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RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: I think we're live.

JANE JACOBSON: Okay, let's do it. Thank you, everyone, for joining us. My name is Jane Jacobson. I'm the President of the northern California Hadassah region which encompasses all of northern California. I want to welcome everyone to this installment of Defining Zionism in the 21st century live from California.

If there's anyone who is joining us who hasn't joined our series before, let me explain that Hadassah's Defining Zionism series was developed -- Hadassah's Defining Zionism series was designed to create a welcoming opportunity for everyone to explore Zionism. There are many definitions and we don't all agree with those definitions of Zionism. But the goal of our program is to create a safe space so we can have open conversations and really explore different perspectives in a respectful and constructive way. We ask that you listen and are respectful during this conversation in your comments and your questions as well as when you continue your conversation online and in your local community.

As a reminder, we encourage you to ask questions via the Livestream chat box which you see on the computer screen. Please register through Livestream if that button isn't on your computer. We're so pleased to have Rabbi Melissa Weintraub today. Listening as a precondition to being heard. Rabbi Weintraub is an educator and thought leader who builds programs at the intersections of Israel, Jewish thought and conflict resolution. Among other projects, Rabbi is currently spearheading a Jewish council for public

affairs new civility initiative working to transform communal norms around Israel and other charged issues from tension and avoidance to productive deliberation across political divides. She was the founding Director of encounter, an organization dedicated to strengthening the capacity of Jewish people to be agents of change in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She was awarded the Grinnell Young Innovator for Social Justice prize honoring individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary accomplishments in effecting social change. Rabbi Weintraub has lectured and taught in hundreds of Jewish institutions, universities and forums and is a faculty member for the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. She was ordained as a conservative Rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary and graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University. Thank you so much for joining us today.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: Thank you, Jane. I hope given the spirit of this talk is listening that our tech will enable everyone to hear me and for me to be able to hear your questions as well. I want to start by acknowledging and thanking Hadassah for this forward looking series, opening up discussion, and re-thinking of Zionism, particularly generational shifts in this sphere which I'll touch on in my talk.

Let's take a moment to zoom out from the many efforts under way to reframe, redefine and rebrand Zionism. Many of these efforts are driven by a desire to articulate a compelling vision that will appeal to younger generations, progressives and other disengaged, uninformed, alienated, skeptical and critical audiences. I often hear from those who wish that these efforts had wider and stronger impact. Israel advocates trying to share things that mean so much, love of Israel, deep values and convictions, a story of our

people that we believe that the world needs to hear that is so often distorted and maligned. We want to fill in gaps of ignorance and inspire. We're often at a loss, confused and frustrated not heard by people we believe should be our natural allies. Today I'm going to share why I believe many visions of Zionism are not heard by some audiences we most want to reach and what might be most effective. I'm going to share an approach drawing from a decade of experience as a Rabbi, and facilitator of dialogue among people with dramatically divergent points of view, from anti-occupation activists, Evangelical Zionists, to Palestinians living in the West Bank. I traveled to many diverse worlds. And what I learned and what I want to share is not new. It's in fact old wisdom, but wisdom that I think is much needed in this context. In fact, the original self-help Blockbuster already said most of what I want to say this evening and I'm not going to bury the lead. Dale Carnegie's book in 1937, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, what Amazon calls the grandfather of all people skill books, says in a nutshell if you want to win people to your way of thinking, listen to them deeply. See their point of view honestly. Show respect for their opinions. Appeal to their noblest motives. And arouse in them an eager want.

Dozens if not hundreds of books have carried on in this genre since the 1930s. I recently picked up a corporate book on persuasion that culminates in the authors saying they once trained their employees to make great elevator pitches. Now they train their employees to better listen, to ask great questions and to create openings to dialogue by the end of those same elevator rides. These capacities, skillful listening, reflecting one's audience in terms of their aspirations and concerns, are currently weak if not lacking in many efforts to

promote Zionism which is why I believe many fall flat. My message today which I will expand on and elaborate on piece by piece is that if we wish to reach the audiences that aren't already with us, we can't just find the right frame, the right message, the right pitch. We need to listen profoundly, and more importantly to demonstrate that we've heard.

Let me explain. In a 2011 piece called the science of why we don't believe in science, journalist Chris Mooney analyzes the human tendency toward confirmation bias, or motivated reasoning. That is our engrained inclination to dismiss, undermine, or simply ignore facts and evidence, even if overwhelming, that don't conform to our preexisting beliefs. A number of studies have demonstrated that in Mooney's words we tend to apply fight or flight reflexes not only to predators but to data itself. That is information we find threatening, facts that challenge our assumptions and prior commitments. We do all we can to push away. And conversely we embrace nonthreatening information, assuming as a matter of course that evidence affords what we already think must certainly be true.

This has been well documented with respect to issues from affirmative action to abortion, to gun control, to climate change, to vaccines, to of course Israel, along with perhaps every other charged social issue. Subject overwhelmingly discredit or disregard facts that contradict our biases, regardless of their ideology or educational levels. When literally hit over the head with instructions to be unbiased doing all kinds of mental acrobatics which doesn't explain and fit into their prior story lines. In a book called the righteous mind, moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt describes how people tend to align themselves with a particular social and political team, and get in his

words ensnared in its moral matrix. They see confirmation of their grand narrative everywhere. And it becomes difficult if not impossible according to Haidt to convince them that they're wrong if you argue with them from outside their moral matrix. In fact, often head on arguments only back fire triggering people to hold onto their views more tenaciously than ever.

So Mooney and Haidt's pieces go a long way to explaining why many common Israel advocacy tactics, debates, education efforts, trying to prove that others are misinformed, and that we are right don't work very well. If what we want is for people who don't already agree with us to hear us. And Mooney offers one tantalizing guideline for what to do instead. One thing is becoming clear, he says. If you want someone to accept new evidence, make sure to present it to them in a context that doesn't trigger a defensive emotional reaction. A context that doesn't trigger a defensive emotional reaction on Israel? Whoever heard of such a thing. When it comes to Israel, people often have their hackles up in advance even when they're only minimally invested. Even a lot of what masks as apathy among millennials seems to be fear and/or rejection of being lectured to or labelled an anything that smacks of your telling me what to think, for this demographic tends to produce defensiveness and distrust.

Now picture in contrast sitting and talking with those who know you best, who understand you, who at least sincerely try to. Those people in your life, your closest friends, perhaps your spouse, will make a point of giving you the benefit of the doubt, who try to understand where you're coming from, who care and want to know what you care about and why. Psychologists call this state of being feeling felt. When we feel felt, we're in the opposite of that

defensive state of mind that gives rise to motivated reasoning. We're the most open version of ourselves, the most flexible and receptive in our thinking.

This insight is exactly I think what Mooney is getting at and concluding that to speak persuasively with those with whom we disagree, or those not on our political team, we must disarm their defensiveness, or according to Jonathan Haidt, we must transcend our own grand narrative and terms. This is I believe the simple wisdom that Dale Carnegie identified and captured 75 years ago. Put all these insights to use, combine them which I will do in a moment and we have the first step for a winning strategy for being heard.

In a context as highly charged as Israel, whenever we're speaking to someone who isn't already with us, defenses are likely to go up quickly, and with them motivated reasoning. If we want to reach those who aren't already with us, we have to make people feel felt. When what we're doing is making a case, no matter how persuasive or inspiring, how right or true our message, if we haven't made our audience feel felt, it simply will not land because we'll meet with motivated reasoning on the other side. That means more than talking points and messaging. To be effective, advocates need training back to Dale Carnegie in how to listen deeply, see the point of view of their audience honestly, show respect for their opinions and aspirations, appeal to their noblest motives, and arouse in them an eager want. And that means changing the whole game around Israel advocacy in terms of both substance and delivery to set the stage for being heard with openness and trust.

So let me give you two tangible examples from my own experience. One of teaching young Jewish social justice activists. A couple of years ago I spoke alongside Anna Baltzer. She's appeared on TV more than a hundred

times including on the Daily Show, and given hundreds of presentations at universities and churches. And I was invited to speak at a Jesuit university alongside her when a university administration turned to the local ADL and JCRC and asked for a Jewish speaker to counter Anna. These communal leaders to their credit decided rather than the usual point counterpoint debate they wanted to try something new they hoped would be more effective. Here is what happened.

First what I didn't do. I didn't turn to this audience, most of whom were more sympathetic to Palestinian than to Israeli narrative, and I didn't make a case for or ask them to embrace Zionism in any form. I did not refute honest facts, evidence, or sources by providing a litany of Palestinian rejectionism, intransigence or aggression, or a history of Israel's out stretched hand in peace. I did not intimate that anyone in this audience was a delegitimazer or could become one if they chose to strongly condemn Israeli policy. I tried not to blame or shame. I believe doing any of these things would have shut the door to being heard. Those not already aligned with Anna would have likely seen us both as two lawyers duking it out trying to get a verdict best for our client with a highly selective presentation of fact, and they would have been pretty cynical and suspicious of everything that I had to say as a result. I instead tried to tune into this audience's moral compass and terms. I knew that most in this audience saw it as their religious responsibility inspired by Catholic social teaching to bring justice to the vulnerable and freedom to the oppressed. I knew most saw Israelis and Palestinians with a clear imbalance of both power and injustice. And so I tried to demonstrate to this audience not cosmetically or glibly. I get it. I get where you're coming from. Like

Anna I spent years among Palestinians, I've seen their humiliation and suffering. I've seen Israel through Palestinian eyes. I get the outrage and your concern. And yet what drives you to it is nothing inflammatory or immoral. Rather your deepest and highest ideals. Rather than rebuke them I tried to get to the moral core of what mattered to them and present them with an exciting invitation. The things you're aspiring to attain: Dignity, freedom, fairness -- your vault will be better fulfilled another way. Not through blame assigning vilification, not through solidarity one side and service to justice, but solidarity with all sides, I didn't reframe or rebrand Zionism for them, but rather reframed what they cared about, the Israeli-Palestinian relations and conflict as a system of conflict rather than a system of oppression which is how they saw it. I tried to show them how they might intensify violence as obstacles to justice and peace by recognition to Palestinians and not to Israelis. Jules Brownold in a wonderful article pointed out the parallel universes in which the very terms that Israelis and Palestinians and those in solidarity with them tend to use when talking about this conflict and talking past each other, with the Israeli camp commonly referencing peace, coexistence and security. And the Palestinian camp deploying terms commonly like justice, rights, and freedom. I didn't talk past this audience by speaking about peace and coexistence. Let alone the threats Israelis live under, Israel security needs or even Israel's right to exist. I did try to offer insight into what it feels like to be Israeli at a human level in a way that aligned with their fundamental values of justice, freedom, empathy, and human dignity.

I tried to build empathy irrespective of agreement for Israeli suffering



and aspirations. And I tried to show the self-defeating impact demonizing Israel might have on the very redemptive goals they sought and to show they would best realize those ideals and goals by becoming neither pro-Palestinian nor pro-Israel but rather pro-solution. In other words I stepped into their moral matrix which is much easier to do in the abstract and hypothetical than it is to do in the tangible. I tried to make them feel. I disarmed their defensiveness by showing respect for their opinions, appealing to their noblest motives and arousing in them an eager want. The audience was taken. The event's organizer said I had approached the conflict with so much balance they wish I had been the only speaker. The Jewish communal leader said this was the most effective response to BDS they'd ever seen. Let me return to my core message. More effective than training people in talking points, thinking we only build the perfect Zionist frame, more effective in how to understand and demonstrate that understanding of target audiences, and create openings to reciprocal relationship. We don't need better elevator pitches. We need better capacity to listen; to ask the right questions; to create pathways to connection and dialogue.

Doing so will maximize the likelihood that what we have to say will land, be taken to heart even by those initially distant from what we have to say. The words two-way relationship and dialogue here are pivotal. I couldn't have said anything resonant to this audience if I hadn't spent more time listening on panels, or giving webinars, trying to create a rich understanding of the people I addressed, and how they see themselves, how they tell their own story. I couldn't have been effective if I hadn't listened to Catholics and Protestants trying to walk the path of Jesus, Palestinians living

in humiliation and Israelis living in embattlement and fear. I couldn't have been successful if I hadn't been genuinely dialogical. That is if I was only trying to butter up my audience in order to win, if I'd only been trying to be smart enough to subsume them to my cause rather than hold myself open to remaining in dialogue. The thing with dialogue is if we actually truly engage in it we run the risk too that we might be changed. That just as we may challenge the judgments of others so too we may need to revise our own; that those with whom we speak just may reframe Zionism for us. So now let me touch on how this approach might work, and play itself out with alienated next gen Jews drawing observations from a few studies in order to see if we can reconstruct elements of their moral matrix to inform engagement strategies. One study stands out in particular, a now classic one called *Israel in an age of m and m*, commissioned in 2003 by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman philanthropies to understand Jews under the age of 35.

Two core principles emerged from the study and similar research in terms of what's needed in the field. The first deals with process. In short, in all these studies young Jews pointed to wanting inclusive, open, respectful conversation about Israel, which I understand this Hadassah series is a part. They want honest recognition of our people's diversity of opinion, and avenues for productive engagement across those differences that don't try to smooth them over in false unity or pretenses of consensus. They see much of the current climate on campus and beyond, written with avoidance of whatever is difficult as repellent. The second related principle is more a question of content than of process. Young Jews want to be exposed to a multiplicity of narratives on core issues. I'll flush this out in a few moments.

Process and content, young Jews want to explore Israel without being told what to think. Explore is the operative word here. They're allergic to any agenda that isn't open-ended. They're hypersensitive -- to state this point blank, there is simply no way to define Zionism or offer Israel up as either objective inquiry or experience that's compelling or relevant enough to be sold to a generation, and really at this point multiple generations, that don't want to be sold anything; that want to figure it out for themselves. Many communal leaders now give lip service to something, the immediate past CEO of the UJA of New York has talked about, decoupling advocacy. We're going to need a truly tectonic shift in what we're currently doing to this community to realize this prescription. As Danny Lehman, has said, true education is open-ended and unpredictable. Michael Oakeshott, the great philosopher of liberal education has described liberal learning as an endless adventure, and we enter a variety of modes of understanding and are not disconcerted by the differences or dismayed by the inconclusiveness of it all. Israel engagement in education to be effective with younger generations must relax from a defense mindset that tries to teach young Jews to win arguments. It must also refrain from behavioral and emotional directives. Other than a minimalist definition of participation that is our message must be we want you to be involved, however you choose to be. We must provide a base of knowledge, including both Israeli and Palestinian narratives and claims. And then we must -- and we must provide a structure of conversation. And then hand over the reigns and empower young people to define for themselves what their relationship will look like, including how relevant Israel will be to them at all. So returning to the initial two principles which I'll summarize as

inclusivity and process, and multiplicity and content -- I'm going to add a third principle, ownership. This is an audience that needs to feel like they're the owners of the conversation. They're owning their own exploration. And ultimately they're owning their own positions. And they're not serving as a tool for anyone else's agenda. Let me make this too more concrete. When I teach young Jews on Israel, if I pose to them a fundamental question like can the Jewish and democratic parts of the state of Israel be reconciled, I don't respond with a didactic yes it can, here is how, according to these three liberal Zionist thinkers. I take seriously at the level of both content and process that this question is incredibly complex, and gives rise to diverse approaches among very smart, thoughtful and ethical people. I may, for example, lay before them some of these complexities in terms of Israel's sources of law, symbols of state, immigration policies, political power structure, and demography. How Israel compares and contrasts not only with liberal democracies like America but also with those democracies that identify with a particularistic religion and ethnicity like England, Germany, Malaysia. How thinkers on both right and left have exposed real tensions to Jewish and democratic parts of Israel's definition as well as practical proposals for change. From demands for loyalty oaths on the part of Arab-Israeli citizens to demands for recognition of collective national Arab minority rights, and better avenues for meaningful political participation and power sharing.

Most importantly, I lay this diversity of perspective before them with questions, not with answers. In collaborative and open-ended conversation, not pre-determined conclusions, because what most touches this audience too is not better framing or argument, but rather reciprocity. Conversation that

allows them, that empowers them to deliberate across the frames we already have and define their own voices and truths.

If we do as I have suggested this evening, listen, see others' points of view, speak to their terms, does this mean we'll go all soft and relativistic, leave Israel undefended and morality unchecked? There's two things I want to say here.

Number one, pluralism, respectful acknowledgement of a diversity of views is not relativism. Empathy, understanding why one might pursue views different than our own, is not disagreement. We can acknowledge the moral core and noble aspirations at the heart of diverging views and express a wish to listen even when disagreement. Number two, I tried to show this evening doing so is actually the precondition for being heard. Promoting what matters to us, to those who don't already -- who aren't already with us. A relationship is a precondition for effective advocacy. Listening is a precondition to being heard. We will only touch and inspire the skeptical questioning and distant whether main line Protestants or young social justice activists when they recognize themselves and the story we tell; when we show that we understand them as they understand themselves; when we say this is how what I'm calling you to do is there in you already. It's when we give meaningful recognition to what our interlocutors hold sacred; that we hold open the door to recognition if not embrace what is sacred to us, however framed. Thank you. I look forward to hearing -- I won't get to hear but I look forward to reading your questions and responding to them.

JANE JACOBSON: Thank you so much. That was an incredible presentation. And I'm sitting here thinking about my life, my Hadassah

chapter and region, and how we can move forward some of the concepts that you've presented today. Especially -- especially this combining my generation, your generation, and the generations that are behind us. Do you find that there is a lot of -- that there are a lot of requests from churches, synagogues, mosques to come and share your concepts, to share these thoughts?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: Yes. I want to come back to the first thing you said in a moment because I want to hear more about what the talk prompted in you how Hadassah goes about its work since I know this is a Hadassah audience. But yes, I think right now -- people have asked me this summer how did this summer change things, by the escalation, and the heartbreaking dark summer that we had. And in terms of the internal Jewish conversation and the broader American public discourse around Israel, what I found is that it actually just intensified and brought an awareness that the importance of people -- the sense that people are living in parallel universes and echochambers and silos that are talking past one another now and then colliding in frustration and hostility, that people don't understand each other's terms is so profound now, so acute. And so even though there's a small part of the community that felt unprecedented unity this summer, most people what they experienced was unprecedented polarization. Everyone -- what I've experienced is there's a tremendous hunger, a ubiquity of hunger within communities, whether talking about synagogues or Hillels or JCCs, and also across communities for people to have support and help to relate to and give recognition to each other's terms.

Now I want to rewind and ask you. Because you said this was making

you think about Hadassah here, and about how you go forward with your work, I'd love to hear what it made you think about.

JANE JACOBSON: I know you were in my local area a few months ago, weeks ago, making a presentation. And from the feedback I got, which was mostly from people -- my peers -- it was very well presented and there was a lot of discussion generated. My hope is to expand on that and to bring in somehow reach out to the various generations and bring them in so they'll be able to participate in this kind of a discussion more, and learn this whole concept of listening well and listening deeply. And I know there are a lot of discussion groups in our area between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. My hope is that they are successful -- it might be that it's one on one, one person at a time. It's a very slow process. But we need to move it forward.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: I think that in some ways we've given more attention to interfaith dialogue than we have to intergenerational dialogue within our own community. And there needs to be a lot of structures and attention poured into intergenerational dialogue. What I find in terms of intergenerational dialogue on Israel is that people just simply sit in a room and share their stories of what are the moments of importance to you in terms of shaping your relationship to Israel. And one person is in their 70s and one person is in their 20s. They have such profound life experiences and different relationships to the history of what has taken place over this last century. And I think it would be game changing actually for more people to be having those conversations. We did an intergenerational conversation recently -- when I say we, the JCPA, with lay leaders, board members, URJ, and Presidents. Very broad span of ages, and people sharing their life experiences. One

person saying 1967 was of course the moment that shaped that whole generation, not just one person, for many people. And others talking about the intifada, or the building of the separation barrier, being what shaped the lens and sensibility through which we see Israel. So markedly different. And when people have that kind of conversation they produce the kind of much more nuanced relationship to the challenges that Israel confronts often than can emerge without them communicating with each other. So I don't know if people are writing in with questions. We could of course continue this over here.

JANE JACOBSON: I would love to know whether the JCPA would be the conduit for expanded work with this multigeneration or younger generation. We live in the bay area but is there the same opportunity in different parts of the country?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: The JCPA works all over the country. Multigenerational dialogue is one prong of what we do. There's not a lot of shortcuts to changing the ways people communicate around Israel. It doesn't come from someone giving a panel presentation or a webinar. It comes from the kind of thing that Jane referenced, doing a workshop in the silicon valley that was actually a five-hour long workshop in which people were really building their muscles to do what I'm talking about here. Because we could commit to listening, but it's very different to practice listening to someone who is saying things that are tremendously hard to hear. Practice shifting from reactivity into curiosity, practice asking questions when we feel defensive, practice demonstrating that we've actually heard instead of just leading with our own lens and our own sensibility. That's the kind of thing



that we do again and again in different workshops. We can't be everywhere at once. We're facing much more demand than we can supply. And we're in the process of deepening our bench of people --

JANE JACOBSON: That's what I want to know, that there is more supply -- more demand than there is supply. Which in a way is good. But we have to build up more leaders like you who can go out and make these presentations and really educate on this topic.

I must say are there any questions that are being generated from our listening audience? The Rabbi and I can go on with a very specific conversation but I hope there are some questions that will be coming in.

I want to thank you again for our conversation and for joining us. You have been a wonderful addition to this series. I want to remember everyone out there listening that this session has been recorded just like all of our previous sessions. They can be viewed alone by you or you can invite your friends, if you're in an organization you can invite your organization to come watch it with you, and it will generate a wonderful discussion.

If you enjoyed this session, consider inviting others to watch this online restreaming. Please continue this conversation on our website at [www.Hadassah.org/Zionismdiscussion](http://www.Hadassah.org/Zionismdiscussion). And on Twitter using the hashtag [definingZionism](https://twitter.com/definingZionism). Our next session will be Wednesday, November 12, 2014, at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time, and 4:30 p.m. Pacific time. Our speaker on that day will be Rabbi Joshua Weinberg, President of the associate reform Zionists of America or known as ARZA. He will be discussing living here, loving there, this American Zionism, is it an oxymoron? Additionally, if you haven't done so already, please consider registering for the entire Defining Zionism

series so that you'll receive updates about all our feature programs. Please share your feedback with us by completing our online survey. Your responses help us create additional programs that is of interest to you and to your communities. Special thanks to all the volunteers and staff involved in the Defining Zionism program without whom these presentations would not be possible. I see some questions coming in. So I'm not going to --

Okay. I guess one says don't stop yet, there are questions coming in. How can these tools be applied or used by interactions with the media? That's a great question.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: I see a bunch of different questions here actually. There's a question here about how this can be applied in relation to the media. There's a question about red lines. And another question about how to deescalate confrontation. I'll start with the latter. I have the least to say about media so I may as well turn to it last.

In terms of -- someone asked how can confrontation be deescalated when things are about to get heated. The best answer that I have to that is to be pre-emptive. There's so much that can be done in terms of how to structure a forum, in terms of what can be done before creating a process to prevent, preempt hostility in the room. From communication agreements that -- guidelines and asking people to make commitments, to how they're going to speak to each other. I've moved more and more away from communication agreements in the way I do this work. In part because I find that it often is stiltifying in relation to conversation that people don't speak in a raw way because they're tiptoeing around each other and they're afraid they're going to do it wrong. What I find is the greater danger than heat and tension is people

just not going there. People coming into the room and staying where it's safe, and staying where they agree, staying where they have commonalities and not talking through some of the really meaty issues that they want to engage. And so a lot of the work that I do in structuring a forum that we do, in structuring forums is about actually surfacing disagreements so that people can have material to work with, that they're not avoiding. And we talk about safe enough space rather than safe space because it's actually risky and not that safe to talk about the things that we disagree on. It can be very scary. It can be threatening, destabilizing. And then providing facilitators who are trained to help people touch those places without getting thrown off their center; without reacting in a way that they can't hear what others have to say. This is where a lot of our work is focused now. Training facilitators to sit in a room and help people move through those charged moments and extend recognition to each other. Like I said, there's not shortcuts in that work. There's not a manual we can hand people that's do it yourself, that says follow this recipe. Each person talks for two minutes and then does this, and then you're going to have a conversation in which you can touch the things you've been avoiding for years. But we are working on training dozens of facilitators all over the country who can support the kinds of conversations that I'm talking about. And also to put in place institutionally the kinds of culture change in an institution so that people are less afraid of touching their differences and less reactive, so that they can -- they have a culture in which we can go there because we know we can hear each other, we can love each other through disagreement.

JANE JACOBSON: Are these people being trained? Are they from

different schools? What is their age group?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: That's a great question. There's a big vision and then there's what we're working with in this moment. In large part, in all honesty because of the funding that has -- the way the funding has worked for these training programs, most of the people that we have thus far trained are in their 20s and 30s and they are engaged with supporting these kinds of dialogues among the next generation. However, that's going to change in the next year, and we have -- many of them first of all are senior level and able to support conversation for all different age demographics. But we also have plans in the works to have a more senior level bench of people, roster of people, and want to be training Rabbis and communal leaders as well, not just mediators and therapists and people who have prior conflict resolution expertise in doing this work.

Now I see a lot of questions. The red lines is clearly something that is impacting so many people right now. Why don't I touch on that? I do avoid this question, and I just became much more assertive on it recently because I've really clarified I think the ways that I believe that red lines, even though they are very much an understandable reaction to this moment of escalation that we came to as a community, I've clarified for myself that I believe that the red lines that our communal institutions have created have done us a lot of damage. I think I couldn't be more eloquent than Daniel Hartman, and I urge everyone to read his times of Israel piece on this question. He talks about how creating -- when we're talking about building an open marketplace of ideas, which is what so many people turn to, especially young people on college campuses, are living. They want to be living in an open marketplace

of ideas. Sending the message that we can't talk about this or that here is really repellent. It sends a message of fear and inability to handle conversation. The idea that you can come as an individual but you can't be represented in our platform in the public space in terms of who we do or don't invite as speakers, people are not pacified or mollified by that. I'm not just talking about people whose views are not represented or expressed or recognized in the public space. People who are connected to them or who want to be able to cosponsor an activity with Palestinians or with a group that is seen as tafe, they're also turned off. One metaphor that someone used for this recently to me was we're not talking about a tent, we're talking about a family. And you can't tell me yes, you're welcome at the dinner table, you're welcome to come. But if you have preferences of whether our family keeps Kosher or Vegan, you can't be supported in our family system. It's just a very condescending thing to say. You can say that maybe to a 7-year-old, maybe not even, but certainly not to an adult who is going to be deliberating with you about what a family looks like. I think that we don't need to be afraid of -- not only do we not need to be afraid, we can't be afraid if we are going to confront the challenges that Israel is facing and let alone to be appealing to the next generation. I have much more to say about red lines but I'll keep it with that for now. I think it creates many theaters of the absurd and I could give many examples. What else?

JANE JACOBSON: The comment that we be too PC and limit our conversation, then doesn't it become dishonest?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: That's a great question. That's part of why I spoke about scrapping the communication agreement. The

communication agreements are one of the shortcuts when I can't work with a community, send a communication agreement and say structure things this or that way. But also what tends to end up happening is you create a conversation in which people are holding back, people are polite. They're -- I think this is what the PC question gets to. There's a sense of we're actually muzzling ourselves or we're just not touching the things, opening the things we most want to talk about here. The purpose of supporting better communication is helping people probe their disagreements and investigate their disagreements rather than sticking to what's safe. It's actually in a way the opposite of safe space. But doing it in a way that supports and strengthens relationships with each other rather than harms them.

JANE JACOBSON: Getting down to the basics, we have a question. How do people reach you?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: How do people reach you? People can reach me through the JCPA. I'll give that E-mail address. MWeintraub@JCPA.org.

JANE JACOBSON: I know the Hadassah office in New York has your contact information. If anybody didn't get the address, they can contact you through them. Okay.

How do you define Zionism?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: It's interesting in the way this goes to the heart of my talk. I'm much more interested in creating a forum for people to talk through the respective definitions of Zionism that have been available in Jewish -- throughout -- not throughout, but depending on your perspective throughout Jewish history or in the last 150 years. And

empowering people to clarify and discern what they think and how they relate to those definitions than I am with defining Zionism myself. I don't think my definition of Zionism would be that interesting. There's bare bones uncontentious ways of defining Zionism as the right of the Jewish people to self-determination or the liberation movement of the Jewish people to be free in its own land. These are common definitions to exercise sovereignty over our own destiny. But to me what's more interesting is to look at or recuperate all of the avenues, as was talked about in the book the paths not taken, the various competing paths of Zionism today, for people to really unpack -- just to bring some oxygen to this conversation instead of looking for the common ground. You'll hear this refrain throughout everything I'm saying.

JANE JACOBSON: The conversation open. --

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: Yes, to keep the conversation not just open but informed by the true diversity of what Zionism means and has meant. Political, cultural, national, et cetera, all the various forms Zionism has taken and can take.

JANE JACOBSON: What is the goal of Israel?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: What is the goal of Israel? Is that the question?

JANE JACOBSON: No. Somebody here thought the roads not taken was a great book. We have somebody from Colorado who would like to find out -- that was why she wanted to get your contact information, so she could bring something to Colorado to start some training there.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: There was a question about media. I haven't responded to it. My strong orientation tends to be toward privileging

face-to-face communication to the point that I usually resist even doing webinars because it's hard for me to even be speaking right now and not seeing the faces of the people listening and adjusting what I'm saying accordingly because to me even speaking needs to be a form of listening. A give and take. To be effective. And so I increasingly especially this summer steered clear of Facebook and a lot of forums, even though there's a lot of opportunity in them, also as so many people have commented on, became incredibly polarized and fraught, and off putting, and people withdrew into the parallel universes I've been speaking about throughout. All that said, I think that insofar as one could bring the approach that I've been presenting to work with media, which isn't my work but perhaps it's someone else's who is listening, I think a lot of that work is about raising invisible stories, lifting up voices that are not usually heard, that transcend the usual categories, boxes of the stereotypes and labels that conflicts tend to produce and intensify. And refusing the single story and encouraging those who are responsible for media to do so as well; that there's not only one single story of who Israelis are or one single story of who Palestinians are. There's box defying depictions of the humanity of people who are actually living in conflict. I'll say one more thing about this. I heard someone talking this week about how story -- you don't understand any conflict until you've heard the stories of those living in it. You can read every policy analysis, every history, every abstraction. Until you've heard enough stories to define all of your analysis to really step into the humanity of the people living in a conflict, you haven't heard anything. I think our media has a long way to go to tell the stories of the people who are living in this conflict to all of us here, and we should be holding our media



accountable to doing so as well as our elected officials and clergy and all other leaders.

JANE JACOBSON: That last topic was really good. That last sentence you said about holding people responsible for what they write. That is not the case. So the media, that means television, radio. Have you used those mediums before?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: Speaking myself? Yes. Yeah.

JANE JACOBSON: You'd rather do an in person presentation?

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: I always prefer a dialogical setting.

JANE JACOBSON: Super. I think that's about -- that's a good response to the questions we've received. I want to thank you again. Again, thank all of the volunteers who made this possible. Thank you, thank our volunteers, and thank all of you for sending questions and participating in today's program. Good evening for now.

RABBI MELISSA WEINTRAUB: Good-bye, everyone. Please be in touch.