



An Update on The Movement for Black Lives and Israel August 24, 2016

Background

On August 1, 2016, the national Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) released a new [platform](#) that was [first conceived over a year before at a convening in Cleveland, Ohio](#). M4BL states that its goal is “ending all forms of state violence against Black people” and offers in its agenda a wide-ranging set of goals and policies. This is not the first time that a national platform on racial justice has been put forward recently. An earlier platform from a group called [Campaign Zero](#) focused on “limiting police interventions, improving community interactions, and ensuring accountability.” However, the M4BL platform includes a section that specifically targets Israel with hateful language. So, who is M4BL, what is its new platform, and what is our plan for addressing the Israel-bashing elements of that platform?

Who Put Forward this Platform?

M4BL claims to represent the views of 50+ organizations, 29 of which are listed as the “United Front,” including the Black Lives Matter Network (BLMN). [BLMN is a loose affiliation of non-centralized, grassroots, independent chapters in 37 cities in the U.S. and one in Canada](#). And, [as the Atlantic described](#) it in an article about the platform, “‘black lives matter’ itself is an imprecise umbrella based on a hashtag and rallying cry, used mostly for its simplicity, and there are dozens—perhaps hundreds—of groups that have been associated with it, and they often disagree with one another.” The document claims to articulate the “collective aspirations” of these many voices and aims to provide “tangible resources for groups and individuals doing the work.”

What the Platform Says About Israel

What emerged from the Cleveland convening and the meetings that followed is a sprawling document that includes 40 policy suggestions, divided into six categories – End the War on Black People, Reparations, Invest-Divest, Economic Justice, Community Control and Political Power – as well as a section in the Spanish language titled, *Una Vision Para Las Vidas Negras*. Suggestions range from economic policies (e.g. universal basic income, restructuring of the tax code, renegotiating all free trade agreements) to matters relating to the criminal justice system, and more. Within the Jewish community, the section titled, “Invest-Divest,” has become the most controversial of the sections. Here, the platform calls Israel “an apartheid state” and claims “the US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people.” It suggests ending U.S. aid to Israel in order to address “the military occupation of Palestine,” fighting anti-BDS legislative bills, working against global private prison companies “in the US, in Palestine, in Brazil and around the world,” and coordinating with global liberation movements.

Since the publication of the M4BL platform, it has become public that “Invest-Divest” was written by only [two or three individuals](#). It is our understanding that different sections were drafted by different activist groups and a [coterie of anti-Israel activists](#) succeeded in inserting virulent text into the overall document. Furthermore, in conversations with our partners and allies, including African American community leaders, we have learned that not all parties that signed onto the platform were fully informed about the inclusion of anti-Israel language – nor are they embracing it. Others have noted [what appears to be an intentional BDS strategy to create divisions along racial lines](#) and suppose that, with this incursion into the platform, [the BDS movement is seeking to divide](#) the Black and Jewish communities. The rhetoric appears to be causing considerable [controversy inside the African American community](#), as well. Meanwhile, tremendous pressure is being brought by many of the national Jewish organizations, which has led to the publication of more than ten significant statements in the last few weeks.

[Response throughout the national Jewish community has been condemnatory](#) with literally hundreds of articles denouncing the incendiary “Invest-Divest” language – to help you wade through all the articles, op-eds and statements that have been released [a list of suggested reading is available on our blog](#). Our national colleagues are working to thwart this convergence of racial justice and hateful anti-Israel rhetoric, and to open channels of communication with the many organizations that have signed onto the platform, but which do not support the anti-Israel language.

JCRC’s Perspective and Response

Our JCRC represents the public affairs voice of the Bay Area’s organized Jewish community and the Jewish community’s interests in the local public arena. JCRC has long condemned extremist, factually inaccurate and hateful language such as this, just as we do now. We remain focused on proactive efforts to address anti-Israel activity and to build meaningful and positive relationships with other communities. We believe this is the most effective and strategic way to advance the Jewish community’s interests. Our work to pursue a just society and a secure Jewish future is done through effective relationship building with local influential government officials and civic and ethnic leaders. To effectively represent our community’s perspectives, we bring the local community together to deliberate and to develop consensus on salient issues. You can see some of our recent [consensus statements on our website](#).

We are committed to [promoting a secure and vibrant Israel and strive to advance peace, reconciliation and a two-state solution](#) through education and community action, working within our community and with allies to fight the campaign to delegitimize Israel. We are currently focused on launching a major political-style campaign to combat the BDS movement. Our strong and meaningful relationships, including with local and influential African American leaders, are of the utmost importance to our advancing Jewish-community interests.

Long before the issuance of this platform, JCRC initiated a [year-long consensus-building process on issues of race](#) and the criminal justice system, public education, voting and environmental protection systems. This process has provided us with an opportunity to tackle tough, important issues of concern to our community, and will enable our public policy committee to deliberate and develop consensus on

racial justice. And as we have been reaching out to our local African American allies, seeking endorsements for our counter-BDS campaign, we have been interested to learn that they have no formal affiliations with M4BL. Our team of public affairs and government relations professionals is working with our partners and allies to ensure that the ugly, anti-Israel rhetoric of the M4BL platform is isolated. And we continue to work strategically, proactively and often 'behind the scenes' to counter attempts to delegitimize Israel and promote [our organization's unique vision](#) of "a more just society, a strong and vibrant Jewish community in the United States and in Israel" enhanced "through collaboration with other communities."