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## **More than 2,500 Jews affirm #JOCsCount in response to flawed assertions to be published in American Jewish Year Book**

***Jewish community soundly opposes analysis that puts more emphasis on numerical calculations than on communal values***

UNITED STATES--A multiracial and multiethnic group of more than 2,500 American Jews and nearly 200 organizations affirmed support for Jews of Color (JOCs) after the number of JOCs was problematically called into question by researchers writing first in [eJewishPhilanthropy](#) and subsequently in [The Forward](#).

**READ: [#JOCsCount Sign-on Letter](#) | [Individual Signers](#) | [Organizational Signers](#)**

#JOCsCount organizers April Baskin, Shahanna McKinney-Baldon, Abby Levine and Ginna Green crafted the sign-on after academics Ira Sheshkin and Arnold Dashefsky questioned the number of JOCs in the United States, and further suggested that the value and worth of Jews of color was predicated on their percentage proportion of the population.

"Jews of Color count--not because of our numbers, but simply because of our divinity and humanity," said April N. Baskin, a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant, former Executive Vice President of Audacious Hospitality at the Union of Reform Judaism, and originator of the #JOCsCount hashtag. "And now is the time to double-down on efforts to advance our vision of a vibrant, equitable multiracial Jewish community. Jews of Color count and we're here to stay."

The researchers, whose now-controversial work will be published this month in the American Jewish Year Book, questioned not only the latest estimates of how many Jews of color are in the U.S., but what these numbers should justify in terms of Jewish community support and engagement in Jewish communal life. The researchers additionally questioned who qualifies as a Jew of Color.

"The issue is not just that Jews of Color are rarely accurately counted, but that our Jewish community access, inclusion, and value could hang in the balance of poor research and a pernicious premise," said Ginna Green, a political strategist who sits on the boards of the Jews of Color Initiative and the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable. "This is a dangerous and slippery slope that harms JOCs and our entire Jewish community."

While the sign-on letter gained quick traction throughout the Jewish community, with Jewish day schools, JCRCs, funders, and synagogues ultimately signing on, leaders of the Jewish social justice field were among the earliest supporters.

Prominent academics also shared the organizers' criticism of the Sheshkin and Dashefsky analysis. Professors Ari Y. Kelman, principal investigator of [Counting Inconsistencies: An Analysis of American Jewish Population Studies, with a Focus on Jews of Color](#), and Marc Dollinger, author of *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s*, both published swift rejoinders in [eJewishPhilanthropy](#) and [JTA](#), respectively, that questioned the researchers' methodology and rigor, as well as impact and intent.

“Our numbers--whether we are 6 percent or 16 percent--should not be used to determine what we are worth, or what we deserve,” said educator Shahanna McKinney-Baldon, a diversity, equity, and inclusion expert and director of the Edot Midwest Jewish Diversity Collaborative. “Our funders, synagogues, Federations and schools must continue to support Jews of Color, and help build an inclusive Jewish community where every single one of us is valued.”

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