

NATIONAL STRATEGY

Each May, hundreds of organizations and Americans of all backgrounds join together to discover, explore, and celebrate the vibrant and varied American Jewish experience from the dawn of our nation to the present day.

JewishAmericanHeritage.org

Background

Jewish American Heritage Month celebrates the inspiring history of the Jewish people, sparks crucial conversations about the Jewish future, and plays a significant role in countering antisemitism.

Designated each May by Presidential proclamation, Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) provides an opportunity for organizations and individuals across the nation to come together to highlight the integral and unique role Jewish Americans have played in shaping our nation over the past four centuries.

The seeds for Jewish American Heritage Month were planted in May 2004 during the celebrations led by the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History, composed of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA), the American Jewish Historical Society of the Center for Jewish History (AJHS), the Library of Congress, and the National Archives and Records Administration. Riding this momentum, a group of Jewish community leaders came together to advocate for Jewish American Heritage Month. Thanks to a bipartisan effort sponsored by the late Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL, 23rd district), with support from the Jewish Museum of Florida, President George W. Bush officially recognized May as Jewish American Heritage Month in 2006.

Each May, JAHM works to highlight the diversity of American Jewish heritage and history, and provides context and content that explores Jewish experience, Jewish achievement, and Jewish identity as an antidote to antisemitism.

The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism

Since its inception as an organized effort in 2006, JAHM has actively responded to the central goals of [The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#) released by the White House in May 2023¹. For nearly two decades, JAHM engaged millions of Americans through efforts to **broaden appreciation for American Jewish heritage, serving as an antidote to antisemitism** by focusing on the “valuable role that Jews have played in our national story,” and **underscoring the importance of both classroom education and the work of public institutions—especially museums and libraries** which are among the most trusted and valued sources of information across demographic groups.

“...The public continues to regard museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family...”

American Alliance of Museums, 2021²

JAHM is powered by the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History and a national coalition of cultural, educational, religious, and advocacy organizations that include museums and library systems across the country. JAHM organizers and its community partners recognize the responsibility they have to educate a broad American public about the importance of America’s diversity and counter all forms of hate through their unique platforms.

- ▶ This first ever Jewish American Heritage Month National Strategy is designed to **facilitate discussions about Jewish identity, combat misperceptions about Jews** that transcend boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity and culture, and strengthen the cultural narrative of Jewish American experience.

- ▶ The Jewish American Heritage Month National Strategy will **engage a growing coalition of networks who want to raise awareness about Jewish Americans’ continued contributions** to cultural, scientific, artistic, and intellectual life.
- ▶ The Jewish American Heritage Month National Strategy **supports a series of evergreen tools** and “how to guides” for individuals and organizations, government officials, workplace leaders, educators, community innovators, clergy, allies, and friends as they develop programming, social media posts, and other tools for public engagement.

JAHM is organized to deliver on promises made by the nation’s highest office.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COUNTER ANTISEMITISM

PILLAR 1 INCREASE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF ANTISEMITISM, INCLUDING ITS THREAT TO AMERICA, AND BROADEN APPRECIATION OF JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE

Strategic Goal 1.1 — Increase School-Based Education about Antisemitism, Including the Holocaust, and **Jewish American Heritage**.

“...More education on Jewish American history and the valuable role that Jews have played in our **national story** is needed. This focus on the positive contributions Jews have made will further help to inoculate young people against antisemitic stereotypes, tropes, and conspiracy theories.”

“We call on state and local governments to include Jewish studies in ethnic studies and history curricula. Lessons should include Jewish history, as well as **curricula on positive Jewish contributions to America**, Jewish diversity, and manifestations of contemporary antisemitism.”

Strategic Goal 1.2 — **Raise awareness about Antisemitism and Jewish American Heritage outside of the classroom**, and increase workplace training on countering Antisemitism

“We call on state and local leaders to speak out about combating antisemitism, including through efforts to educate their constituents. They should also use International Holocaust Remembrance Day and **Jewish American Heritage Month to raise awareness of antisemitism and Jewish American history**. They should **celebrate the positive contributions Jewish Americans have made to their communities and to our Nation**.”

“We call on state, local, and private cultural institutions to **highlight Jewish American heritage, culture, identity and history** as well as histories of antisemitism in cultural festivals and institutions.”

PILLAR 4 BUILD CROSS-COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AND COLLECTIVE ACTION TO COUNTER HATE

“Increasing space for **deeper awareness, shared empathy, and action across communities is critical to preventing hate and building resilience** in the face of rising antisemitic and other forms of hate-motivated violence. It is **imperative that non-Jewish and Jewish communities work together** and stand up for each other in order to counter antisemitism and other forms of hate. It is essential that non-Jewish voices continue to speak out and intensify their efforts to combat antisemitism.”

Excerpt from The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, May 2023¹

National Objectives & Key Strategies

EDUCATE & RAISE AWARENESS

“Why do Jews only appear in high school history textbooks once they are headed for a mass grave?”

Dara Horn, Novelist & Scholar, April 2022³.

(Creative Advisor to The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History/JAHM)

IN K-12 CLASSROOMS

JAHM and the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History are in collaboration with educational partners across the country to develop and implement a **national initiative focused on teaching students about Jewish history, traditions, culture, and diversity as well as the roles they have played in American life since the seventeenth century, as there is a notable absence of Jews in school curricula**¹.

[Research](#)⁴ shows that a greater knowledge of Jewish people, life, and culture correlates to lower levels of belief in harmful antisemitic tropes and stereotypes. This initiative will launch during JAHM 2024 and expand in the subsequent school year.

ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

With the rise of antisemitism on college campuses, JAHM will engage existing and new partners whose work centers on Jewish student life. Working with them to leverage May as a unifying moment to celebrate Jewish history and heritage with the broader campus community, JAHM awareness will serve as an important counterpart to direct work confronting antisemitism on campus.

TRAVELING EXHIBITION FOR AMERICAN AUDIENCES

In collaboration and coordination with JAHM’s national library partners, a traveling exhibition about contemporary American antisemitism is being developed. This co-created project details the history and major themes of antisemitism in America. A combination of historical artifacts, interactive displays, and multimedia presentations will present the various forms that antisemitism has taken and its impacts on the lives of American Jews. It will highlight the critical role of non-Jews in combating antisemitism and provide concrete ways for visitors to take action in their own lives.

“Museums and other exhibit-based cultural organizations are trusted by more people than they were pre-pandemic....people look to cultural institutions to provide direction on how to take action to make the world a better place.”

Colleen Dilenschneider, March 2021⁵.

ACTIVATE PUBLIC LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTERS

In addition to the traveling exhibition project, JAHM will deepen and expand its work with libraries, museums, and cultural centers, as purveyors of American history, to disseminate accessible, high-quality content and confront a resurgence of antisemitism. These institutions have a unique role within society that combines local community engagement with institutional innovation, action, and expertise—a perfect complement to JAHM.

“Being educational is a museum superpower.”

Colleen Dilenschneider, 2021⁶.

JAHM organizers recognize the power of public libraries as deeply trusted and oft-frequented public institutions, serving as ideal venues for raising awareness about Jewish American Heritage Month. Continuing its work with the American Library Association and the nation’s largest public library systems, JAHM will support library staff and patron engagement through resources that include recommended reading lists, public programming, and recognition of Jewish writers and creators in communities near and far.

ENLIST PUBLIC OFFICIALS

JAHM continues to prioritize engagement with public officials at the federal, state, and local level in order to introduce the Jewish American experience into communities around the country.

Through strategic cultural and government partnerships, JAHM will continue to support the creation of official city and state-level JAHM proclamations and city-organized celebrations, and continue to build on carefully curated resources for public leaders in 2023 about how Jewish Americans have contributed to the development of American society through education, defense, and justice. JAHM is redoubling its efforts to engage all levels of government as they work to promote awareness of Jewish American heritage.

“We call on state, local, and private cultural institutions to highlight Jewish American heritage, culture, identity and history as well as histories of antisemitism in cultural festivals and institutions.”

The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism¹

LAUNCH NATIONAL JAHM LEADERSHIP ADVISORY COUNCIL & ONE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

Hundreds of organizations around the country have mobilized to support Jewish American Heritage Month since its national partnership coalition was reactivated in 2020 during the pandemic, helping to advance its important message and enhance the way communities are engaged throughout the month of May.

To extend the reach and impact of Jewish American Heritage Month, JAHM will organize a national partnership coalition with major US Jewish organizations by establishing the National JAHM Leadership Advisory Council. This council composed of Jewish communal leadership will help shape the future of JAHM to serve larger audiences of Americans through unified messaging and shared goals.

An overarching goal in creating the Advisory Council is to advance the JAHM ’24 One Community Campaign, a national outreach and awareness initiative designed to empower organizations to speak with one voice.

The Campaign will help position Jewish American Heritage Month to present the American public with a clear, concise, overarching message, centralized resources that are supported by the unique expertise of the participating organizations, and an authentic community voice to advance public understanding.

EXPAND JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE.ORG

The [JAHM website](#) highlights the diversity of American Jewish heritage and history, and provides context and content that explores Jewish experience, Jewish achievement, and Jewish identity. The website also centers opportunities to learn and engage with a broad spectrum of the American Jewish community today, featuring more than 100 curated resources from museums and organizations across the country.

[JewishAmericanHeritage.org](#) will continue to be expanded and enhanced to ensure that visitors can discover a deeper understanding of Jewish cultural heritage, learn about the history of antisemitism, engage with family history resources, dive into the stories of extraordinary Jewish Americans, and myriad resources on American Jewish experiences across all aspects of American society and culture. Website resource categories will continue to include *About the American Jewish Experience*, *Educators and Schools*, *Understanding Antisemitism*, *Reading Lists*, and more.

JAHM organizers will continue to grow the website and build an events calendar, expanding on the beta [community events calendar](#) established in JAHM 2022, so that individuals from anywhere in the country can easily access events and activities in their community as well as online programming across the U.S.

STRENGTHEN NATIONAL REACH AND IMPACT

JAHM 2023 continued on a path of exponential growth by reaching more Americans than ever before. In addition to the launch of its first national commercial, JAHM received more than 53 million television, radio, and print impressions, and over 3 billion online media impressions. Hundreds of thousands of Americans engaged through #OurSharedHeritage, #MyJAHM, and #JewishAmericanHeritageMonth social posts, as well as JAHM's first TikTok campaign.

Looking ahead, JAHM will work to deepen its impact by continuing to pursue an active 50-state strategy, collaborating with organizations from all corners of the union and developing resources that delve even deeper into the rich tapestry of the American Jewish experience.

JAHM will continue to provide resources both to partners and the general public at no cost, including an electronic marketing toolkit, resource guide, fact-sheet poster, and more.

About Jewish American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) is a national month of recognition of nearly four centuries of Jewish contributions to American culture, celebrated each year in the month of May by Presidential Proclamation and with support from Congress. JAHM serves as an antidote to antisemitism by lifting up the indelible contributions made by the American Jewish community to our nation's history, culture, and society.

Learn more at [JewishAmericanHeritage.org](#).

Questions? Contact info@jmuse.org.

End Notes

¹ “The U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism,” The White House, May 25, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf>

² American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting. “Museums and Trust,” 2021. <https://www.aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021/>

³ Horn, Dara. “The Beginning of the Answer: Storytelling to Reveal Antisemitism.” In *Activating Archives, Libraries, and Museums in the Fight Against Antisemitism*, edited by Michael S. Glickman and Miriam R. Haier, 82-87. A Publication of the Center for Jewish History and jMUSE, 2022. <https://www.cjh.org/antisemitism/archives/pdf/Activating-Archives-April-2022.pdf>

⁴ ADL. “Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Conspiracy Theories, Holocaust Education and Other Predictors of Antisemitic Belief.” March 17, 2023. <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-conspiracy-theories-holocaust-education-and-other>

⁵ “More People Trust Museums Now Than Before the Pandemic,” *Know Your Own Bone/IMPACTS Experience*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.colleendilen.com/2023/03/01/more-people-trust-museums-now-than-before-the-pandemic-data/>

⁶ “Credibility of Museums Continues to Increase During Pandemic,” *Know Your Own Bone/IMPACTS Experience*, October 14, 2021, <https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/10/14/credibility-of-museums-continues-to-increase-during-pandemic-data/>

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HERITAGE MONTH 

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Powered by the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History