



# UNLEARN ANTISEMITISM

A LEARNING GUIDE FOR UNLEARN IT





## **A Learning Guide for *Unlearn It***

This guide is intended to help support your learning journey through the *Unlearn It for Everyone* videos. Your facilitator, Jess Burke, is your “tour guide” and will share helpful introductions for each theme featured in this course.

This guide can be used if you are learning in a group or on your own. The questions and prompts can be used for personal reflection or to help foster conversation within groups.



## **PART 1:** **INTRODUCTION TO UNLEARN IT FOR EVERYONE**

### **Facilitator Introduction**

Use these guided prompts throughout your learning journey to reflect on what you hope to gain from these modules and consider how you will create the conditions for your own learning *and* unlearning.

1. What are you hoping to take away from these learning modules? What are your personal learning goals?
2. How might your own identity and experiences impact the ways in which you connect to these modules? How might your identity and lived experience impact the topic of addressing and responding to contemporary antisemitism?
3. If you do not identify as Jewish, what are the ways in which you are proximal or connected to members of the Jewish community?
4. Throughout the course of these modules, we will ask you to think about how the content S.I.T.s with you. When you see this prompt, we are asking you to pause to reflect on something from the video that is Surprising to you, something you find Interesting, and something that is Troubling.

Slow down to consider Jess Burke's comments:

What do you think Jess means when she says the following? What might be some of the implications of these statements for Jewish people?

1. "The marginalization of Jewish people, our histories, our intergenerational traumas, our resilience, our successes and contributions to Canada and global society, are often erased, "revisioned," and even written and spoken over."
2. "Unlike most Canadian immigrants and their descendants, Jews did not come from a majority cultural group or from a sovereign nation, but rather from other diasporic regions, where they had lived as minorities dispersed throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and Europe."



## PART 2: UNPACKING JEWISH IDENTITY

### Who are the Jews and What is Jewish Identity?

“The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult.”

[Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's \*The Danger of a Single Story\* TED Talk](#)

Think about some of the commonly held “single stories” of Jewish people. (You do not need to share them, but think about them for yourself).

This video begins by saying that “Jewish identity is multifaceted and complex.” How has this video helped to expand the *single stories* that are held about Jewish people? In what ways is Jewish identity more multifaceted and complex than we may have previously known?

Slow down to consider Jess Burke’s comments:

1. “Before we discuss anti-Jewish oppression, discrimination or antisemitism, we should first know who Jewish people are, where they come from, and what forms their Jewish identity.” Consider the connection between this statement and the following quote from [Dr. Doris Bergen](#), the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies at the University of Toronto:

*"...Prejudices always reveal more about the people who hold them than they do about those at whom they are directed. You will not learn much useful information about Judaism or Jews by studying antisemitism, but you can learn quite a lot about antisemites, their insecurities and their fears [...]*

*"Prejudices are habits of thought; they are not reasoned responses to objective realities. When you read descriptions of common prejudices [...] keep in mind that these attitudes were based on imaginings about people rather than on who those people really were."*

Dr. Doris L. Bergen, *The Holocaust: A Concise History*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 2009.

2. What other reasons come to mind for why it is important to begin this course with an examination of the diversity of Jewish people and the multifaceted ways in which Jews connect with their Jewish identities?

*"A comprehensive academic study, *Survey of Jews in Canada*, conducted in 2018, published a final report indicating that Jewish Canadians viewed themselves as: 22% mainly a matter of culture, 15% mainly a matter of ancestry / descent, 12% mainly a matter of religion, and 33% believing that all three are equally as important."*

3. Are these findings surprising to you?
4. How does it connect with what Jess said earlier in this segment, "Today Jews are often reduced to only a religious or "faith" group, but really, these concepts and words used to define us are thousands of years newer than our actual identities. Today, Jews are usually considered an ethnoreligious group, which, simply put, means that Jews are unified by both a common ethnic background and a common religious background."
5. Do you see a disconnect in who Jewish people tell us they are, versus who society tells us Jews are? Take a moment to reflect on the data about Canadian Jewish self-identification and the ways in which we have seen Jewish people referenced, represented, and depicted in the media, in our communities, and elsewhere.

## Additional Resources:

- [2018 Survey of Jews in Canada - Final Report](#) (Environics Institute for Survey Research, University of Toronto, York University)
- [The Science of Race](#) (Facing History & Ourselves)
- [Periphery](#) (No Silence on Race, Ontario Jewish Archives) is an evocative photographic and film project that bears witness to ethnic diversity in the Jewish community. Sharing narratives from individuals of multiracial and multiethnic backgrounds. *Periphery* creates space to look, listen, and learn from participants as they share their experiences and explore ideas of representation, intersectionality, ethnicity, race, and sexuality.



## PART 3: UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM

### Jewish Lived Experience of Antisemitism

1. This video includes many harmful caricatures of Jewish people from different eras. Pause the video on one or more of these images and take a moment to identify some of the ways that stereotypes of Jewish people have been spread through drawings, paintings, and cartoons. Why do you think racial imagery is used as such a powerful method to spread hate?
2. In a Newsweek article Natan Sharansky explains his 3D test for antisemitism as follows, "If we watch a 3D movie without 3D glasses, we see a blurred, partial picture. But when we put on our 3D glasses everything becomes clear—and when we use the 3D test for anti-Semitism we can easily distinguish between legitimate criticism [of Israel] and anti-Semitism. These 3Ds—demonization, delegitimization and double standards—are the three main tools that anti-Semites employed against Jews throughout history."

[Natan Sharansky: Why BDS Fails My 3D Test on anti-Semitism.](#) Newsweek. September 25, 2019.

As you watch this short video, take a closer look at one of the examples of historic antisemitism. Can you apply the 3Ds to that example? Are Jews being demonized, delegitimized, or are double standards being applied?



How are these 3Ds helpful in assessing whether words, actions, or images are conveying legitimate criticism of the Israeli government policy? How can the 3Ds test be used as a tool to redirect antisemitic bias instead of reinforcing antisemitism?

Slow down to consider Jess Burke's comments:

1. a) Take a moment to define the following terms: imperialism, colonialism, inquisitions, expulsions, ghettoization, and slavery.  
  
b) Reflect on whether you have ever considered that these terms might connect to Jewish experiences.
2. How does this video S.I.T. with you?
3. What is something new that you learned about the ways that Jewish people in different parts of the world have experienced anti-Jewish racism?
4. "Jewish people exist in a liminal space. We are often labeled as too white to participate in anti-racism initiatives in our workplaces, or to be victimized by racism itself; we are then simultaneously labeled as non-white, by the structures of white supremacy, historically and contemporarily, all the while, Jews of colour, Sephardim, Mizrahim, and Black Jews are completely erased, spoken over, and perceived as non-existent." Is Jewish existence subject to stereotypes about appearance? Is Jewish existence subject to stereotypes about behaviour? Has your understanding of how Jews show up in the world shifted since beginning this module?

### Additional Resources:

- [The Power of a Lie: The History of the Blood Libel](#) (Facing History & Ourselves)
- [Antisemitism from the Enlightenment to World War I](#) (Facing History & Ourselves)
- [Antisemitism Today](#) (United States Holocaust Museum)
- [Antisemitism Uncovered: Myth – Jews Have Too Much Power](#) (ADL)



## **PART 4:** **UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA**

### **The History of Antisemitism in Canada and the Lived Experience of Canadian Jews**

1. How does this video S.I.T. with you?
2. How do the [Four I's of Oppression](#)\*\* apply to the examples in this video?
3. While, in Canada today, we may no longer see the same overt examples of institutional oppression of years past targeting Jewish people, structural antisemitism *does* still exist. How do you think that the other three I's (Ideology, Interpersonal, and Internalized) [oppression] impact Jewish Canadians today?
4. What can we do as individuals to recognize and eradicate behaviours, cultural norms, and practices within institutions that are ingrained, but unwritten, and are de facto maintaining and perpetuating an antisemitic status quo?
5. What do you think are some of the effects of antisemitism in Canada, on both Jews and non-Jews?

Slow down to consider Jess Burke's comments:

1. Consider how structural racism has persisted. This video provides a helpful construct for understanding the ways in which oppression takes root and is expressed within society. As you consider the two stories that Jess shares in this section (*The Ideal Maternity Home* and the *Hôpital Notre-Dame*), consider how Ideology, Institutional, Interpersonal, and Internalized oppression are at work in each case. Which I's were obvious to you? Which I's were more subtle to you?

### **\*\*Extended Learning: The Four I's of Oppression**

- i. Ideological: the *idea* that one group is somehow better than another, and in some measure has the right to control the other group.
- ii. Institutional: the institutions of society—the laws, the legal system and police practice, the education system and schools, hiring policies, public policies, housing development, media images, political power, etc.—are grounded in and perpetuate the idea of one group's superiority.
- iii. Interpersonal: individualized behaviors by members of the dominant group that disrespect or mistreat individuals in non-dominant groups.
- iv. Internalized: when members of oppressed groups experience the oppression and come to believe (internalize) the negative messages about themselves and their group membership.

### **Additional Resources:**

- [Christie Pits Riots](#) (The Canadian Encyclopedia)
- [Full text of Justin Trudeau's St. Louis apology](#) (The Canadian Jewish News)
- [Survivors of dark episode in Canada's history trace their past: The Butterbox Babies - Horrific Canadian Child Rights Story](#) (Canadian Children's Rights Council)
- [Dr. Sam Rabinovitch and The Notre-Dame Hospital Strike - Hôpital Notre-Dame](#) (Museum of Jewish Montreal)



## **PART 5:** **A PATH FORWARD**

### **How to be Anti-Antisemitic**

“Jewish people have always been involved in pursuits of racial justice, in seeking equity, and in pursuing freedoms. There’s always a place for Jews at the table, whether that is equity, diversity, and inclusion committees, anti-racism initiatives, or anti-oppression learning. Jewish people should be able to speak about their own experience and should not be spoken over. Jewish folks should be able to share their histories and their full identities. And it is the Jewish people themselves who should be allowed to define their own Jewish identity, their experiences with oppression or racialization, and what their liberation movement might involve.”

Slow down to consider Jess Burke’s comments:

1. At the conclusion of this experience, ask yourself: What will you do with this learning? Is there something that you have learned that you will share with others? Is there a topic or theme that you would like to learn more about? How will you look for ways to stand up for your Jewish colleagues, peers, and community members?

### **Additional Resources:**

- [How to be Anti-Antisemitism](#) (Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs)

## Research Footnotes

- I. *Abraham Ascher, Russia: A Short History. (Oxford: One World Publications, 2002). "Many lower-class people were convinced the Jews were responsible for the Tsar's assassination. In 1881 marauders unleashed pogroms in 48 some two hundred villages and towns leaving at least 40 Jews dead, many more wounded and hundreds of women raped. The destruction of Jewish neighborhoods left hundreds of people homeless in several cities."*
- II. *Gendered Violence: Jewish Women in the Pogroms of 1917-1921 by Irina Astashkevich.*