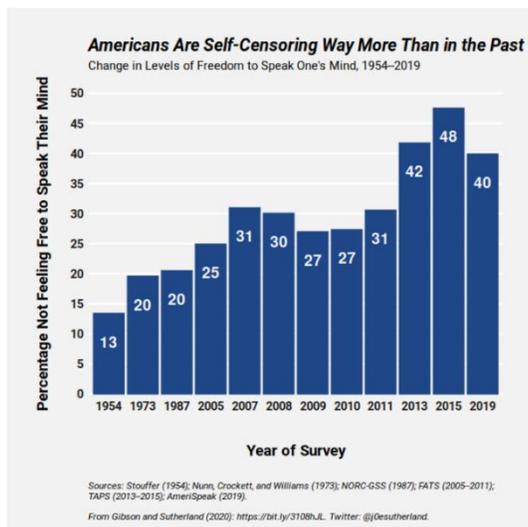
Indeed, **social mediascapes reflect broader political sensibilities; specifically, a left-wing one-dimensional focus on right-wing anti-Semitism** to the exclusion of addressing the phenomenon on the left. This one-dimensional focus was on display recently, for example, in the agenda for [this fundraiser](#) for Joe Biden, billed as a “Virtual Conversation on Anti-Semitism,” and in the readiness of progressives and progressive Jewish communities [to condemn](#) Senator David Perdue of Georgia who released an campaign ad that enlarged his Jewish opponent’s nose compared to relative silence on other recent prominent examples of anti-Semitic discourse.

More broadly, **a rapidly changing influence environment** enables groups, as never before, to connect and mobilize; and to bypass and influence establishment gatekeepers in political, societal, and media arenas. Social media is a driving force in this process of societal decentralizing that is rewarding fringes and extremes; and navigating these changing waters often require adopting new and different engagement strategies. Recent weeks have seen discussion about [Tik Tok](#) as “the latest in a line of new communication technologies that began with simpler intentions but were drawn into politics once they reached a critical mass,” and Instagram’s transformation into “[a hub](#) for information and advocacy” and a platform for an alternative, interactive [news source](#).

Cancel culture and the silencing of voices against left-wing anti-Semitism

Growing discussion beyond the political right-wing about the implications of the ‘cancelling’ phenomenon as a byproduct of ‘woke’ culture – Cancelling, or the threat of excommunication of the bearer of opinions deemed to contradict the edicts of wokeness, can play a role in preemptively or actively silencing Jewish advocacy or pro-Israel expression. The [resignation](#) of the University of Southern California’s Undergraduate Student Government President Rose Ritch after being harassed by students for her support for Israel, for which she has also been labeled as racist, is the latest outcome of what Ritch

described as a culture shift in which students ‘cancel’ those they disagree with. (See also Matti Friedman [here](#) on Israel as ‘patient zero’ of ‘cancel culture.’)



▪ **Silencing of the lone voices committed to educating about anti-Semitism on the left** – In an ironic twist that represents the potential and importance of brave advocacy voices, as part of his process of reconciliation following recent anti-Semitic comments, Nick Cannon [reviewed](#) a book written by Bari Weiss, who recently resigned from the New York Times claiming an intolerance to the differing perspectives she represented. Cannon wrote, “In this insightful read, the words that stood out to me were ‘Anti-Semitism is fueled by the malicious but often feeds on the ignorance of the well-intentioned.’”

Similarly in this context, see [this interview](#) with outgoing Consul General of Israel in New York Dani Dayan, who entered the position reviled for his outspoken support for settlements and is leaving showered with more accolades by more different communities than any other Israeli diplomat in recent history (Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., for example, enacted an “Ambassador Dani Dayan Day”). Dayan’s approach of engaging with his authentic voice, even if - and especially given - that it departs from what people are used to hearing, can be an informative lesson in the potential benefits of braving cancel culture. (Dayan indeed suggests that U.S. Jewish organizations start hosting Israeli Orthodox politicians to speak to American audiences, and not only the ‘usual suspects’ who are well-versed in conversing according to progressive sensibilities.)

Liberals are especially susceptible to self-censorship – A recent [study](#) substantiates that: Americans are increasingly self-censoring, moderates are just as likely to self-censor as those who fall on either end of the ideological spectrum, and Americans are more likely to self-censor the more urban and educated they are.

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

This moment of acute crises is also ushering in many new initiatives that represent an unparalleled opportunity for innovation. When new modes of engagement prove robust, they are ripe for tailored replication in additional localities and communities, and potentially nationwide. Therefore, this section surveys highlights from the approaches generated in recent weeks as a basis for further monitoring.

Efforts focused on improving Black-Jewish relations

Given the prominence of Black-Jewish relations in the broader discourse, a lion's share of engagement effort can be seen centering on addressing challenges in this arena.

Black Jewish solidarity 'micro' initiatives

Notable developments are manifesting locally on societal and political levels:

- **An Orthodox synagogue and a Black church** in Baltimore, Md. Are partnering on a '[walking tour](#)' app educational initiative to teach children the shared local history of the Black and Jewish communities as "the first step to bringing Baltimore's Black and Jewish communities closer together."
- **A monthly [Zoom dialogue](#)** in Chattanooga, TN focusing on Black-Jewish relations aims to "re-initiate connections and relationships between the African American and Jewish communities."
- **Black and Jewish members of the Michigan Legislature [announced](#) the formation of the Black and Jewish Unity Caucus** at the Michigan State Capitol, partnering with the Coalition for Black and Jewish Unity, an initiative of the JCRC/AJC and the Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit and Vicinity. The caucus will also serve as the state equivalent to the national Congressional Caucus for Black and Jewish Relations, based on a conviction that Michigan needs a "narrow focus to take on hate in the local community."
- **Local legislators, Black and Jewish, in Pennsylvania issued a [joint statement](#)** drawing on their state and local community leadership positions to "condemn any anti-Semitic statements and cannot ignore intolerance involving any racist, anti-Semitic or bigoted comments."
- Moreover, **the case of the Jewish community's efforts to stand against the anti-Semitism of Philadelphia NACP Chapter President Rodney Muhammad may demonstrate the benefits of working locally.** While Jewish institutions have [been unable](#) to get a strong condemnation issued by the national NAACP, the Pennsylvania State Conference was forthcoming with such a rejection of Muhammad's anti-Semitism (see [here](#)). To address the issue on the local level, the Jewish community relied on intensive organizing and drew upon long-cultivated relationships: the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia [convened](#) a press conference to address this issue. According to State Sen. Anthony Williams, "many African American leaders attended- the head of the state NAACP, two state senators, a city councilwoman, a labor leader -all African Americans standing with the organized Jewish community expressing their outrage. So as bad as the situation is, I am uplifted by seeing our community standing together to express its outrage against hate."

Focusing on the common threat posed by white supremacy

The issue of boldly confronting white supremacy is gaining in urgency and presents a potent common cause for Black-Jewish allyship (see example [here](#) on pressure for state legislatures to adopt and enforce laws on hate crimes). Blacks and Jews are the main targets of white supremacists (see [here](#) for example on two historic cemeteries in Virginia, one Jewish and one Black, recently vandalized with Nazi imagery).

Notably, the seeds for the upcoming formation of the Michigan Black and Jewish Unity Caucus were initially [planted](#), according to co-initiator Sen. Jeremy Moss, at the April 30 “protest at the capitol where Nazi imagery and Confederate flags were displayed side-by-side. This was the time to come together as two targeted communities to support one another and team up and build on our efforts to combat the type of rhetoric that leads to hateful actions.” Among the first policy objectives the group is expected to pursue are bills banning Nazi and Confederate imagery.

Intersectionalizing institutionalized Judaism and the role of Jews of color

The call for Jewish institutions to intersectionalize within grows louder and more insistent that this is a necessary adaptation in order to maintain an authentic voice in the anti-racism struggle; to ensure that the Jewish fight against anti-Semitism is unsullied with internal hypocrisy; and to more generally adapt to a period in which individual identity, and the complexity of overlapping identities, play a greater role in affiliation (see for example [this](#) anecdote, which highlights a claim that the author’s “experience was indicative of broader issues within the fight against anti-Semitism – that the movement needed more intersectionality to combat racist tendencies in some parts of the culture”). Indeed, local examples of initiatives in this direction focused on empowering Black-Jewish voices provide promising examples of potentially replicable approaches – see, for example, [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Outing, naming, and shaming: People-to-people style

In parallel to the focus on supporting the Black right struggle, Jewish and pro-Israel communities are working to vigilantly identify and clearly confront ideological adversaries. The national and popular conversation ignited by Black support for Louis Farrakhan and expanding into a broader exploration of the prevalence of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories in Black communities is an extremely valuable opportunity to unabashedly out, name, and shame malicious anti-Semitism. In this context, two examples from the past couple weeks stand out for their personal and authentic tone: [this](#) Jewish rapper Kosha Dillz response to Wiley, and Zioness’s [treatment](#) of Farrakhan.

Showing up with a unique Jewish voice

A number of inspiring initiatives seized upon the Jewish day of mourning, Tisha b’Av, to express solidarity with the calamities facing American Blacks (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Combating social media platform’s inaction on anti-Semitism

While the U.S. Jewish establishment has focused hate-combating efforts largely on Facebook, **the past weeks have seen a groundswell of movement targeting Twitter’s tolerance of anti-Semitic hate from ‘red’ and ‘green’ ends of the ideological spectrum.** While these expressions of anti-Semitism do not stem from progressive discourse, they are significant in their being far more likely to be tolerated in progressive circles and thus to affect constraints on progressive discourse on Jews and Israel. Efforts to combat them achieve an additional effect of exposing hypocrisy within progressive circles when it comes to anti-Jewish hate.

- **A 48-hour #NoSafeSpaceForJewHate Twitter boycott** [initiated](#) by UK Jews and protesting anti-Semitism on the platform was triggered by rapper Wiley's anti-Semitic tweets and the lack of a forcible response. The initiative [garnered](#) widespread support from well-known entertainment industry figures and was prominently covered in mainstream media.
- **A Knesset [hearing](#) held Twitter accountable** for a “double standard” of censoring comments by politicians that it has deemed hate speech while allowing Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to tweet calls to “eliminate” Israel.

The End.