

Development of a CJC Statement of Racial Justice FAQs

Why do we need a Statement of Racial Justice?

Creating a congregational statement conveying our commitment to racial justice expresses our Jewish value of honoring all people as G-d's holy creations. With this statement, we aim to deepen CJC's inclusive culture as we celebrate our Jewish rituals and foster relationships of deep respect within our congregation.

Further, this statement will express our commitment to being active in our larger community's effort for racial justice, both in partnering with/supporting the work of other organizations and through our own initiative. The statement, informed by our communal values, will act as a compass, guiding our actions.

Why now?

- 1) The world is on fire as new injustices are being exposed every day. It feels critical for CJC to step up and step in to take a more active role in pursuing the good. CJC is a brave community! If anyone has the chutzpah, it's us!
- 2) Antisemitism is on the rise! One way to combat anti-semitism is to build bridges through building relationships. This statement is a step toward reaching out, cultivating and deepening relationships, and creating a shared spiritual home where people of any race can access belonging and a sense of safety.
- 3) We are inspired to follow the lead of our county as they prepare to roll out a Racial Equity Plan, which will build on the [Racial Equity Framework for Howard County](#) published in 2022.

How will CJC benefit from having this statement?

Some specific benefits of having a Statement of Racial Justice:

- It will demonstrate that we have given deep consideration to our values and priorities and are making public our intentional welcome. It confirms our tagline – ***“Wherever you are in your journey, you are welcome here.”***
- Having the statement will enable the clergy and leadership to respond quickly in the name of CJC in matters related to racial justice.
- It will join our already adopted statements on [Gender Identity and Gender Expression](#), [Marriage Equality](#), and [Immigration](#), which express our deeply held values of inclusion and respect for all people.

- It will help to make CJC a more welcoming, inclusive, and holy congregation for all, including all Jews and their families.

Why do we need to have focus groups? Can't the Standing for Racial Justice Committee just write the statement and the Board approve it?

At a minimum, we want all CJC members to know that we are developing the Statement on Racial Justice and what it means for the congregation. We are committed to as many members as possible having a voice in developing the Statement so that it reflects the ideas and feelings that speak for us all.

Why racial justice? Shouldn't we be focusing on Anti-semitism?

- Based on the three most comprehensive data sets available (the 2013–2019 American Jewish Population Project, the 2011 New York Community Study, and the 2017 San Francisco Bay Area Community Study) **researchers estimate that self-identifying Jews of Color represent at least 12-15% of American Jews**, or about 1 million of the United States' 7.2 million Jews.¹
- More younger people identify as non-white than older people do.

This means that the future of American Jewry is racially diverse! So, fighting to dismantle systemic racism IS fighting for the Jewish community!

And EVEN if this was not the present and future of the Jewish people, Torah teaches us:

לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל־דַּם רֵעֶךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Do not stand idly by as your neighbor bleeds. I am YHWH. [Leviticus 19:16]

When we see injustice happening, not to us, but to another in our midst, our tradition commands us to step forward!

We know, from history, that the greatest safety comes through solidarity, and we know that the way forward is to fight antisemitism alongside all other forms of oppression. We aim to strengthen one another and build communal power

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<https://leichtag.org/press-release-population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20three%20most,1%2C000%2C000%20of%20the%20United%20States>

against the forces that threaten us all. This is a shared struggle and we MUST do our part.

Why are we focusing on “racial” justice instead of the broader “social” justice?

In this project, we are aiming for targeted universalism.² The Standing for Racial Justice Committee asserts that we should be universal in our goals and aspirations, but targeted in our approach. The universal aspiration is a society where all lives are valued equally and where all people have what they need to thrive. However, if we only proclaim that aspiration and stop there, we are ignoring the reality in America. We also water down our power and muddy our mission. It is easy to see that all lives are not valued equally in America and much of this difference is how white people and Black, Brown and Indigenous people are differently situated and supported within the systems and institutions that are the foundation of this country.

By naming a particular commitment, we are not saying that other justice movements are less important or that others don't deserve care, attention, and allyship (including the Jewish people!). What we ARE saying is that we see the historical struggles of Black, Brown and Indigenous people in the United States, we know we have a role to play in bringing equity and *tikkun* [healing] to our society, and that we commit to supporting the Black, Brown and Indigenous communities in finding justice.

If the statement is approved by the Board, what happens next?

The statement will join the other statements of CJC's commitments on our website so that members of the community, as well as prospective members, can learn about the values that we hold and the actions that we take. Further, we intend that the words of the Statement will spur greater action within CJC and in the wider community.

² <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism>