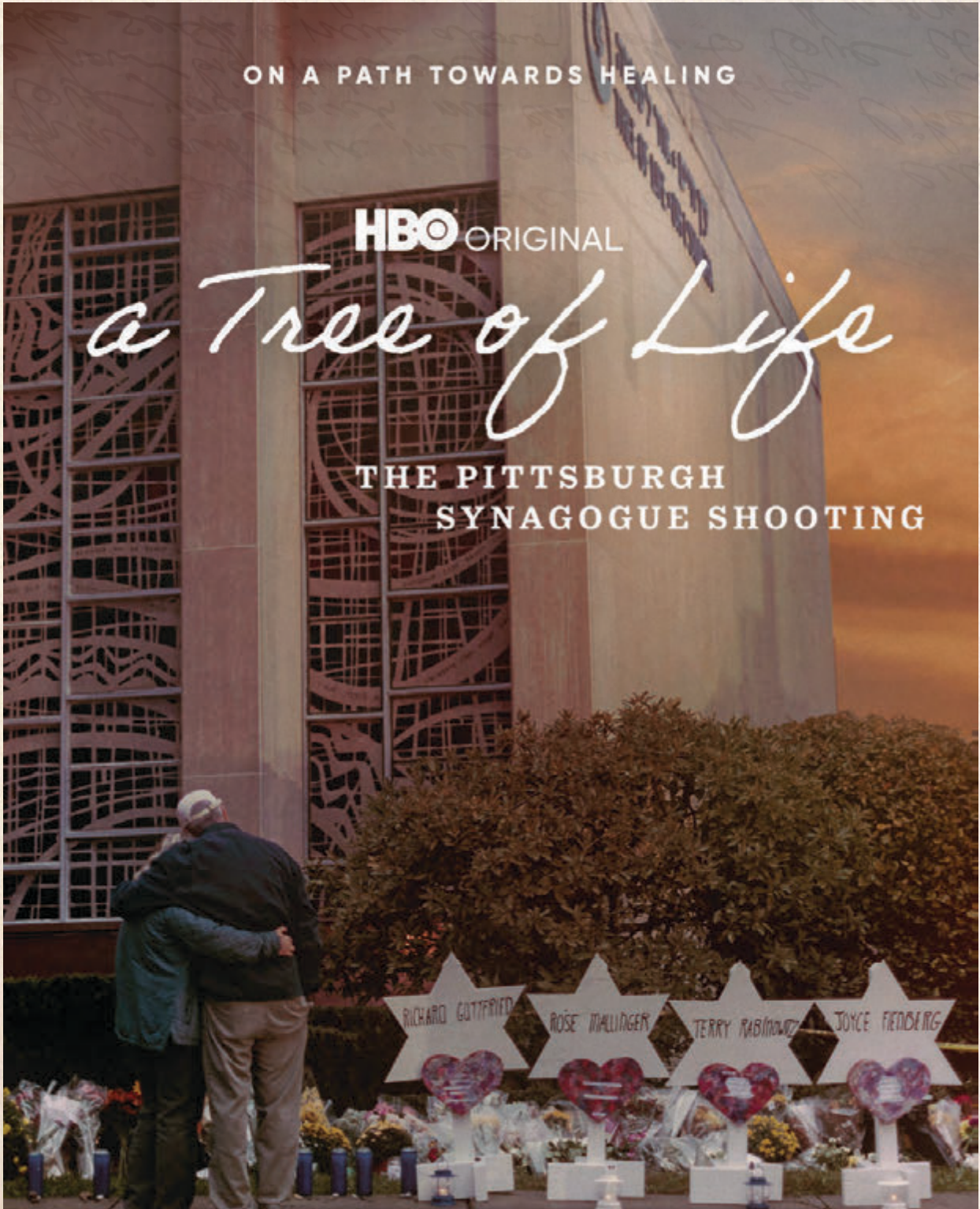


ON A PATH TOWARDS HEALING

HBO ORIGINAL

a Tree of Life

THE PITTSBURGH
SYNAGOGUE SHOOTING



AN ENGAGEMENT **GUIDE**

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PROLOGUE

“The danger of antisemitism is that it doesn’t stop with antisemitism. It denotes a moral decay in humanity when you’re going to treat people as an ‘other’ and think of them as less than human.”

— Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

Introductory materials to review before any film screening.

The resource developed for ***A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*** documentary supports facilitators and educators seeking to moderate conversations essential for a healthy democracy. Such conversations include fostering civic dialogue, maintaining respect and freedom for religious pluralism, and upholding the safety of all our institutions.

The documentary centers on first-person accounts from survivors, family members, and the immediate Squirrel Hill community of Pittsburgh following the synagogue shooting that occurred on October 27, 2018. Listening and learning from their stories is one way to honor the 11 individuals murdered, reflect on the ongoing steps of healing from one community, and continue to participate in the hard work of ending all forms of extremism.

IMPACT OUTCOMES

Sharing this story is an opportunity to focus on these important priorities:

- **Disrupt and stop the rise of White nationalism and antisemitism in today’s America through education and community-based initiatives.**
- **End identity-based discrimination and violence in our public squares and online communities.**
- **Strengthen interfaith relationships and work in solidarity across shared values.**
- **Support organizations to conduct safe and secure professional development training.**
- **Continue to advocate for gun safety reforms.**
- **Explore the challenges and complexity of what it means to feel a sense of belonging in an increasingly diverse and dynamic nation.**
- **Facilitate conversations that bridge perceived differences.**
- **Honor the 11 beautiful individuals who were murdered.**



ABOUT THE FILM

On October 27, 2018, a gunman opened fire inside a Pittsburgh synagogue, murdering 11 people as they prayed, in what would become the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history. ***A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*** is a deeply personal portrait of the survivors, victims, and family members, who share their harrowing first-hand accounts of the impact of the shooting on the community. The film is rooted in a community working to rebuild and heal in the aftermath of a violent attack. Despite core differences, they come together to determine what justice looks like and how best to move forward while honoring and learning from the past. The film sheds light on the collective trauma suffered by a tight-knit group and brings into sharp focus the hate-based rhetoric surrounding many of the mass shootings today, threatening the fabric of our society. The story of the attack is told through voices from the community, including Carol Black, Dr. Joseph Charny, Anthony Fienberg, Martin Gaynor, Audrey Glickman, Daniel Leger, Hannibal Lokumbe, Wasi Mohamed, Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, Brad Orsini, Rabbi Jonathan Perlman, Michele Rosenthal, Diane Rosenthal, Augie Siriano, Ellen Surloff, Andrea Wedner, Stephen Weiss, Barry Werber, Eliezer Rosenthal, and Joy Rosenthal.



RUN TIME: 81 MINUTES

DIRECTOR: TRISH ADLESIC

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: MICHAEL KEATON, MARC CUBAN, BILLY PORTER, D.J. GUGENHEIM, GEETA GANDBHIR, LAURAN BROMLEY, ELLIOTT JOSEPH, LLOYD MYERS, MICHELE FETTING, CHARLIE FRIDAY

PRODUCERS: TRISH ADLESIC, SUSAN MARGOLIN

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

White supremacy and the increase of hate rhetoric and hate crimes are a matter of life and death for all of us. We began by telling an American-Jewish story, then a Pittsburgh story, and have now found ourselves telling a universal story. It was of vital importance to me to honor the sacred memory of the victims by giving agency to the family members and survivors that felt comfortable sharing their experiences and feelings. They are the only ones that should tell the story.

When we started making *A Tree of Life* in October 2018, it was hard to imagine how the outlook for the American promise of 'liberty and justice for all' could be any bleaker. We have seen the January 6th insurrection, unjust laws meant to disenfranchise voters of color, and a wave of identity-based hate laws that are dangerously reminiscent of the Nazi regime's strategy.

As filmmakers, we hope doors of understanding open when we share a lens into the lives of others. The families of those so wrongfully taken and the survivors never hesitated once to speak out against hate in all forms. Wasi Mohamed (Former Dir. of the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh) raised money to pay for all of 11 funerals. Hannibal Lokumbe extended his hand to Tree of Life in inviting one of the survivors to sound the shofar in his opera, "Healing Tones," which he wrote after the Emmanuel shooting attack. As Hannibal said, I wanted to make a commentary on what happened." And so did we. The film is our response.

— Trish Adlesic, Director

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Setting the stage for any conversation inspired by a documentary story deserves care and thoughtful planning. This is particularly true with stories filled with deep emotion and trauma.

The discussion and educational resource for ***A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*** was developed with this sensitivity in mind. The content is intended to be flexible to meet your needs as a facilitator, your audience needs as participants and viewing goals. The resource includes screening guidelines, background information, discussion questions, and opportunities to engage more deeply with responses and actions.

Here are possible audiences and outcomes for incorporating the film:

- **Middle and high school classrooms and other educational initiatives** can explore ideologies associated with extremism; discuss issues such as the first amendment and social media platforms; research the rise of White supremacy, extremism, and antisemitism in America today; and examine the rule of law and parameters for monitoring and intervening in violent extremist movements.
- **Active shooter safety response training** can share this story as an example of why training works, assess current safety protocols, and introduce new practices while continuing to reinforce their life-saving work. Similarly, **First Responders** can share the documentary to discuss best practices when responding to gun violence crises.
- **Interfaith initiatives and faith-based communities** can explore values discussed in the documentary, discuss the role faith communities played after the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, examine religiously based hate, including antisemitism around the world, and explore ways the community can work in solidarity to eliminate these beliefs and ideologies.
- **Policy and advocacy** professionals can explore effective interventions and programs working to interrupt the spread of extremism while also exploring how the Pittsburgh community, and other communities, respond to mass shootings.
- **Mental health professionals** can discuss current practices when working with individuals and communities who have experienced gun violence and other hate-induced trauma. **Public health professionals** can engage with the story when exploring a public health approach to countering violent extremism (CVE).

ACT I: BEFORE VIEWING RESOURCES

To help prepare moderators and educators for thoughtful and purposeful conversations.

Reflect on these questions as you plan your screening:

- What do you wish to accomplish with this screening and conversation?
- What do you want to make sure your audience learns from the film and discussion?
- What does a successful screening look like?
- What concerns do you have and what kinds of support can help alleviate these concerns?

Review these resources before any film viewing:

- **Community Guidelines:** Helpful suggestions for facilitating conversations that touch upon emotionally difficult stories
- **Background:** Historical and Cultural overviews and resources to frame the context of the story
- **Relevant Terms** for reference and to support discussions of the documentary



COMMUNITY GUIDELINES

One priority of this resource is to foster civic dialogue across differences. To ensure the physical and emotional safety of all who attend, here are suggested guidelines to adapt to your group or classroom:

BEFORE SCREENING

- **Prepare Yourself:** Watch the documentary [here](#) or contact Good Docs [here](#) to learn how to obtain a license. It is highly recommended to take time to discuss your emotional reactions to the story prior to your screening to help you guide the conversation.
- **Partner Locally:** Contact organizations and invite representatives from local groups or non-profit organizations engaged in the topics covered in the film, such as identity-based hate, antisemitism, interfaith dialogue, safe and secure training, and gun safety.
- **Create Group Guidelines:** Remind audiences that they all will have different personal experiences with the Pittsburgh shooting and to stay open to learning from one another. Norms such as not interrupting and paying attention to how much or how little you are speaking may be helpful to ensure all voices feel welcome to share.
- **Establish Clear Goals:** Before and after the screening, clarify your reasons for sharing the film with the group. (If helpful, use the frameworks included in Impact Outcomes listed in the Prologue or communicate your own goals.)
- **Explain a Trauma-Informed Approach in Documentary Filmmaking:** It is important for communities and classrooms to know that Trish Adlesic, the director of this documentary, centered her filmmaking on the care and well-being of film participants throughout the process. This approach is necessary, particularly when the story is centered on communities that have experienced trauma. Read one exposition on this values-based approach [here](#).

AFTER VIEWING

- **Provide some time for viewers to process their experience:** When the film ends, offer the audience a few moments to collect their thoughts and emotions. Then, invite people to take a few deep breaths before transitioning and debriefing the film with the discussion questions provided.
- **Offer Supportive Resources:** Having information available at the screening on mental health or crisis support may be helpful. Consider exploring the [10.27 Healing Partnership](#) for support and materials. As their website explains, local leaders met with staff from other resiliency centers from around the country for more than 11 months after the shooting. The [greater Pittsburgh community joined with local organizations and those outside the Pittsburgh area](#) to gather lessons learned and best practices to assess the community's short-term and long-term needs. As a result, the 10.27 Healing Partnership was established, offering extensive support for those directly impacted by the October 2018 attack or any other hate-induced trauma.

BACKGROUND: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

“Just before the shooting, we had organized what was called a HIAS-Shabbat. It was happening all over the country, and there was a particular Shabbat that was to be focused on immigrants. Apparently, the HIAS website listed congregations that were participants, and congregant Dor Hadash was listed as a participant. That’s how he knew that we had something to do with immigrants.”

— Ellen Surloff, Former President of Congregation Dor Hadash, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

As you plan the format and focus of your screening, review these general overviews for background, share what is helpful with your group or class, and use the recommended resources for additional learning.

OCTOBER 27, 2018

The Tree of Life building in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, housed three congregations — [Tree of Life Congregation](#), [New Light Congregation](#), and [Congregation Dor Hadash](#). On the morning of October 27, 2018, members from all three congregations were present and beginning their Shabbat morning services.

At approximately 9:50 am, the gunman entered the building and went on a shooting rampage using an AR-15-style rifle and at least three semi-automatic handguns, killing 11 congregants and injuring seven others. During the 20 minutes of the assault, he shouted, “All these Jews need to die.” This act of domestic terrorism remains the deadliest antisemitic hate crime in U.S. history. It cannot be separated from the historical and political context of the time, nor from the two extremist ideologies the gunman professed in his online communities — White nationalism and antisemitism.

Women gather Thursday at New Light Cemetery in Etna for the burial of Richard Gottfried, who was killed in the Tree of Life synagogue shooting.

Day 3 of services: Hundreds of mourners pay respects to those killed at Tree of Life

By Peter Smith and Elizabeth Behman
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

where visitation services for Sylvan, 86, and Bernice Simon, 84, were held between 11 and noon.

The Simons, of Wilkinsburg, were married 62 years ago in the Tree of Life

Inside

• Local synagogues invite public to “Show Up For Shabbat.” A4

grandchildren recalled visits with “the



THE RISE OF WHITE NATIONALISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY

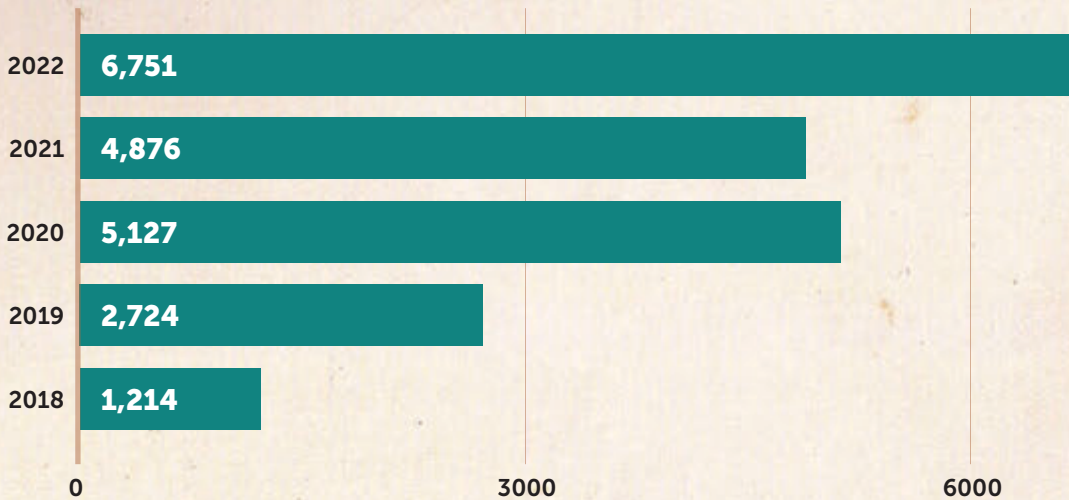
“Antisemitism was a fuel, it fueled other hate speech that the suspect was posting. So it wasn’t just antisemitism; it was also hatred of immigrants, hate about other individuals.... Several of the messages were against a Jewish refugee resettlement agency. One of the points he [the gunman] was making was that this agency [HIAS] is bringing people in, and he said, ‘My people are being slaughtered.’”

— CNN anchor, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

White nationalist groups are splintered into dozens of groups, from neo-Nazis and the alt-right to established media platforms such as Breitbart. While members move amongst different groups, they all believe in preserving a White majority and a racial hegemony. One common thread connecting from the murders at the Emanuel AME Church in 2015, the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally in 2017, the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in 2018, and the January 6, 2021 insurrection is the toxicity of White supremacy, violence, racism, and antisemitism and the online social media platforms that enable their messages to spread.

According to investigations after the Pittsburgh shooting, the gunman was actively posting on his alt-right social feed before the shooting. The [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) reports that he was obsessed with Jews, engaged with numerous antisemitic conspiracy theories, and shared a wide range of grievances shared across the far right. Such postings were not an anomaly. Online communities have become the primary space for antisemitism and White nationalism to flourish. The most recent data from the ADL reports that 2022 saw the White supremacy propaganda “[soar to an all-time high](#)” since the organization began tracking these materials in 1979.

WHITE SUPREMACIST PROPAGANDA 2018-2022 INCIDENTS IN THE U.S.



Source: [ADL 2022 Report](#)

RESOURCES

For additional material on the rise of White nationalism in the United States, explore resources published by these established organizations and agencies:

- [Anti Defamation League \(ADL\) - Center on Extremism](#)
- Read their report, "[Murder & Extremism in the United States in 2022](#)"
- See the ADL [H.E.A.T Map](#) (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism), an interactive and customizable map detailing specific these incidents by state and nationwide. Read details on specific incidents, better understand tactics extremists use, compare activity by type or state, and access and download raw data.
- [FBI Hate Crime Statistics](#)
- [Global Project Against Hate and Extremism](#)
- [Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab \(PERIL\)](#)
- [Rand Corporation - Violent Extremism Reports](#)
- [The Southern Poverty Law Center](#)

“The Jewish people have been here on these shores 355 years. And if you think about antisemitism, which has been prevalent all 355 years, it’s surprising, well, what took so long. It was inevitable that there was going to be an attack of this nature on a synagogue.”

— Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

21ST-CENTURY ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Antisemitism is often referred to as the longest hatred. It is a deeply rooted animus, perhaps one of the oldest traceable ideologies of “othering” that spans geography and history. A complete analysis is beyond the scope of this guide, but an introduction to where it has surfaced in religious, racial, and political arenas is one place to start.

Historically antisemitism, known as Jew-hatred before the 19th century, has been expressed in religious beliefs and observances (e.g., [blood libel](#)), conflated with loyalty to a nation (e.g., [the Dreyfus Affair](#)), associated with economic and political power (e.g., [the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion](#)), tied to leaders of political movements of Jewish descent (e.g., communism and socialism), or blamed for historical losses (e.g., [World War I](#).) The hatred of the Jewish people flares in times of political and economic uncertainty (e.g., [Weimar Germany](#)) and has also been associated with particular political leaders and ideologies perceived as a threat to Western democracy (e.g., antisemitic signals from political leaders or celebrities can embolden bigots to come out into the public square and commit violent acts of domestic terror based on these beliefs).

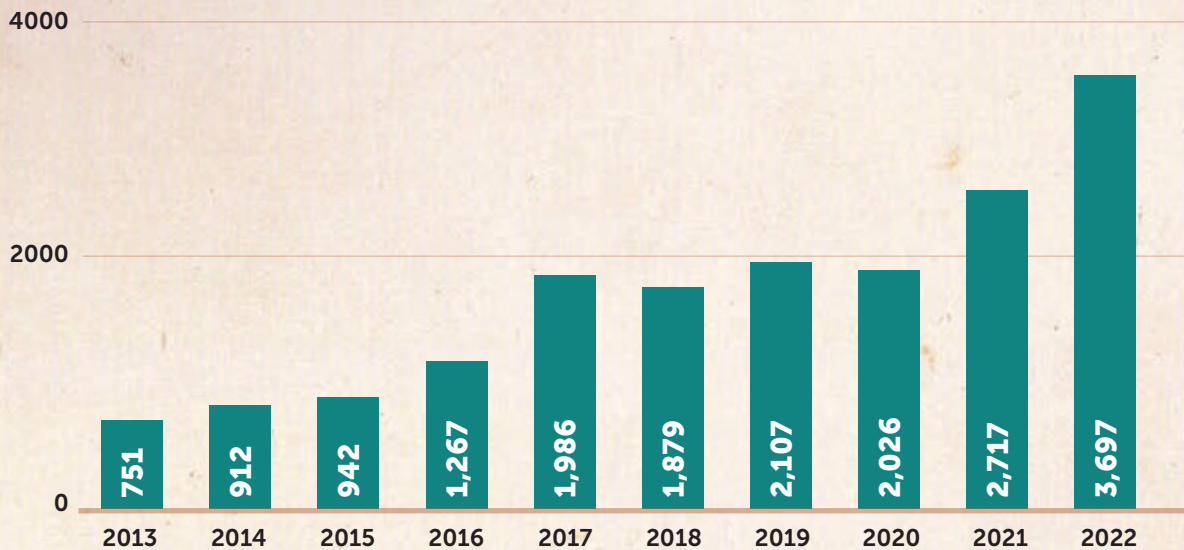
The Jewish community makes up about approximately three percent of the U.S. population. At the time of the Pittsburgh shooting, the [2018 Hate Crime FBI Statistics](#) found that 56.9 percent of the 1,617 victims of anti-religious hate crimes in the U.S. were victims of crimes motivated by anti-Jewish bias.

In its annual [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#), the ADL reported that antisemitic incidents in the U.S. rose 57 percent in 2017, the largest single-year increase on record. Five years after the shooting, the [2022 ADL audit](#) tabulated 3,697 antisemitic incidents, a 36 percent increase from 2021 and a more than double from 2018.

The 2022 report also found:

- **5 states account for 54 percent of the total incidents — New York (580), California (518), New Jersey (408), Florida (269), and Texas (211).**
- **Schools and synagogues continue to be the primary targets with bomb threats at their highest since 2017.**
- **Organized White supremacist groups, specifically the Goyim Defense League, lead the way with distributing propaganda, as did sites such as Ye’s social media, which remained a consistent reference point in antisemitic propaganda posts.**

ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS | U.S. TEN YEAR REVIEW | 2013-2022



Source: [ADL Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2022](#)

Alongside these incidents, the American Jewish Committee's "[The State of Antisemitism in America in 2022](#)" report found feelings of safety within the Jewish community to be under increasing threat:

- Four of every ten Jewish Americans feel their status is less secure as Jewish people than it was a year earlier.
- Nearly 90 percent of Jewish Americans — and the same percentage of the country's total population — believe antisemitism is a serious problem, up from 73 percent in 2016.
- Of the Jewish community surveyed in 2022, 63 percent said that they see law enforcement as appropriately responsive when it came to antisemitism, a substantial drop from 2019 when that number was 81 percent.

RESOURCES

To dig deeper into the history and context of antisemitism within and outside of the United States, here are some recommended collections of texts to explore:

- Explore the [Foundation to Combat Antisemitism](#) and the work this foundation is doing in their campaign [#StandUpToJewishHate](#)
- See the Jewish Book Council's recommended books on the history of antisemitism [here](#).
- To focus on American antisemitism, explore [this list from Brandeis University](#).
- Watch [this short video](#) from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum explaining the contexts of today's violent antisemitism and explore their [bibliography](#) of additional source materials.
- Watch [Audrey Glickman interviewed on CBS News](#) on the rise of antisemitism in response to January 6, 2021.

RELEVANT TERMS

Unless otherwise noted, this curated list of terms relevant to the documentary is excerpted from the extensive [Glossary of Extremism](#) assembled by the ADL. It may also be interesting to explore the conversation on the capitalization of “White” as it relates to racial or ethnic identity. Read more [here](#).

Alt-right (short for alternative right) is a loose movement that arose in the 2010s. By 2015 it had become a new segment of the White supremacist movement, including a subculture heavily influenced by websites such as 4chan and 8chan. The more politically oriented alt-right adherents seek to legitimize and expand racist and antisemitic views within the American right. See the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#).

Anti-immigrant bias: The marginalization and oppression of immigrants, transnational or outside the dominant national identity or culture. (Other related terms include xenophobia to describe a fear of anyone or anything perceived as foreign or strange.)

Antisemitism is a belief or behavior hostile towards a Jewish person because they are Jewish. For instance, antisemitism may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about an individual Jewish person or the Jewish community.

Countering violent extremism (CVE) refers to policies, programs, and interventions designed to prevent all forms of ideologically based extremist violence and includes the recruiting, radicalization, and mobilizing of followers.

In addition, CVE efforts include awareness building, counternarrative measures, and intervention programs.

Extremism describes religious, social, or political belief systems that exist substantially outside of mainstream accepted beliefs in society. Extremist ideologies often seek radical changes in government, religion, or society. Most exist outside the mainstream because many of their views or tactics are objectionable.

Hate crime is a criminal act against a person or property because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or disability of another person or group. Hate speech alone very rarely constitutes a hate crime. In all but very limited circumstances, hate speech is protected speech under the First Amendment.

HIAS is the world’s oldest refugee agency, formally established in 1902. Its origins date back to the 1880s and 1890s when it supported Jews fleeing [pogroms](#). Today HIAS remains a humanitarian aid and advocacy organization dedicated to helping all persons forcibly displaced from around the world in keeping with the organization’s Jewish ethical roots. (excerpted from [Our History: HIAS website](#))

Identity-based hate is an extreme dislike for someone or a group based on the characteristics considered unique to a person's identity, such as race, religion, sexual orientation, or physical appearance. This hate directed at someone's identity can result in interpersonal bias, discrimination, hate incidents, hate crimes, and involvement in an organized hate group. (Note: Adapted from definitions of [Hate](#) and [Identity-Based Bullying](#))

Optics debate: The gunman posted on Gab the Saturday before the shooting, "HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. [Screw your optics.](#) I'm going in." His citing of "optics" refers to the debate among White supremacists about whether it is better to promote their White supremacist ideology overtly via National Socialist symbolism (e.g., swastikas) or with less overtly racist imagery (e.g., American flags) favored by so-called American Nationalists.

White genocide is the White supremacist belief that the White race is dying due to growing non-White populations and "forced assimilation" deliberately engineered and controlled by a Jewish conspiracy intent on destroying the White race. This fear animated the gunman's actions in Pittsburgh.

White nationalism is a term that originated among White supremacists as a euphemism for White supremacy. It emphasizes defining a country or region by White racial identity and seeks to promote the interests of Whites exclusively, typically at the expense of people of other backgrounds.

White supremacy characterizes a belief system based on the ideas that Whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds and live by themselves in a Whites-only society, that they have their own superior "culture," and that they are genetically superior to other people. In addition, White supremacy holds that the White race is in danger of extinction due to a rising "flood" of non-Whites controlled and manipulated by Jews.



ACT II: TO REMEMBER

**“It is a tree of life for those who grasp it,
and all who hold onto it are blessed.”**

— Proverbs 3:1

To remember individuals lost to domestic terrorism, gun violence, or other violent acts of identity-based hate is to honor their memory. Take a moment after the film concludes to say the names of the individuals from the three congregations aloud.

“We don’t refer to it as the Tree of Life shooting. We call it the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting. Because we want people to know that two other congregations were in that building, and all three congregations lost people.”

— Carol Black, survivor, and sister of Richard Gottfried, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

“You just start thinking about each one of them and how you knew each one and how long you knew each one. All of us have such different memories and associations with them, but I think that their memories really are what we would call a blessing for all of us, and that part of them continues to live on within us.”

— Stephen Weiss, survivor, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

*Bernice Simon
and Sylvan Simon*

Rose Malling

**THESE 11 MEMBERS OF THE PITTSBURGH
JEWISH COMMUNITY WERE MURDERED WHILE
ATTENDING THEIR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ON
OCTOBER 27, 2018.**

JOYCE FIENBERG

RICHARD GOTTFRIED

ROSE MALLINGER

JERRY RABINOWITZ

CECIL ROSENTHAL

DAVID ROSENTHAL

BERNICE SIMON

SYLVAN SIMON

DANIEL STEIN

MELVIN WAX

IRVING YOUNGER

ACT III:

AFTER VIEWING RESPONSES

There are multiple ways to share and engage in this story depending on your audience and priorities. These opportunities can be an entry point for community discussion, deeper learning, understanding, and action.

THIS SECTION INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS** FOR POST-SCREENING CONVERSATIONS
- **SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES** TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING VOICE TO SURVIVORS AND FAMILIES
- **RESPONSES AND ACTIONS** ARE SUGGESTED CALLS TO ACTION TO FOCUS PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCES, COMMUNITIES, AND CLASSROOMS ON A TOPIC WITHIN THE DOCUMENTARY AND TO EXPLORE WAYS TO BE INVOLVED IN SOLUTIONS.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was new to you as you watched the film?
- In what ways did you connect to the people in the film?
- Have you ever met someone who is Jewish? If you have never met a Jewish person, what did you learn about Judaism from this film?
- Did the film raise any theological questions for you?
- Was there one moment, scene, or testimony that moved you in a particular way?
- Were you drawn to any particular people whose voices you heard or whose story was offered?
- How does connecting to these people shift your understanding of what occurred?
- Did you feel anything was missing from this account or narrative?
- What emotions did the film raise in you?
- Did you feel any familiarity with Pittsburgh as a community?
- What choices do you think the filmmaker prioritized in the production of the documentary? If you were making the film, would you have done anything differently? Why?
- If you could visit with any of the film's subjects or the filmmaker(s), what would you want to talk about or ask?

FOCUS ON SURVIVOR TESTIMONIES

Director Trish Adlesic prioritized [a trauma-informed approach](#) to collecting and curating the testimonials for the documentary. This includes centering the care and well-being of film participants at the onset of a film's development and throughout the filmmaking process.

Considering this value, share and discuss this curated collection of testimonials from ***A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*** and use the suggested "Conversation Starter" questions to engage in a deeper conversation. These recollections can also be a meaningful way to open or close your film viewing and set the tone for your discussion.



CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- How do you define a testimonial? Is it different from other forms of storytelling? If so, how?
- Why do you think it is essential to document and share first-person testimonials?
- For what other events have you accessed survivor testimonials? Why did you seek them out?
- How would you characterize these survivor testimonials excerpted from this documentary?
- What have you learned from what the survivors shared in the film?

EXPERIENCES OF SURVIVORS

"It was a rainy morning. I got there, and my dear friend Jerry Rabinowitz arrived just a few minutes before I did. Then we heard gunshots, and Jerry and I looked at each other, and, well, Jerry is a doctor, I'm a nurse. Our instincts are counter to what everyone is trained to do and should do, and I encourage them to do — and that is to run, hide, and fight in that order. Jerry and I thought that somehow we could be helpful, so we moved in the direction of the gunfire. Jerry was killed, and I was shot. I knew that it was very likely that I was going to be dead in a few minutes."

— Daniel Leger, survivor

"Rabbi Myers was already on the phone to 9-1-1. I didn't have my phone because I had worn something with pockets too shallow for a phone, so my phone was on the pew. It was a poor decision, and I'll never go to the synagogue again without pockets big enough to have my phone on me. And I think women's clothing should be made with pockets big enough for phones because apparently, it's a matter of life and death." —Audrey Glickman, survivor

"I couldn't see too much. I knew I could see the long gun. I knew the type. It was some sort of an automatic weapon. He stepped over Mel, and I couldn't see anything. I had 9-1-1 in my ear yelling at me, trying to get me to say something, and I couldn't breathe, and then he stepped back out of the door, and the door closed. I guess it was about a half hour later; I'm not sure about the time. By this time, I'm talking to the 9-1-1 operator and [there's] a shaft of light over my shoulder and footsteps behind me. And then this young SWAT officer comes down the steps and takes me and Carol Black out of the building." — *Barry Werber, survivor*

"We couldn't run. We were in the back, in our seats. And I just told my mother, I said, 'Just get down.' And I think we both got shot before we went down. I just lay on the floor. I didn't move. I was bleeding a lot. I think I must have been in shock. My mother was lying right next to me. And I couldn't look. I just stayed there until somebody came through. When I got up, I just told my mother I loved her. I had to go, I had to live. I knew she wasn't going to survive." — *Andrea Wedner, survivor*

"Of course, I'm changed by this. Who wouldn't be? The vision of the man with the gun facing me is not as prominent as it was the first week or two, but every once in a while, he shows up." — *Joe Charny, survivor*

EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS

"One of my elder daughters came running in and asked, did Bubbie go to the shul today? That's about when my stomach fell out, and I knew something was wrong." — *Anthony Fienberg, son of Joyce Fienberg*

"I don't know that two people were happier living the life that they had. They would carry the Torah; it meant a lot to them. It is an honor to do something like that, but for them, it was a true honor, and they were so proud of themselves when they were able to do it. And then, the Rabbi reached out to me and asked me if I would carry a Torah on Yom Kippur, which was an absolute "yes" because it was to honor Cecil. But, I have to say that day, I thought I was ready, and I wasn't ready, and it was probably one of the hardest things because I heard stories from people where kids from the congregation who had gone with their parents were like, that was Cecil's job. So it was just really hard. I reached out to Cecil in my mind and just said, 'Please get me through this.'" — *Michele Rosenthal, David and Cecil Rosenthal's sister, A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

RESPONSES AND ACTIONS

After screenings, many community members and students may ask, **“What can I do right now?”** There are multiple ways to respond to this question, and no one action will be the solution. Instead, it will take a multi-pronged approach to address this ideological and systemic pathology. **All of us have a role to play.**

One place to start is to consider options and identify your interests and strengths. This section includes a handful of recommended prosocial and proactive actions. Each suggestion includes a film quote to connect viewers to the action, Conversation Starters to discuss the actions within your community or in classrooms, A Call to Action to consider if interested in doing something concrete, and suggested organizations and articles under Additional Exploration to continue to learn more.

Responses and actions can effectively be incorporated using these formats:

- **They can be stand-alone ideas to introduce, discuss, and explore in the community;**
- **They can be topics for small groups in workshops or classrooms;**
- **They can be offered as take-aways for audiences or students to explore independently after the viewing experience.**

FIGHT EXTREMISM, IDENTITY-BASED HATE, ANTISEMITISM, AND DISCRIMINATION

Identity-based hate and violent extremism have always existed but have historically been relegated to the margins of society. Eliminating these ideologies requires vigilance and a systems-wide approach, from tracking and making public any effort to promote these ideologies to advancing educational initiatives that strengthen democracy and are inclusive of cross-sections of society to prosecuting individuals or groups violating laws that promote political violence.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What American institutions are most effective in fighting extremism?
- What are the most effective interventions available to interrupt and stop the spread of extremism?
- How do extremist ideologies spread?
- What is one thing you can do to disrupt a cycle of disenfranchisement, which is a common element for attracting individuals to join extremist groups?



A CALL TO ACTION

Know More about Hate in Your Community

- Go to your state on the ADL's [H.E.A.T. Map](#) (Hate, Extremism, Antisemitism, Terrorism). It is important to remember that map only includes reported acts of H.E.A.T.
- Invite local law enforcement to a post-viewing conversation to discuss your findings.
- Check out [this resource](#) from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Know How to Report Identity-Based Hate

Here are organizations and tools to access to report or receive support in reporting incidences of hate:

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC) has a hate crimes tracker [here](#).
- Muslim Advocates has a place to report incidents impacting the Muslim community [here](#).
- South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) has resources on hate crimes and xenophobia here, and a link to report any incident [here](#)



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

Learn More about the Rise in Attacks Rooted in Hate from the Work of These Organizations

- [Center on Extremism](#) - ADL
- [Collaboratory Against Hate](#) - The University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University
- [Resources to know your rights](#) - Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)
- [Global Project Against Hate and Extremism](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#) - Amongst many issues, working to combat transgender and nonbinary violence
- [Immigrants' Rights Initiative, Mapping Anti-LGBTQ Attacks in U.S. State Legislatures](#), ACLU
- [MPower Change](#) - Muslim Grassroots Movement
- [Parents for Peace](#) - A support network for parents scarred by extremism
- ProPublica is documenting stories of hate [here](#).
- [State of Black America](#) - National Urban League
- [Stop AAPI Hate](#) - Leading aggregator of anti-Asian and Pacific Islander hate incident
- The Sikh Coalition has resources to prevent hate and discrimination [here](#).

"After the Tree of Life massacre, probably about 30 or 40 of these [antisemitic leaflets] were thrown about in the Squirrel Hill area referring to Jews as Satan. These groups are emboldened, they're empowered, and they're vocal, and they feel they can be now."

Brad Orsini, National Security Advisor, Secure Community Network, A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting

Audrey Glickman shared one reason she wanted to be part of the documentary was to show what Jews do is not that different than what everyone else does. She explained, "We are all more than just how we appear. People need to know this. The only thing to do is to live life with a variety of people and get to know them so the hate can never appear." For example, she emphasized, "Barry Werber and Sylvan Simon were veterans. Sylvan and Bernice were actually buried in a military cemetery. So, this shooter who said all kinds of things about being American on his social media actually was shooting veterans—people who defended America."

HOLD TECH COMMUNITIES ACCOUNTABLE

“[The] alleged shooter... is not believed to have a prior criminal history. The social media posts attributed to him contain antisemitic views and other hate speech.”

— Reporter, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

The online communities populated by White extremists are prolific seedbeds for radicalizing individuals seeking a sense of belonging. Circulating what is defined as “hate speech” currently falls under First Amendment protection, and yet tech platforms can stop the amplification of these ideas and communities by refusing to host users who actively spread discriminatory ideologies. This effort, known as “deplatforming,” can make it more difficult for extremists to find a home and for those seeking out these ideas to access these communities.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Do you think extremist groups have a First Amendment right to post hate speech?
- Do you agree or disagree with limiting access of White supremacists to post online?
- How do you think social media platforms should combat hate speech and misinformation?
- Does the government have a role in regulating these platforms?



A CALL TO ACTION

Address Hate On Social

We all can share the responsibility of monitoring one of the spaces where extremist ideologies are spread—our social media feeds. If you see antisemitic or other identity-based hate posts on your social media, you can immediately report them to the platform.

Here are general instructions on how to notify the host:

- Tap the options symbol (dots, arrow, carrot) on the post, profile, or comment.
- Tap **Report**.
- Select the reason as listed on the platform (hateful conduct, hate speech, etc.).
- Find more direct information on reporting from [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- [Disrupt Online Hate and Harassment](#), ADL
- [“Failure to Protect: How tech giants fail to act on user reports of antisemitism,”](#) Center for Countering Digital Hate
- [“How mass shooters practice their hate online,”](#) Vox
- [“Does ‘deplatforming’ work to curb hate speech and calls for violence?”](#) The Conversation
- [Online Speech and the First Amendment: Ten Principles from the Supreme Court](#), The Brennan Center for Justice

EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Anthony Fienberg, son of Joyce Fienberg, shared this reflection with several families outside of the Tree of Life building after October 27:

“The Chabad of Pittsburgh did something in the days following the tragedy, which was to ask people within the Congregation and beyond to do 100 mitzvahs, or good deeds, for every victim. So when you think about what can come of this sort of situation, you need to think about the positive values for which the victims stood and how we can change other people’s lives in a positive manner. That, in particular, is what our mother would have wanted as a legacy, and that is what we’re going to do in a positive light about that.”



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Is education the most effective intervention to interrupt and end extremism? What would be your educational priorities if you were a community, school, faith leader, or parent?
- How can this story connect to educational initiatives in your community or school?
- What lessons would you like to draw from this story to bring to your community or school?



A CALL TO ACTION

Explore [Love Like the Boys](#)

This global initiative from the Achieva Organization was established in honor of David and Cecil Rosenthal to promote everyday acts of kindness. Consider participating in this work. Intentional part of raising. See [#LoveLikeTheBoys](#)



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- [10.27 Healing Partnership](#)
- [Classrooms Without Borders](#)
- [Eradicate Hate Global Summit](#)
- [“Pittsburgh Marks a Massacre’s Anniversary with Prayers and Projects,”](#) October 27, 2019, *The New York Times*

POWER OF ART

“That’s what a shofar does; we call people to action.”

— Audrey Glickman, survivor

“As a human being, I found it unfortunate to have to write it. I completed the composition when I heard of the horrible event in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life synagogue. So I said to the staff, we must make a commentary on this, if we could, in fact, get one of the shofars, the instrument. So they called, and I was in the office and all of a sudden, Jeremy broke in and said, ‘Hannibal, guess what?’ ‘The shofar player is going to come! Has agreed to come and play!’”

— Hannibal Lokumbe, composer, “Healing Tones”, and Chief Musician, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- How do you think art can be a vehicle for healing?
- What role did art play in the aftermath of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting?
- How can art be a commentary? What commentary do you think composer Hannibal Lokumbe is making in response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting?
- What art form could you imagine turning to in response to 10/27? Why?



A CALL TO ACTION

Imagine a World Without Hate Art Project

- 1 Read about this project in the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle [here](#).
- 2 Explore [the Poster Gallery: Art of Healing and Resilience](#), an initiative of Uncover Squirrel Hill and the 10.27 Healing Partnership.
- 3 Choose one poster that you found meaningful and share your thoughts and feelings with someone attending the screening or in your class.
- 4 Consider creating your own creative expression using the prompt, “What does a world without hate look like to you?”



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- [“Tree of Life victims honored by 4 schools with public art,”](#) November 10, 2022, *The Pittsburgh Gazette*
- [“When Jewish Artists Wrestle with Antisemitism,”](#) December 9, 2022, *The New York Times*

SUPPORT SAFETY AND FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING

“The days when synagogues just leave their doors open and just hope that no one comes through with a gun, I think those days are gone.”

— Ellen Surloff, Former President, Congregation Dor Hadash, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

“I’ve taken on a mission to really try to promote ALICE [Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate] training, kind of as my personal take out of this whole thing. Because I really credit that training with saving my life.... It’s up to each one of us to learn this because it can save your life.”

— Stephen Weiss, survivor

“Since the year 2000, active shooters, that active threat, has increased every single year. I am going to talk about a commitment to action. We have to learn how to survive for three to five minutes. That three to five minutes is the timeframe when we call the police till first responders typically come.”

— Brad Orsini, National Security Advisor, Secure Community Network, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

“[A]ll of the police officers, the EMTs, they risked their lives without hesitation.

As you know, four of our officers were wounded very badly, and of course, if you talk to any of them, they’ll say, ‘Oh, I was just doing my job.’ The EMTs went in when it was still a very dangerous situation because they wanted to see if they could save people, and thank God they did. They saved Dan Leger. If they had not gone in, he might not be here.”

— Marty Gaynor, survivor



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What questions do you have about safety training?
- What other community safety efforts do you believe are necessary to change the targeting of Jewish people and their institutions?
- According to the most recent [ADL Report](#), the Jewish community remains America’s most targeted religious group. Review this report and discuss its findings. What questions does this report raise in your mind?



A CALL TO ACTION

A Step-by-Step Safe and Secure Assessment Exercise

- 1 Read FEMA’s recommendation of [“5 Ways to Improve the Safety and Security at Your Place of Worship or Community Spaces.”](#)
- 2 Explore the many recommended steps to stay prepared.
- 3 Invite a professionally trained security assessment to map and do a current assessment of your safety protocols.
- 4 Communicate their recommendations through various ways, including social media, community newsletters, posters within the institution, and reminders at staff meetings or other community events.



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- [“The Secure Community Network has been building a shield over U.S. Jewish communities. It saved lives in the Texas synagogue attack”](#), CNN.com
- Contact the [Secure Community Network](#) and explore their resources



STRENGTHEN INTERFAITH RELATIONS

“There’s a lot of reliance on religion in our country. And I think everybody seemed touched, whether Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, or any other religion, that this could happen to them. It’s not some random shooting, it was a crime against people — they were only shot because of what they believed in.”

Ron Wedner, husband of Andrea Wedner, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

In recent history in the United States, many interfaith coalitions have come together to engage in deep spiritual work on shared beliefs, values, and practices. Audrey Glickman, Tree of Life member and survivor of the shooting, shared that Wasi Mohamed had attended Saturday morning services prior to October 27, 2018, had given a [D’var Torah](#), and was known in the community. She added that many interfaith groups, previously established amongst the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, have increased since the synagogue shooting.

“I think a lot of people were surprised to see the Muslim community, of all communities, step up and help the Jewish community. And I think it’s because of misconceptions about both of our communities that people were so surprised. But our religions are very similar. Our traditions are similar. Our values are similar.”

— Wasi Mohamed, Former Executive Director of the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh, *A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is your experience in interfaith dialogue?
- What do you believe are the gravest misconceptions across religious faiths?
- How did this documentary change or shift your ideas about the power and need for stronger interfaith alliances?



A CALL TO ACTION

Explore Interfaith Connections

One exercise to foster interfaith understanding is to look at different religious texts (e.g., interpretations of justice and “love thy neighbor”) and interpretations of shared values (e.g., on forgiveness.) For example, as Wasi Mohamed noted, Judaism and Islam have many shared traditions and customs, and shared reverence for specific values.

Justice

(Judaism) “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18)

(Islam) “Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good – to parents; kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess.” (The Holy Qur’an, al-Nisaa 4:36)

Love thy neighbor as thyself

(Judaism) And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, “But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:34)

(Islam) “Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.”(Surah 4: 36-37)

Forgiveness

“One of the things that I’ve learned from all of this is how many different religions there are in the world that teach all the same thing. Love and peace. You have to reach out to your fellow man; you have to be gracious, you have to be generous, you have to share, you have to cause peace to happen.”

— Audrey Glickman, survivor

"I remember very little of the ambulance ride. I remember arriving at the hospital, and then I don't remember anything.... I remember when the breathing tube was removed. I remember looking and realizing that my family was around me and saying that I loved you. And the third thing I said was, 'God, forgive him.' As awful as it sounds, I'm not trying to give the shooter a free pass here. But I know that he was made in the image of God, just like I am. He's a human being."

— Dan Leger, survivor



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

There are many local and national initiatives organized around interfaith relations. Here are a few places to begin exploring:

- [Council of Center on Jewish-Christian Relations](#)
- [Interfaith Alliance](#)
- [Interfaith Dialogue—The Islamic Society of North America](#)
- [Interfaith Youth Core](#)
- [The Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation](#)
- [United Religions Initiative](#)
- [United States Institute of Peace](#) — Religious Engagement and Peacebuilding
- [World Jewish Congress—Interfaith Dialogue](#)

At its most basic level, interfaith dialogue involves people of different religious faiths coming together to have a conversation. "Conversation" in this sense has an expansive definition and is not limited to verbal exchange alone... The notion of interfaith dialogue encompasses many different types of conversations, settings, goals, and formats. But it is not an all-encompassing concept: interfaith dialogue is not intended to be a debate. It is aimed at mutual understanding, not competing; at mutual problem solving, not proselytizing.

Some writers note that even this expansive definition of "dialogue" or "conversation" is too narrow if confined to the merely verbal. They argue that demonstrable deeds of reconciliation are usually much more effective than engaging in conversation. But these deeds may also be classified under the rubric of interfaith dialogue, in the broadest of senses, because they share one underlying feature: reverence, the shared devotion to high ideals. Reverence enables participants from different faith traditions to jointly affirm transcendent ideals such as honor, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and freedom.

WORK ON BEHALF OF GUN SAFETY REFORMS

We live in a time when differing views on gun reform remain stark. Yet, events such as the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting compel us to engage in important conversations on gun violence and gun ownership in America, including how our nation and our communities respond to gun violence, whose story of gun violence gets told, where resources are allocated to support survivors of gun violence, and how the rule of law is exercised in response to the victims.

“If we didn’t change the gun regulation and gun laws after Sandy Hook, I don’t know that we ever will. I hope and pray there is a day when we do that. I’m a Marine, I’m an FBI agent, and I’ve carried a gun my entire professional career. I think too many people have guns that should not have guns, and that is not qualified and fit and sound to carry that weapon.” —Brad Orsini, National Security Advisor, Secure Community Network, *A Tree of Life: A Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

“I can’t understand people that have hate. I’m at a point now, I’m 62, that I think I’d have trouble hunting. Believe me, I would quit selling guns if I thought it would make a difference. What really upsets me is as soon as there’s a shooting agenda, people want to ban assault rifles. Banning assault rifles isn’t going to do anything. Better background checks? I’m all for that, but even that is a band-aid. Common sense just tells you... these people aren’t going to give up their guns, especially the criminals. If anything, I would think to arm more people.” —Gun shop owner whose shop is a former synagogue, *A Tree of Life: A Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*

“We have to be here to be able to support and encourage our local leaders as they pass legislation that our federal and state government is too broken and too inept to take care of for us.” — Dan Leger, survivor. Comment made at Squirrel Hill Stands Against Gun Violence gathering



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What different points of view on gun use and ownership were included in the documentary?
- What role do you think faith communities can play in gun safety reforms?
- [The American Association of Pediatrics](#) and the [American Public Health Association](#) have identified gun violence as a public health crisis. [The Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) explains that the public health approach to the prevention of gun violence involves examining the root causes of conflicts, interrupting situations likely to result in gun shootings, and promoting community-wide healing. What obstacles do you foresee in implementing this approach?



A CALL TO ACTION

Explore How Pittsburgh Responded

[Squirrel Hill Stands Against Gun Violence](#) was established in the aftermath of the shooting. Explore their website and research other efforts around gun safety reforms in the Additional exploration section.



ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- [Brady Campaign](#) - multiple programs addressing gun violence from legislation to research to education
- [Center for Gun Violence Solutions](#), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- [Clergy for Safe Cities](#) - a coalition of clergy-based gun violence prevention initiatives
- [Gun by Gun](#) - gun buyback program
- [Pew Research Center](#) - Key facts about Americans and guns
- [Sandy Hook Promise](#) - Educate and empower youth and adults to prevent violence in schools, homes, and communities.
- [Safe and secure gun storage](#) - John Hopkins

EPILOGUE

**“It is not your duty to finish the work,
but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.”**

— PIRKEI AVOT (ETHICS OF OUR FATHER), CHAPTER 2:16

In the final scene of the documentary, Joe Charny reads from theologian Martin Buber:

“To love God truly one must first love all humanity. If anyone tells you that they love God and do not love others, you will know that they are lying. What you must do is love your neighbor as yourself. There is no one who knows your many faults better than you do, but you love yourself anyway. So you must love your neighbors no matter how many faults you see in them.”

The stories told in ***A Tree of Life: The Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting*** stands as a testament to building bridges across communities of difference, supporting educational initiatives to break down barriers across faith communities, eradicating extremism online and in the public sphere, building a more just world for all, and to walk on the path of healing — together.

ONGOING HEALING

“Parkland has been here, and the church in Charleston, they were here. Those were really helpful times, especially in Charleston. It’s been five years, so they had some time to heal, and their knowledge is very helpful.”

— Andrea Wedner, survivor

Healing from loss is an ongoing process. In the first Podcast of [WITH](#) (What It Takes to Heal), Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks recorded a message to the Pittsburgh community one year after the event, sharing, “We may never know the answer to the question, ‘Why did this happen?’ But nevertheless, we can and should ask the question, ‘What, then, shall we do?’ The most important Jewish response is yizkor — the act of remembering. When we remember as a Jewish community, we do so for the sake of the future so that those who died may live on in us: in words, gestures, a smile here, an act of kindness there, that we would not have done had that person not left their mark on our lives. That is what yizkor is, memory as an act of thanksgiving for a life that was and still echoes and reverberates into the life that is.”

"Since the shooting, I feel a lot more connected to Judaism. Certainly to my shul family. I've gotten very involved. I think if my brother is watching at all, I think he'd be happy to see that that's what I'm doing." — Carol Black, survivor, and sister of Richard Gottfried

"I was protective of [David and Cecil]. I think what we found out after this horrific tragedy is that they actually did a pretty good job of taking care of themselves. The people that love David and Cecil — I guess we probably took it for granted that they did a pretty good job of taking care of themselves. I have people all the time that come up and share stories, and I will not get tired of them. It means so much to us."

— Michele Rosenthal, sister of David and Cecil Rosenthal

"These gardens were created for my mother in her memory. My sister-in-law initiated it. A lot of people sent rose bushes. Neighbors and family. The yellow light-colored ones are peace roses. They were sent by cousins. This one is mine. This one — I made this one. I'm not an artist, but it's the words [Garden stone with a quote, "You are forever in my heart."] Everybody loved her, and if love alone could have spared her, she would have lived forever." — Andrea Wedner, survivor

Taking a moment and pause and engage in yizkor, in memory as an act of thanksgiving. Think about the memories of loved ones shared by family members and the community in the documentary and think about someone in your own life you want to remember.

ELLEN SURLOFF, FORMER PRESIDENT OF DOR HADASH, SHARED HOW MEANINGFUL IT WAS TO RECEIVE CONDOLENCES FROM AROUND THE WORLD IN RESPONSE TO THE SHOOTING. **"JUST REACHING OUT AND THINKING ABOUT THEM AND THEIR LOSS — IT IS AMAZING HOW POWERFUL IT IS."**

JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

"I hope that one day I will have the opportunity to speak with him. I would like to ask him why he did this. I would like to have the opportunity to have a glimmer of influence. What if he is inclined to indoctrinate other inmates to leave the prison and go out and do similar things that he should not do so. I don't believe in the death penalty. I think that we don't have any right to take another person's life." — Dan Leger, survivor

"I always thought I was against the death penalty. What sum of money can give financial reparation? There isn't. In fact, we would give all the money in the world to have another day. So, not easy to do that. Therefore, I am part of, along with my brother and a couple of others in the group, ardent supporters of the death penalty in this particular case. Will that change anything? Absolutely not except to potentially send a message to those who believe that perpetrating crimes of this sort of mass murder, is a way of achieving that — it doesn't achieve anything." — Anthony Fienberg, son of Joyce Fienberg

Discussing justice and accountability is an invitation for dialogue. Following the shooting, Jewish community organizations in Pittsburgh and around the nation established many efforts to support the survivors, their families, and the community at large. Funds were raised, resources were distributed to those in need, and a form of communal accountability was exercised. In a nation based on the rule of law, after acts of domestic terrorism such as the Pittsburgh shooting and far too many others, a court of law is certainly necessary and important. As survivors of this community share in the film, there are different perspectives on what justice can and should look like. It is personal.

ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

- ["Letter to the Editor," Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle, November 23, 2022](#)
- [United States Attorney's Office, Western District of Pennsylvania, "Additional Charges Filed in Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting," January 29, 2019](#)
- ["U.S. to seek the death penalty for accused Pittsburgh shooter," Reuters](#)

EPILOGUE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the relationship between healing and justice?
- How do you define justice?
- What are the ripple effects of the crime that are important to acknowledge when discussing ongoing healing efforts and justice and accountability?



LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

Many organizations and additional reading materials referenced throughout this guide. We hope incorporating these connections within the content is a helpful way to learn.



In response to the shooting, the Pittsburgh community launched [Tree of Life Reimagined](#) as one step to engage in the ongoing work of education, healing, and remembrance.



The [Eradicate Hate Global Summit](#) is another response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting. Explore this annual conference held in Pittsburgh and consider attending.



To learn more about the Jewish community of Squirrel Hill, watch [these videos](#) produced by the Squirrel Hill Historical Society.



CREDITS