

The Antisemitism Laundromat: Nexus Project's Mission to Sanitize Anti-Zionist Hate

By Gregg Roman

The contemporary struggle over the definition of antisemitism constitutes one of the most volatile fronts in the culture war engaging the American Jewish community, the progressive political left, and the legal apparatus of the United States. Within this contested terrain, the Nexus Project has emerged not merely as a pseudo-scholarly initiative, but as a strategic intervention designed to reshape the boundaries of permissible discourse regarding Israel and Zionism. Established ostensibly to explore the intersection of antisemitism and Israel with nuance, a forensic examination reveals a more specific functional purpose: the construction of an intellectual and political firewall that protects anti-Zionist rhetoric and actors from the stigma and legal consequences of being classified as antisemitic under the widely adopted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism.

The Nexus Project operates as a fiscally sponsored project of the [New Israel Fund](#) (NIF), launched in November 2019 immediately after the Trump administration codified IHRA. The organization has achieved its central strategic objective: insertion into official U.S. policy, fragmenting Jewish communal consensus on antisemitism, and deployment as a defense mechanism whenever progressive figures face accusations of Jew-hatred related to Israel. By prioritizing intent over outcome, the organization effectively creates a safe harbor for political attacks on Jewish self-determination, offering an ideological fig leaf to factions that would otherwise be marginalized by the mainstream Jewish community.

Personnel Forensics: The Ideological DNA of Nexus

A forensic audit of an organization begins with its human capital, which reveals a monolithic consolidation of the institutional left rather than a diverse academic inquiry. The leadership and task force members share a dense web of professional affiliations centering on the New Israel Fund, J Street, and academic centers dedicated to challenging traditional Zionist narratives. This insular network suggests that Nexus functions less as an independent think tank than as the intellectual defense ministry for a specific political faction. The Task Force was initially [hosted](#) by the Knight Program on Media and Religion at USC Annenberg from 2019 to 2021 before affiliating with the Bard Center for the Study of Hate, maintaining institutional connections that reveal its ideological orientation.

The Leadership Core

Jonathan Jacoby, the president and national director who founded Nexus in 2019, exemplifies the project's genealogical roots in progressive Israel-critical advocacy. Jacoby [served](#) as the founding executive director of the New Israel Fund from 1982 to 1988, then as president of Americans for Peace Now from 1989 to 1992, and subsequently as founding executive director

and co-founder of the Israel Policy Forum from 1993 to 2005. This 40-year trajectory through the institutional infrastructure of progressive Jewish engagement with Israel is critical because the NIF has historically been the primary financial engine for civil society organizations in Israel that challenge the state's character, including groups that have accused Israel of war crimes and apartheid. Jacoby's transition to Nexus represents a shift from funding the activism to defining the legitimacy of that activism, ensuring that the charges leveled by his former grantees remain within the bounds of acceptable [discourse](#). The child of Holocaust survivors—his mother Erika survived Auschwitz—Jacoby deploys this biographical detail to establish moral authority while advancing positions that mainstream Jewish organizations characterize as enabling antisemitism.

In his May 2022 *Times of Israel* piece, Jacoby articulated the core Nexus position: “I know people who oppose Zionism, and they are far from being anti-Semites. Their opposition does not necessarily reflect a specific anti-Jewish [stance](#).” In his December 2022 *Forward* op-ed, Jacoby argued that unlike other forms of antisemitism, left-wing antisemitism is often a hatred that begins with anger toward Israel, not a hatred of Jews qua [Jews](#). He defended use of the term “apartheid” as “inflammatory but not antisemitic,” citing Yitzhak Rabin's own warning about avoiding apartheid conditions. In a September 2025 Interfaith Alliance [interview](#), Jacoby stated: “We don't think that any definition of antisemitism should be adopted in any formal way—certainly not incorporated into law. There's no definition of racism in law; why should there be a definition of antisemitism?” He further warned that “shouting down any political action directed against Israel as antisemitic made it harder for Jews to call out actual antisemitism, while stifling honest conversation about Israel's government and U.S. policy toward it.”

Kevin Rachlin, the vice president for government relations and Washington director, spent nearly seven years at J Street, rising to vice president of public affairs before joining Nexus in January 2024. J Street functions as the counterweight to AIPAC, frequently lobbying against measures that would penalize the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. Rachlin's transition signals a strategic division of labor: while J Street handles direct lobbying, Nexus provides the intellectual cover. In his March 2025 Senate Judiciary Committee [testimony](#), Rachlin argued that IHRA “becomes problematic when used as an enforcement mechanism because it conflates legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies with antisemitism.” Congressional staff have praised Rachlin for “helping the Beltway understand when people are using antisemitism—and using the Jewish community—for political purposes,” a framing that positions Nexus as a tool for deflecting rather than combating antisemitism [accusations](#).

Kenneth S. Stern, the original lead drafter of the IHRA definition itself, now [serves](#) as an ex officio Nexus Task Force member through his position directing the Bard Center for the Study of Hate. Stern's trajectory from authoring the definition at the American Jewish Committee in 2004-2005 to opposing its codification into law makes him a pivotal figure in antisemitism policy debates. He served as director of antisemitism and extremism at the AJC for 25 years, from 1989 to 2014, before joining Bard in 2018. His book, *The Conflict Over the Conflict: The*

Israel/Palestine Campus Debate (2020, University of Toronto Press), examines campus speech controversies from his perspective.

Stern has testified before Congress multiple times against the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, arguing the definition was “never intended to target or chill speech on a college campus,” but rather created “primarily so that European data collectors could know what to include and exclude.” His December 2019 *Guardian* [op-ed](#) was titled, “I Drafted the Definition of Antisemitism. Rightwing Jews Are Weaponizing It.” He wrote that “It was never intended to be a campus hate speech code.” In his [Boston Globe piece](#), he stated: “It was never intended to be weaponized to muzzle campus free speech.” When NPR asked directly in March 2025 whether the Trump administration was weaponizing antisemitism, Stern [responded](#): “Yes, it’s absolutely weaponizing antisemitism.” In September 2024 Senate testimony, Stern [argued](#): “Legally endorsing a binary—whether as the UN did when it adopted the Zionism=racism resolution in 1975, or the current attempt to use IHRA to legislate its mirror image (that anti-Zionism is antisemitism)—harms democracy and Jews and others, and is inappropriate for legislation.” On anti-Zionism specifically, he stated: “Not all antizionism is antisemitism, but this isn’t only a matter of political disagreement, it’s also a religious one, about whether Zionism is an essential part of Jewish identity.” And “antizionism is sometimes clearly antisemitic, it is sometimes clearly not antisemitic, and it is sometimes simply unclear.” Later in the testimony he said, “I am a Zionist. But I know many young Jews whose Judaism leads them to anti-Zionism. I disagree with them, but it is wrong to call them ‘unJews,’ let alone antisemites.” His presence allows the project to claim it is “saving” the true intent of antisemitism definitions from political abuse, effectively weaponizing his credibility to undermine the enforcement of the very standard he helped create.

The Academic Task Force: Scholars of Revisionism

The Nexus Task Force draws heavily from academic Jewish studies departments, assembling scholars whose published work and public statements demonstrate consistent patterns of challenging Zionist narratives, signing letters accusing Israel of apartheid and ethnic cleansing, endorsing the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as an alternative to IHRA, and opposing any codification of antisemitism definitions into law. This academic cohort provides the scholarly veneer for what functions as political advocacy.

Derek Penslar, the William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History at Harvard, became a national figure when his January 2024 appointment to co-chair Harvard’s Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism ignited fierce controversy. Penslar had signed an August 2023 letter—the “Elephant in the Room” letter drafted by David Myers—accusing Israel of “ethnic cleansing” and implementing “a regime of [apartheid](#).” The letter was signed by [2,147](#) academics. Penslar is also a founding signatory of the [Jerusalem Declaration](#) on Antisemitism, which serves as an alternative framework designed to narrow what constitutes antisemitism regarding Israel.

Critics of Penslar's Harvard appointment included former Harvard President Lawrence Summers, who [called](#) the appointment "highly problematic," stating that Penslar "has publicly minimized Harvard's anti-Semitism problem, rejected the definition used by the U.S. government in recent years as too broad, invoked the need for the concept of settler colonialism in analyzing Israel, referred to Israel as an apartheid state and more." Summers [compared](#) the appointment to putting "someone who had minimized the racism problem" on an antiracism task force. Bill Ackman [tweeted](#) that Harvard "continues on the path of darkness." Rep. Elise Stefanik said Penslar "is known for his despicable antisemitic [views](#) and statements." Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO, [criticized](#) naming "a professor who libels the Jewish state and claims that 'veins of hatred run through Jewish civilization.'"

In his December 2023 *Harvard Crimson* op-ed, Penslar argued: "Conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism magnifies divisions within our Harvard community and stymies a common struggle against [hatred](#)." He noted "the enormous media attention paid to antisemitism at Harvard has obscured the vulnerability of pro-Palestinian students, who have faced harassment by actors outside of the University and verbal abuse on and near campus." In *Fathom Journal*, he [stated](#): "I have long had reservations about the IHRA definition. Its sections on the nature of antisemitism lack clarity, and its judgment of critical discourse about Israel assumes guilt rather than innocence." Penslar told JTA that "outsiders took a very real problem and proceeded to exaggerate its scope" regarding Harvard antisemitism. Writing in *Tablet Magazine*, David Mikics of the New College of Florida concluded that Penslar's work is "designed to make Harvard and the larger world a safer place for [antisemites](#)—which is a scary thought." Notably, Penslar later expressed regret about signing the "Elephant in the Room" petition: "I do regret signing that one petition for the simple reason that the net value of signing a petition is pretty small and the net risk is high"—suggesting strategic rather than substantive [reconsideration](#).

David N. Myers, Distinguished Professor of Jewish History at UCLA and holder of the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Chair, serves on the Nexus Task Force while he simultaneously served as president of the New Israel Fund from 2018 to 2023, creating a direct conflict of interest or, at minimum, a unified strategic purpose between the funder and the [definer](#). Myers earned his Ph.D. with distinction from Columbia University in 1991 under Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and serves as founding director of the UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy and, since 2003, as co-editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*. His scholarly achievements include authoring *Jewish History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2016) and co-authoring with Nomi Stolzenberg *American Shtetl: The Making of Kiryas Joel* (Princeton, 2022), which won the National Jewish Book Award.

Myers was forced to resign as CEO of the Center for Jewish History in August 2018 after a coordinated campaign by activists, including the Zionist Organization of America, over his New Israel Fund [affiliations](#). Nearly 500 Jewish studies scholars, including Deborah Lipstadt, signed a petition defending him. His [comments](#) on Israel include describing it as "an increasingly illiberal version of democracy" and criticizing "the discriminatory, self-defeating, debilitating nature of

Israel's occupation." On BDS, Myers opposes "most forms of" boycotts of [Israel](#), but one critic has [written](#) that Myers and the New Israel Fund "leave open the possibility that boycotting goods originating from the West Bank could be a legitimate form of nonviolent protest." In a February 2025 *Los Angeles Times* [op-ed](#), Myers co-wrote that Trump's antisemitism executive order "mistakes dissent for bigotry." In October 2018, he [stated](#): "For those of us who care about Israel's future as a liberal democracy, there is no better home than the New Israel Fund." Myers drafted the "[Elephant in the Room](#)" letter signed by [2,147](#) academics stating that "Palestinians live under a regime of apartheid." In 2025, he signed a [letter](#) with 2,400+ Jewish scholars opposing the arrest and deportation of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil.

Dov Waxman, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair in Israel Studies at UCLA and Nexus Project Scholar in Residence, provides the sociological framework for Nexus and co-authored the Nexus Document itself. His book *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel* (Princeton, 2016) [argued](#) that Israel is "fast becoming a source of disunity for American Jewry, and that a new era of American Jewish conflict over Israel is replacing the old era of solidarity." Additional works include *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2019) and *Israel's Palestinians: The Conflict Within* (Cambridge, 2011), with Ilan Peleg. Waxman argues that the definition of antisemitism must adapt to the fracturing of American Jewish consensus. In the *Times of Israel*, he [argued](#): "The IHRA definition, and its accompanying examples, has been widely criticized, including by Jewish studies scholars who have warned that it could stifle legitimate criticism of Israel." In the same op-ed, he wrote that "Zionism is an ideology and hence is subject to critique like any political ideology. Opposing a Jewish state is not the same as hating the Jewish people." On [X](#), Waxman defended the Nexus Document: "Nexus clearly identifies when criticism of Israel or opposition to it crosses the line into antisemitism. But because it is clearer than IHRA in this respect, it is less susceptible to being misused and weaponized against Palestinians and their supporters."

Perhaps most significantly, Waxman [wrote](#) in August 2025 that he changed his position on genocide accusations against Israel: "I initially rejected the genocide charge, but I have changed my mind." He "firmly believed that the Israeli government had no intent to commit genocide in Gaza." However, "the evidence that was presented back then to support the genocide charge ... seemed insufficient to me to demonstrate the Israeli government's intention to commit genocide." This evolution—from a scholar who co-authored a definition ostensibly designed to distinguish legitimate criticism from antisemitism to one who now endorses genocide accusations against the Jewish state—exemplifies the trajectory of those supporting Nexus's agenda.

Ethan B. Katz, associate professor of history at UC Berkeley and faculty director of the Center for Jewish Studies, [chairs](#) Berkeley's Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Jewish Student Life and Campus Climate. His book *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Harvard, 2015) won the National Jewish Book Award, the J. Russell Major Prize from the American Historical Association, and the David H. Pinkney Prize from the

Society for French Historical Studies. Katz authored the Nexus “Campus Guide to Identifying Antisemitism in a Time of Perplexity” (2024) and co-founded the Antisemitism Education Initiative at Berkeley in 2019, which produced the training film “Antisemitism in Our Midst.” In the Fall/Winter issue of *Sources: A Journal of Jewish Ideas*, Katz distinguished between “critical anti-Zionism” (critiquing Zionism’s implementation) and “negationist anti-Zionism” (rejecting legitimacy of Jewish self-determination altogether): “It seems clear that sometimes, anti-Zionism is indeed antisemitism”—but warned against the opposite error of “highly problematic 1:1 equivalency between anti-Zionism and antisemitism.” This framework creates space for anti-Zionist activism by requiring granular categorization that sophisticated actors can exploit.

Joshua Shanes, Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History at UC Davis (succeeding the late David Biale), serves on the Nexus Task Force and the board of Partners for Progressive Israel. His book *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (Cambridge, 2012) [argued](#) that “Zionism was not about escaping Diaspora existence but rather normalizing it” and “challenges the still-dominant Zionist narrative.” Shanes endorsed the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. In *The Conversation* in January 2024, Shanes [wrote](#): “Anti-Zionism opposes [Jewish statehood], and critics argue that it should not be labeled antisemitic unless it taps into those antisemitic myths or otherwise calls for violence or inequality for Jews.” He stated: “In my view, antisemitism must be identified and fought, but so too must efforts to squash legitimate protest of Israel by conflating it with antisemitism.” This framing positions efforts to apply IHRA as themselves a threat requiring opposition—equating antisemitism enforcement with antisemitism itself.

David Biale (1949-2024), the Emanuel Ringelblum Distinguished Professor of Jewish History (emeritus) at UC Davis who [died](#) July 28, 2024, was one of the most influential historians of Jewish secularism and Zionism of his generation and participated in the Nexus Task Force. His major works include *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (Schocken, 1986), which won the 1987 National Jewish Book Award and [challenged](#) the “myth of Jewish political passivity,” and *Hasidism: A New History* (Princeton, 2018) as project director and lead author. A three-time National Jewish Book Award winner, Biale was described by *JTA*’s [obituary](#) as “a self-described Jewish activist who wrote op-eds and signed petitions from a liberal Zionist perspective.” In a March 2023 essay for *J: The Jewish News of Northern California*, he [wrote](#) that “the Likud, the party that [Menachem] Begin led, has evolved ... toward a kind of authoritarianism.” His participation in Nexus reflected the project’s strategy of recruiting scholars with impeccable academic credentials whose political commitments aligned with its objectives.

Lila Corwin Berman, Paul & Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at NYU and director of the Goldstein-Goren Center (previously at Temple University), serves on the Task Force. Her book *The American Jewish Philanthropic Complex* (Princeton, 2020) won the Ellis W. Hawley Prize from the Organization of American Historians and the Saul Viener Book Prize from the American Jewish Historical Society. In *JTA* in May 2023, Berman [stated](#): “In the power plays to claim the Jewish ‘mainstream,’ institutions and their leaders are trying to silence

those who disagree with their policies and politics.” She continued that “Its purveyors vocally and consistently defend harsh anti-boycott laws, on the books in several American states, that penalize institutions or individuals for engaging in or promoting boycotts against Israel.” On IHRA, she [criticized](#) efforts to define it as the “gold standard despite concerns that it chills legitimate criticism of Israel.” Berman co-chaired (with Ethan Katz) the AJS Task Force on Antisemitism and Academic Freedom from 2021 to 2023, positioning herself at the intersection of academic credentialing and political advocacy on antisemitism definitions.

Steven Beller, an independent scholar based in Washington, D.C., is an authority on Habsburg history, Vienna’s Jews, and the history of antisemitism. His works include *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1989), the first statistical analysis of Jews’ role in Vienna’s cultural life; *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2007; 2nd ed. 2015); and *Herzl* (Halban/Grove, 1991), a biography of Theodor Herzl. Winner of the Austrian State History Prize in 1995, Beller has written positions that challenge Zionist frameworks. In an Oxford University Press Blog piece in January 2014, he [stated](#): “The Zionist perspective actually undermines the most powerful arguments of antisemitism’s main antidote: liberal pluralism.” On Israel, he wrote: “Jews in the Diaspora and also Israel will recognize Israel cannot claim to be a proper liberal democracy when a large portion of the population under its control is denied its fundamental political rights.” This framing delegitimizes Israel’s democratic character while positioning liberal pluralism as incompatible with Jewish national self-determination.

Legal Theorists: Constructing the Framework

David Schraub, associate professor of law at Lewis and Clark Law School, provides the legal theory necessary to challenge IHRA in courtrooms and policy debates. Schraub earned his J.D. from University of Chicago Law School with high honors and his Ph.D. in political science from UC Berkeley, previously serving at UC Berkeley Law as Darling Foundation Fellow. His legal scholarship includes “The Epistemic Dimension of Antisemitism” (*Journal of Jewish Identities*, 2022), which [argues](#) antisemitism manifests when Jews fail to stay “confined to their place”; “Arguing About Antisemitism” (*Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 2022) with Waxman; and “White Jews: An Intersectional Approach” (*AJS Review*, 2019). He convened the Law vs. Antisemitism [Conference](#) at Lewis and Clark in 2023. Schraub has written extensively on the potential for IHRA to chill speech if applied as a campus code. His contributions to Nexus focus on the distinction between “intent” and “effect,” arguing that without evidence of discriminatory intent, anti-Zionist speech should be [protected](#). On anti-Zionism, Schraub has [stated](#) in The Third Narrative initiative website: “It depends on what people mean by ‘Zionism,’ and it depends on what people mean by ‘antisemitism.’” He continues, “as one moves down the list [of Zionism’s meanings], the charge of antisemitism for anti-[that form of] Zionism becomes increasingly plausible.” In a *Forward* column with Alan Solow in October 2023, Schraub [defended](#) Biden’s National Antisemitism Strategy, noting it “chose to incorporate insights from diverse sources, including IHRA, Nexus and other initiatives” rather than making IHRA exclusive. This legalistic

maneuvering is essential for universities looking for reasons not to sanction Students for Justice in Palestine chapters.

Nomi M. Stolzenberg, Nathan and Lily Shapell Chair in Law at USC Gould School of Law, is married to David N. Myers, thereby creating a spousal partnership that spans the academic and funding dimensions of the Nexus ecosystem. Her book *American Shtetl: The Making of Kiryas Joel* (Princeton, 2022), co-authored with Myers, won the National Jewish Book Award and was named to *The New Yorker*'s Best Books of 2022. Her scholarship [addresses](#) “faith-based discrimination” and the boundaries between religious and secular law; she delivered the [lecture](#) “Faith-Based Discrimination and the Antisemitism Question” at Penn’s Katz Center in September 2022, where she was a [fellow](#). Stolzenberg and Myers are legacy [donors](#) to the New Israel Fund, completing a circuit in which the funder, the definer, and the legal theorist share both professional collaboration and personal partnership.

Post-Zionist Voices: Beyond Liberal Zionism

Mira Sucharov, [professor](#) of political science at Carleton University in Canada, represents the Task Force’s post-Zionist faction. When asked in an *Alberta Jewish News* [interview](#) in October 2020 if she would characterize herself as post-Zionist, Sucharov responded: “That could be an accurate way of defining it, if we can all agree on what Zionism means. In my case, it’s really about concern over equality and justice in Israel and Palestine and to what extent a Jewish state can grant all its inhabitants the rights that they deserve under current international law and norms.” Her published works include *Borders and Belonging: A Memoir* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), *Public Influence: A Guide to Op-Ed Writing and Social Media Engagement* (University of Toronto Press, 2019), and *The International Self: Psychoanalysis and the Search for Israeli-Palestinian Peace* (SUNY Press, 2005).

Sucharov serves on the Advisory Council of New Israel Fund-Canada, is a founding signatory of the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, signed the [letter](#) “Jewish Faculty in Canada Against the Adoption of the IHRA Working Definition,” and serves on the North American Steering Committee of A Land for All: Two States, One Homeland. In *Moment Magazine* in 2023, on the equation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, Sucharov [stated](#): “I don’t agree with that equation, but it has to be heard and dealt with.” She argues: “If we eschew the term Zionism, then we can advance the conversation.” In the same interview, she noted that her research showed only 10 percent of American Jews identified as Zionist when defined as “a set of policies that flow from a particular governing structure where Jews are inherently privileged over non-Jews”—a framing designed to produce precisely that result. The inclusion of an openly post-Zionist voice on a task force ostensibly defining antisemitism regarding Israel reveals the ideological parameters of acceptable discourse within Nexus.

Journalists and Public Intellectuals: The Messaging Apparatus

Emily Tamkin, a Nexus Fellow and journalist, has written extensively on antisemitism, Jewish identity, and George Soros—positioning her at the intersection of Jewish communal debates and progressive philanthropy. Her book *The Influence of Soros: Politics, Power, and the Struggle for an Open Society* (Harper, 2020) examines Soros’s influence while “[disentangling](#) it from rumor and conspiracy theory.” Her second book, *Bad Jews: A History of American Jewish Politics and Identities* (Harper, 2022), based on 150+ interviews, [argues](#) “Everyone is someone else’s bad Jew”—a framing that relativizes Jewish communal boundaries and positions critics of Israel within legitimate Jewish discourse. Tamkin served as US Editor at *The New Statesman* and staff writer at *Foreign Policy* and *BuzzFeed News*, and currently serves as contributing columnist at *The Forward*.

In *The Forward* in November 2022, Tamkin [argued](#) for asymmetry in treating left-wing and right-wing antisemitism: “The antisemitism that had actual power over their lives was, in fact, white supremacy. I believe — and I think this comes through in the book — that that is still true today. ... That said, I also believe that at this point in time there’s no equivalence between the antisemitism that we’re seeing from the political left and from the political right at this point.” This framing minimizes left-wing antisemitism by comparison to right-wing threats, positioning progressive anti-Zionism as a lesser concern. In her [Substack](#) on January 24, 2025, Tamkin [wrote](#): “I have been working as a fellow with the Nexus Task Force, a part of the Nexus Project, which works to counter antisemitism and protect free speech.” The pairing of “counter antisemitism” with “protect free speech” captures the dual mandate that critics argue prioritizes the latter over the former.

The Organizational Network: NIF Ecosystem and Progressive Infrastructure

Isaac Luria, senior director at the Nathan Cummings Foundation and Nexus Project Senior Fellow (currently on leave), represents the intersection of progressive philanthropy and Jewish organizational advocacy. Luria was a founding team member and vice president of New Media at J Street from 2008 to 2011, then served as vice president at Auburn Seminary and co-founded the Groundswell digital platform. His career trajectory—from building J Street’s digital infrastructure to directing grantmaking at the Nathan Cummings Foundation—illustrates the revolving door between progressive Jewish advocacy and philanthropic funding. In *Sources Journal* in Spring 2022, Luria [argued](#) antisemitism should be understood as “instrumental”—a political tool used by reactionary forces—and that the Jewish community should devote resources to racial and economic justice movements rather than Israel-focused concerns. On Trump in 2016, Luria called him a “[proto-fascist](#)” who “used blatantly anti-Semitic tropes in his closing campaign ad.” This analysis consistently positions the right as the primary antisemitic threat while minimizing concerns about left-wing anti-Zionism.

Norman Rosenberg, an organizational consultant, served as CEO of the New Israel Fund from 1990 to 2003, [leading NIF](#) for 13 years during which he grew annual income to \$21.3 million and oversaw \$120 million in grants to Israeli civil society organizations. His participation in the

Nexus Task Force represents the senior generation of NIF leadership lending credibility to the project. On NIF, Rosenberg [stated](#): “We’re a small philanthropy by the standards of worldwide Jewry.” In 1992, he said in an [interview](#) that “our activities, which once were thought to be outside of the mainstream, turn out to be very much in the mainstream of thought in Israel and this country.” He continued, “The fund from the beginning has remained avowedly non-partisan. We are guided by Israel’s Declaration of Independence and try to support institutions that will provide equality between the various peoples of Israel.” This framing positions NIF-funded organizations as mainstream despite documentation by NGO Monitor and other watchdog groups of their Israel-critical and, in some cases, BDS-adjacent activities.

Aaron Back, an independent policy advisor, served as Ford Foundation Program Officer for Israel from 1995 to 2003, during which he directed \$20 million in [Ford Foundation](#) grantmaking focused on “civil society, human rights, and social justice organizations in Israel.” He later led NIF’s Social Justice Fund, a \$20 million Ford-funded program. Back co-founded INCLO (International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations). His presence on the Nexus Task Force connects the project to the Ford Foundation’s controversial history of funding organizations that critics have documented as promoting anti-Israel positions. The Ford Foundation’s Israel grantmaking during Back’s tenure came under [scrutiny](#) for supporting organizations that participated in the 2001 Durban Conference, which became notorious for anti-Israel and antisemitic manifestations, including labeling Israel an “apartheid regime.” Back’s inclusion signals continuity with this philanthropic tradition.

Rabbinical and Religious Leadership: The Theological Cover

Rabbi Esther L. Lederman, vice president of Leaders in Action at the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), oversees URJ’s youth movement NFTY and leadership development. Ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York in 2008, she previously served as associate rabbi at Temple Micah in Washington D.C. Lederman serves on the boards of T’ruah, Ameinu, Avodah, and the Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign. She signed the T’ruah/Partners for Progressive Israel anti-annexation [letter](#) in 2020 opposing Israeli annexation of the West Bank and [protested](#) Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich with liberal Zionist organizations in 2023. Her participation positions Reform Judaism’s institutional infrastructure within the Nexus coalition, lending denominational legitimacy to its definitional framework.

Rabbi Jocce Hudson, Campus Rabbi and Senior Jewish Educator at University of Southern California Hillel, provides the campus religious leadership voice within Nexus. Ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Los Angeles in 2007, she previously served as Rabbi-in-Residence at LA Voice and associate rabbi at Temple Israel of Hollywood for 12 years. She received T’ruah’s 2019 Rabbinic Human Rights Hero [Award](#). On NPR/WESA Pittsburgh in October 2024, Hudson [stated](#): “As we have seen tens of thousands of Palestinians also killed, we have ongoing anguish. And there are students who have deep reactions to that—deep moral outrage.” On campus Jewish life, she reflected: “When our hearts are broken open in

grief, there are two possibilities: One is pulling back. The other is reaching out. And that's the spiritual work." This pastoral framing positions pro-Palestinian student activism as a legitimate grief response rather than potential antisemitism, providing theological justification for the Nexus framework.

Diversity Advocates: Intersectional Dimensions

Analucía Lopezrevoredo, Founder and CEO of Jewtina y Co., founded the organization on September 15, 2019, to serve Latin-Jewish communities. A Peruvian-Chilean-Quechua-American who spent nearly 15 years as an undocumented immigrant, she holds a Ph.D. in social work and previously worked at JIMENA/Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, OneTable, and Bend the Arc. She serves on the boards of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), American Jewish World Service, and Urban Adamah. At the Jewish Federation Bay Area in October 2025, Lopezrevoredo [stated](#): "The events of October 7 reshaped Jewtina's work in profound ways. ... Our community is hurting in ways they didn't think they would be in 2025." Her inclusion positions Nexus within intersectional Jewish identity frameworks, lending diversity credentials to a project that critics characterize as representing a narrow progressive-elite perspectives.

Eric Greene, Los Angeles regional coordinator for the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable (a coalition of 63 Jewish social justice organizations), represents the progressive organizational infrastructure within Nexus. Greene serves as associate communications director for Diversity and Campus Climate at UCLA, previously served as senior policy advisor at the ACLU of Southern California, and regional director of Progressive Jewish Alliance/Bend the Arc. A Stanford Law School graduate, he serves on the boards of the Jewish Multiracial Network and IKAR. His book *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race, Politics, and Popular Culture* (Wesleyan UP, 1998) analyzed the film series as racial allegory. Greene authored "Kaddish for Black Lives" [prayer](#) in 2020, distributed by the Jewish Multiracial Network. His portfolio—spanning civil liberties advocacy, diversity administration, and progressive Jewish organizing—positions him as a connector between Nexus and the broader progressive coalition infrastructure.

Academic Program Directors: Institutional Positions

Lori Lefkowitz, Ruderman Professor of Jewish Studies at Northeastern University and director of the Jewish Studies Program, [founded](#) the first women's studies department at a rabbinical school (Kolot, the Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1996-2010) and co-founded Ritualwell.org. Her book *In Scripture: The First Stories of Jewish Sexual Identity* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2010) was a National Jewish Book Award finalist. In the Fall 2024 *Lilith Magazine*, Lefkowitz [stated](#): "I believe that it is dangerous to Jews when accusations of antisemitism are exaggerated or weaponized by forces on the political right who want to suppress protest. ... That said, antisemitism is visible among well-intentioned people who are understandably horrified by the war but have been persuaded by a

range of antisemitic stereotypes and prejudices that they cannot disentangle from criticism of Israel's policy choices." She explained: "The Nexus Task Force, in which I participate, works to tease out the often-subtle difference between antisemitism and criticism of Israel." This formulation—"teasing out" distinctions—describes the process of creating definitional space for criticism of Israel while maintaining a nominal commitment to identifying antisemitism.

Marla Brettschneider, [professor](#) of political and feminist theory at the University of New Hampshire with joint appointments in political science and women's and gender studies, brings feminist and intersectional theory perspectives to the Task Force. She served as [executive director](#) of Jews For Racial and Economic Justice from 2002 to 2004 and was [coordinator](#) of the Progressive Zionist Caucus in Israel in the 1980s. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from New York University. Her published works include *Jewish Feminism and Intersectionality* (SUNY, 2016), *7 October 2023 Book I: Jewish Reflections from Around the Globe* (2024, co-edited), and *The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism* (winner, Gustavus Meyers Human Rights Award). Her trajectory from Progressive Zionist Caucus activism in the 1980s to Jews For Racial and Economic Justice leadership to Nexus participation illustrates the leftward evolution of progressive Jewish organizational leadership over four decades.

The Founding Structure: USC Annenberg Origins

Diane H. Winston, Knight Chair in Media and Religion at the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, served as founding [chair](#) of the Nexus Task Force. Her Knight Program initially hosted the Nexus Task Force from 2019 to 2021 before it moved to Bard. Winston's published [works](#) include *Righting the American Dream* (U Chicago, 2023), *The [Oxford Handbook](#) of Religion and the News Media* (editor, 2012), and *Red-Hot and Righteous: The Urban Religion of the Salvation Army* (Harvard, 1999). She is a three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee as a journalist. In *The Forward* in October 2020, co-writing with Jacoby, Winston [articulated](#): "What is antisemitic, in our view, is treating Israel with different standards than those applied to other countries because it is a Jewish state. That is when we find the line is crossed." This formulation—requiring proof that differential treatment of Israel is "because it is a Jewish state"—creates an intent requirement that critics argue is nearly impossible to demonstrate, effectively shielding discriminatory treatment from antisemitism classification.

Textual Forensics: Systematic Loopholes in the Nexus Document

The core of the Nexus Project's utility lies in the text of the Nexus Document itself, which fundamentally rewrites the standards of antisemitism to create loopholes for anti-Zionist rhetoric. While the IHRA definition focuses on the impact of speech—specifically whether it denies Jewish self-determination or applies double standards—Nexus reintroduces a strict intent requirement. The document explicitly states that opposition to Zionism "does not necessarily reflect specific anti-Jewish [animus](#) nor purposefully lead to antisemitic behaviors and conditions." This clause shifts the burden of proof from the victim who experiences hostility to

the accuser who must prove the inner mind of the speaker. If a student group chants slogans calling for the elimination of the Jewish state, Nexus allows them to argue that their intent is political liberation rather than Jew-hatred, effectively decriminalizing a vast swath of hostile rhetoric.

The “disproportionate attention” reversal represents the most consequential divergence. IHRA Example number eight identifies as potentially antisemitic “applying double standards by requiring of Israel a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.” Nexus explicitly inverts this, stating: “Paying disproportionate attention to Israel and treating Israel differently than other countries is not prima facie proof of antisemitism.” Nexus then provides affirmative defenses: “some people care about Israel more; others may pay more attention because Israel has a special relationship with the United States and receives \$4 billion in American aid.” This provision effectively shields the United Nations Human Rights Council’s singular obsession with Israel from antisemitism [accusations](#).

The document creates a massive loophole regarding the denial of self-determination by stating it is antisemitic to treat Israel negatively “based on a claim that Jews alone should be denied the right to define themselves.” This addition allows anti-Zionists to evade the label by framing their opposition as part of a universal anti-nationalist ideology. The founding criticism shield explicitly protects challenges to Israel’s legitimacy: Nexus [states](#) that “even contentious, strident, or harsh criticism of Israel for its policies and actions, including those that led to the creation of Israel, is not per se illegitimate or antisemitic.” This clause provides explicit safe harbor for *Nakba* discourse and fundamental challenges to Israel’s right to exist.

The Nazi analogy gap is a complete omission. IHRA Example #10 identifies “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis” as a potential antisemitism indicator. Nexus contains no equivalent provision whatsoever, leaving Holocaust inversion rhetoric entirely unaddressed. The apartheid and settler-colonial silence is equally telling. While IHRA’s “racist endeavor” example potentially covers claims that Israel is an apartheid state or settler-colonial project, Nexus is completely silent on these frameworks—effectively permitting such characterizations without antisemitism implications.

The “as such,” “per se,” and “not necessarily” qualifiers function as what legal analyst David Levitt described as interpretive escape hatches: “if a comment or action is ‘not per se,’ ‘not necessarily,’ or ‘not prima facie’ antisemitic, when is it? When does it cross the line? Nothing in the Nexus Document provides any [guidance](#).”

The Campus Guide: Operationalizing Antisemitism Defense

Nexus did not leave these definitions in the abstract; it operationalized them through the September 2024 “Campus Guide to Identifying Antisemitism in a Time of Perplexity,” co-authored by Derek Penslar and [David Myers](#), with Ethan Katz as lead author. The guide

systematically analyzed phrases used at campus protests, providing frameworks for defending anti-Zionist slogans that Jewish students experience as threatening.

On “From the River to the Sea,” the guide states: “On the face of it, the term does not invoke traditional antisemitic tropes. ... If the phrase conveys the aspiration for a state (or states) that grants Jews and Palestinians equal individual rights ... then it is not discriminatory toward Jews.” On “Intifada,” the guide argues: “If focused on Israelis (regardless of their ethnicity or religion) rather than Jews more globally, the call for Intifada may fall into the category of a hostile or dangerous act, but it is not necessarily antisemitic.” On “By Any Means Necessary,” the guide concludes: “While it may be proscribed on other grounds as dangerous or supportive of indiscriminate violence, the phrase is not necessarily [antisemitic](#).”

On apartheid and genocide accusations against Israel, the guide states: “Even if the claim that Israel is engaging in apartheid [or genocide] proves to be false, or imprecise, or reductionist, that does not necessarily mean that the claim is antisemitic.” The guide argues that use of “Zionist” to refer to Israel supporters “is more likely to be an accurate description than an antisemitic trope.”

Cary Nelson, the University of Illinois professor emeritus and author of *Hate Speech and Academic Freedom*, [responded](#) in *Fathom Journal*: “When hundreds of students and community members gather to chant ‘From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,’ it feels rather like a call for a Judenrein terrain.” Nelson concluded: “Nexus is now an apologist for antisemitism. ... They have set out to exonerate anti-Zionism by any means necessary.” Nelson characterized the guide as Nexus ensuring “the permissive spaces it made available to anti-Zionism with its February 2021 ‘Nexus Document’ have not been curtailed or disqualified by the flood of antisemitism that engulfed the world following the October 7, 2023, Hamas assault.”

Funding Networks: Following the Money

The Nexus Project operates as a fiscally sponsored project of the New Israel Fund, meaning Nexus does not file its own Form 990s. Its finances are commingled with NIF’s broader reporting, obscuring the specific amounts allocated to Nexus operations. NIF’s \$58 million annual budget finances organizations that critics including [NGO Monitor](#) and Im Tirtzu have [documented](#) as hostile to Israel, including B’Tselem, Adalah, and Breaking the Silence. By housing Nexus, the NIF extends its protection of these groups to the U.S. domestic sphere. If the “apartheid” charge is deemed antisemitic in the U.S., NIF’s funding model is threatened. Nexus ensures it remains “legitimate discourse.”

The personnel overlaps between NIF and Nexus are extensive and revealing. Jonathan Jacoby founded NIF and now leads Nexus. David Myers served simultaneously as NIF President and Nexus Task Force member. Norman Rosenberg led NIF for 13 years and now participates in Nexus. Nomi Stolzenberg and David Myers are legacy NIF donors. Mira Sucharov serves on the Advisory Council of NIF-Canada. This concentration of NIF-connected personnel suggests

Nexus functions as NIF’s definitional project, ensuring that the political speech of NIF-funded organizations remains protected from antisemitism classification.

NIF’s donor base includes foundations with documented records of funding Israel-critical causes. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund provided NIF a [grant](#) in September 2016 specifically to “research and report on antisemitism on U.S. campuses.” RBF’s [grantee portfolio](#) includes Jewish Voice for Peace (\$490,000 since 2019), Palestine Legal (\$515,000 since 2019), and nearly \$1 million to Tides Foundation earmarked for Palestine Legal and Adalah Justice Project in 2023 alone. RBF trustee Daniel Levy is the co-founder of J Street. The Open Society Foundations has directly [given](#) NIF \$2,310,000 since 2019 and contributed almost [\\$77 million](#) to the Tides Foundation from since 2016, with portions earmarked for pro-Palestinian causes. In 2024, Alex Soros of OSF [announced](#) \$1 million specifically to “combat antisemitism and work to prevent the weaponization of antisemitism charges”—language that mirrors Nexus’s framing.

Nexus operates within the Progressive Israel Network coalition, which includes J Street, Americans for Peace Now, New Israel Fund, and T’ruah. Kevin Rachlin came from J Street; Isaac Luria from J Street’s founding team; Rabbi Lederman serves on T’ruah’s board. In January 2021, PIN issued a joint statement explicitly opposing “codification in US law or policy of the IHRA Working Definition of [Antisemitism](#).” This coalition has collectively lobbied the Biden administration and Congress against IHRA adoption. Aaron Back’s Ford Foundation background connects Nexus to that foundation’s controversial history of funding organizations that participated in the 2001 Durban Conference.

The Far-Right Exploitation Risk: How Nexus Protects All Antisemites

The danger of the Nexus approach extends beyond shielding the left; its emphasis on intent and political speech creates a permission structure that can be exploited by the far right. By decoupling anti-Zionism from antisemitism and protecting “strident” criticism of Jewish power structures framed as the “Israel lobby,” Nexus inadvertently validates the rhetorical strategies used by white nationalists who code their antisemitism as anti-globalist or anti-Zionist political critique.

If the standard for antisemitism requires proving specific animus against Jews as a people, sophisticated far-right actors can simply claim their hostility is directed at the “Zionist political entity” or “international interests” rather than Jews, using the very loopholes designed to protect progressives. When Tucker Carlson [platforms](#) Holocaust revisionists and voices who minimize the Nazi genocide, Nexus’s framework offers no clear classification mechanism because it focuses on intent rather than impact. The Heritage Foundation itself, which has driven much conservative antisemitism policy, has faced internal [challenges](#) with antisemitism, yet Nexus’s definition’s rigidity on “intent” makes it harder to call out right-wing dog whistles that technically avoid classic tropes while inciting hatred.

The “disproportionate attention” carve-out proves equally useful to the far right. White nationalists who obsess over “Zionist Occupied Government” or Jewish influence in media can now cite the Nexus standard that “paying disproportionate attention to Israel ... is not prima facie proof of antisemitism.” The same framework that protects campus activists protects [Groyper](#) trolls. By requiring proof of subjective animus, Nexus creates an evidentiary standard that sophisticated bad actors—on both left and right—can easily evade through careful word selection.

Political Deployment: The Fig Leaf in Action

The emergence of “The Squad” (Representatives Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and others) created a crisis for the Democratic Party. Their rhetoric—accusing pro-Israel politicians of allegiance to [“Benjamins”](#) (Omar) or describing Israel as an “apartheid” state (Tlaib)—triggered accusations of antisemitism from the right and Jewish establishment. Nexus leadership and documents were deployed to argue that these statements, while perhaps “clumsy” or “strident,” were not inherently antisemitic because they were political criticisms of a lobby or state policy. By invoking the Nexus standard, defenders argued that accusing AIPAC of buying influence is a “political reality,” not a “Jewish money trope.”

NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani [revoked](#) the city’s IHRA definition adoption and anti-BDS order on his first day in office in January 2026, defending the action by [citing](#) that “several Jewish organizations ‘have immense concerns around this definition’”—the precise framing Nexus has promoted. The ADL [characterized](#) this as having “weakened protections to fight antisemitism.” Israel’s Foreign Ministry [called it](#) “antisemitic gasoline on an open fire.”

Congressional lobbying has achieved measurable results. When the House considered a [resolution](#) describing anti-Zionism as antisemitic, 92 Democrats voted “present” after Nexus lobbying urged them not to support it. Squad members including Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib have invoked Nexus-aligned arguments when opposing IHRA-referencing resolutions, with Omar [stating](#) the definition “dangerously conflates legitimate criticism of Israel to antisemitism.”

The Biden administration’s National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism (May 25, 2023) represented Nexus’s central strategic victory. The document [stated](#): “The Administration welcomes and appreciates the Nexus Document and notes other such efforts.” Progressive organizations celebrated this inclusion as a defeat of mainstream Jewish advocacy for exclusive IHRA adoption. J Street [declared](#) the strategy “avoids exclusively codifying any one specific, sweeping definition of antisemitism.” Americans for Peace Now [thanked](#) Biden for “not succumbing to those who demanded the codification of the IHRA definition so that they could use false accusations of antisemitism to attack those who criticize indefensible Israeli policies.” Even Palestine Legal [hailed the outcome](#), as what it called the “staunchly pro-Israel Biden

administration declined to do so.” Why, it asked? “Because IHRA is wrong, useless, and clearly unconstitutional.”

Mainstream Jewish Organizations Condemn Nexus

The institutional Jewish community has mounted comprehensive opposition to Nexus, characterizing it in terms that validate the fig leaf hypothesis. B’nai B’rith International stated that Nexus “[allows](#) the more invidious of Israel’s nemeses to hide their animus behind ‘strident’ criticism of Israel.” In *JNS*, Rabbi Eric Fusfield [wrote](#) that it “gives cover to those who challenge Israel’s right to exist and wish to revive the canard that Zionism is racism.”

The Zionist Organization of America called Nexus “dangerous” and “appalling,” [stating](#) it would “shield and permit antisemitism that is masked as hatred for the Jewish state and Zionism.” The American Jewish Committee [argued](#) that Nexus “falsely labels Zionism as nothing more than a political movement rather than the 2,000-year-old tangible expression of the Jewish people’s yearning to return to their homeland, that it “prioritizes intention over impact, enabling purveyors of antisemitism to say ‘Sorry, not sorry,’ rather than try to comprehend why their speech or actions are hurtful.”

StandWithUs [stated](#) the definition “reflects the positions of a minority of Jewish people” and demonstrates “a misunderstanding of Zionism” that may have “the effect of perpetuating anti-Zionist forms of antisemitism.” The Jewish Federations of North America’s Eric Fingerhut [stated](#) in February 2024: “It simply is an attempt to undermine the IHRA definition to advocate for a different definition, including the Nexus definition, which has been accepted by nobody and is not being used anywhere.”

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations [boycotted](#) a May 2024 Education Department meeting because progressive groups including Nexus participants were invited. Professor Eugene Kontorovich testified to Congress that “the Nexus Advisory Board ... is overwhelmingly left-wing and includes people, like the head of J-Street, who can only be described as professionals in the field of Israel bashing.” He also noted that “not one single country has adopted the Nexus Declaration,” compared to IHRA’s adoption by over 40 governments.

The Shofar Report: Progressive Counter-Strategy

Released in October 2025, the [Shofar Report](#) frames antisemitism as inseparable from threats to democracy, positioning itself “the Nexus Project’s answer to Project Esther, which is the Heritage Foundation’s blueprint for using weaponized claims of antisemitism to undermine democratic institutions.” Jonathan Jacoby described conservative antisemitism strategies as “a blueprint for weaponizing the politicized charge of antisemitism to advance the goals of its ideological forebear at the Heritage Foundation: Project 2025.”

Jeremy Ben-Ami, J Street CEO and Nexus Advisory Committee member, co-authored the foreign policy chapter with Waxman, arguing: “Giving Netanyahu and his far-right allies carte blanche to do what they like in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank does not protect Jews, it makes them less safe.” Alan Solow, Nexus board chair and former chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, [wrote](#) in *The Forward* that the Antisemitism Awareness Act’s “claim to helping combat the disturbing surge in anti-Jewish incidents across the United States is, upon closer examination, little more than a symbolic gesture that could actually weaken the fight against this bigotry.”

The report reframed the debate, [arguing](#) that the real threat to Jews is “authoritarianism” (i.e., the Right/Trump) and that conservative antisemitism enforcement was weaponizing accusations to dismantle civil society. The Shofar Report confirms that Nexus views its primary mission as the defense of the progressive donor infrastructure against legal and political attacks from the Right.

Patterns and Conclusions: The Nexus Network Exposed

The forensic audit of Nexus Task Force personnel reveals several patterns that illuminate the project’s true function. First, the concentration of New Israel Fund connections is overwhelming: founding leadership (Jacoby), board presidency (Myers), legacy leadership (Rosenberg), legacy donations (Stolzenberg/Myers), and advisory council membership (Sucharov). This density suggests Nexus is functionally NIF’s definitional project, designed to protect NIF-funded organizations from antisemitism classification.

Second, the J Street pipeline is evident: Rachlin spent seven years there; Luria was on the founding team; the Progressive Israel Network coordinates their lobbying efforts. Third, the “Elephant in the Room” apartheid letter signatories include multiple Task Force members: Penslar, Myers (who drafted it), and others. This shared public commitment to labeling Israel an apartheid regime reveals ideological alignment that contradicts claims of neutral scholarship.

Fourth, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism signatories overlap substantially with Nexus: Penslar, Sucharov, Shanes, and others. The JDA serves as an alternative framework to IHRA, and Nexus participants’ endorsement reveals coordinated effort to replace rather than complement the mainstream definition. Fifth, the post-Zionist and anti-Zionist voices included—Sucharov’s self-described “post-Zionism,” Beller’s critique of Zionism as incompatible with liberal pluralism, Waxman’s evolution toward endorsing genocide accusations—reveal ideological commitments beyond “nuanced” antisemitism definitions.

Sixth, the Ford Foundation connection through Aaron Back links Nexus to the foundation’s controversial history at Durban 2001. Seventh, the rabbinical and religious leadership (Lederman, Hudson) provides denominational legitimacy, positioning the project within mainstream Jewish religious frameworks despite its marginal communal standing. Eighth, the

diversity advocates (Lopezrevoredo, Greene) provide intersectional credentials that position Nexus within progressive coalition frameworks.

Conclusion: Strategic Intent and Consequences

The investigative record supports characterizing the Nexus Project as a strategic intervention designed to fragment Jewish consensus on antisemitism and provide definitional cover for anti-Zionist actors who would otherwise face legitimate antisemitism accusations under IHRA. The personnel genealogy reveals careers built in progressive Israel-critical advocacy rather than neutral scholarship. The textual analysis exposes systematic loopholes—"not necessarily," "per se," "as such"—that critics accurately describe as escape hatches. The funding network connects to foundations documented as supporting Israel-critical and BDS-adjacent organizations. The timing precisely tracks counter-mobilization against IHRA adoption. The deployment record shows consistent use as a defense mechanism for figures and movements accused of antisemitism.

By emphasizing intent over effect, Nexus creates a standard that protects not only progressive critics of Israel but also sophisticated far-right antisemites who code their hatred as political commentary. The same loopholes that shield campus activists shield Groyper trolls who attack "Zionist influence" while technically avoiding classic tropes. Nexus has made it harder, not easier, to combat all forms of antisemitism.

Mainstream Jewish organizations have reached a verdict: Nexus functions to allow antisemites to "hide their animus behind 'strident' criticism of Israel" while claiming Jewish organizational endorsement. The project represents not a good-faith scholarly effort to define antisemitism accurately, but an advocacy operation designed to narrow what can legitimately be called antisemitism—providing, in the characterization its critics have offered, a "permission slip" and "kosher stamp" for those who would otherwise be held accountable for Jew-hatred masked as Israel criticism.

The Nexus Project has not made Jews safer. It has made antisemitism harder to identify, harder to prosecute, and harder to combat. That is not a bug of its design—it is the feature.