A SIMPLE GUIDE: UNDERSTANDING JEWISH IDENTITY & ANTI-SEMITISM

Most people don’t know what it means to be a Jew, what antisemitism is, or how it works. Fixing these misunderstandings is necessary to help people recognize & combat anti-Jewish ideas & understand why pushing back on antisemitism is so necessary.

WHO/WHAT ARE THE JEWS?

WHAT PEOPLE SEE

- white
- religion

WHO WE ARE

- SKIN COLOR
- HISTORY
- ETHNICITY
- LANGUAGE
- CULTURE
- ALL RACES
- WHO WE ARE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A JEW?

- Most people think Jews are a religious community.
- But, Jews have identified as part of a people or an ethnic group, with a collective or national identity, for thousands of years longer than the existence of organized religion.
- Someone could be an atheist & still be Jewish.

JEWS = A PEOPLE (NOT JUST A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY)
WHAT IS MODERN ANTISEMITISM

MODERN ANTISEMITISM = ANTI-JEW OR JEW HATE, NOT ANTI-JUDAISM

Most people think antisemitism is about religion, but antisemitism is about people.

Jews are typically attacked for who we are, not how we pray.

Antisemitism usually presents as anti-Jew or Jew-hate, not anti-Judaism.

We aren’t often attacked for how we pray but for who we are and what people accuse us of doing or being responsible for (e.g. ills of society).

When someone attacks Jews at a synagogue, it’s usually because the synagogue is an easy place to find & attack Jews.

When someone attacks an Orthodox Jewish person on the street, it’s usually because they’re a visible Jew.

Most Americans understand systems of power & oppression as fixed in a society, so it can be hard to imagine a group that some perceive as privileged ending up victims of systemic oppression.

There are countless examples of Jews living safely & even thriving for a time in a society, only for something to change and for Jews to be violently and systemically attacked, murdered, and/or expelled.

Throughout Jewish history, skin color & status have not ensured safety.

This is true in Europe (white-presenting Jews) the Middle East or Asia (brown-presenting Jews), and Africa (black-presenting Jews).

HOW DOES ANTISEMITISM WORK?

JEWISH SAFETY IN A SOCIETY CAN CHANGE RAPIDLY