

# Introduction

Why do we call this resource guide, and the Jewish Sanctuary Movement as a whole, *Mikdash*?

1 *Mikdash* comes from the Hebrew root *kadosh*, holy. *Mikdash* reminds us of the holy work we do when we act as allies to immigrants, standing against xenophobia and hate, and for the preservation of families and communities.

2 The second-to-last line of the Song of the Sea, recited during the traditional daily *Shacharit* service, links *mikdash* with dwelling and safety:

**You will bring them and plant them in Your own mountain, The place You made to dwell in, O LORD, The sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands established.** (EX. 15:17, NJPS TRANSLATION)

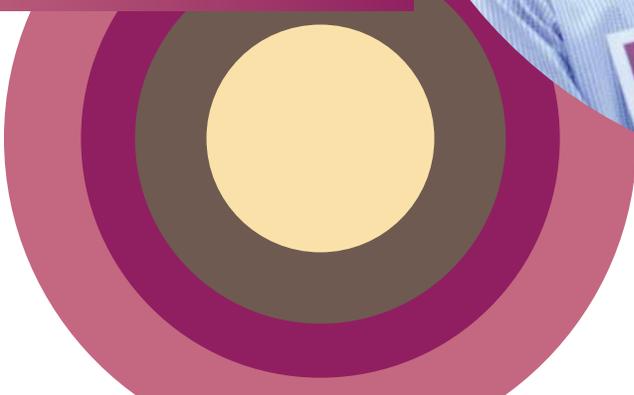
America from its earliest days has viewed itself as a city on a hill; now it is time to make sure those who dwell here can stay safe on that mountaintop. Walking in God's ways, we commit to reestablishing America as a country that lives up to the best of its ideals and welcomes today's immigrants, just as it welcomed many Jews in previous generations and today.

3 *Mikdash* is the Hebrew word for sanctuary—as in, the *Beit HaMikdash*, the Temple that stood in Jerusalem. One of the lessons of the *Beit HaMikdash* relates to spiritual architecture: we put our most sacred values at the center of our communities and our lives. *Mikdash* encourages us to orient ourselves towards living out these values.

4 We refer to modern synagogues as *mikdash me'at*—the “small sanctuary.” We may imagine our congregations to serve primarily ritual or pastoral roles. *Mikdash* reminds us that we do equally valuable, and perhaps more crucial, work when we live out our values in the public sphere as well.

“Many of us ask our parents where they were when Kennedy was assassinated, how they dealt with the Vietnam draft, or what they did during the civil rights era. Our kids are going to ask us two questions: Where were you during 9/11? and What did you do during this current tumultuous period of American history? I wanted to be sure that I could look my children in the eye 10, 20, 30 years from now and say that I did something, that I showed up.”

— RABBI JOSH WHINSTON, TEMPLE BETH EMETH, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, ABOUT HIS ACTIVISM TO CLOSE THE TENT CAMP THAT HOUSED THOUSANDS OF MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TORNILLO, TEXAS; DECEMBER, 2018.



## The Big Picture: Where U.S. Immigration Policy Is Headed

President Trump has made anti-immigrant policies a key feature of his administration since he took office in January 2017, beginning with the first version of his Muslim ban just four days after his inauguration. While the blizzard of different policies may seem haphazard or just an expression of xenophobia, we submit that there is a more dangerous ideology that ties them all together. The seemingly disparate parts of the administration's immigration policies come together to form a coherent plan that aims to transform the U.S. into a white nationalist state.



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to a framing of immigration as a national security issue. But the Trump administration has greatly intensified and expanded these efforts. Stephen Miller, the driving force behind many of Trump's policies, has characterized the administration's extreme attempts to get money for a border wall as a question of whether "the United States remains a sovereign country."<sup>2</sup>

“We Jews have chosen our history to be our mandate. We choose to remember and underscore that the quintessential experience of the Jewish people is both the slavery in and the exodus from Egypt. We are all refugees.”

— RABBI NEIL COMESS-DANIELS, BETH SHIR SHALOM, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA, IN A HIGH HOLIDAYS SERMON, SEPTEMBER, 2018.

Eric Ward, Executive Director of the Western States Center and a longtime researcher and activist against white nationalism, explains this movement and the difference between it and white supremacy:

**“If white supremacy is a system of disparities and bias used to exploit and maintain control, white nationalism seeks the complete removal of Jews and people of color from the United States altogether. White nationalists seek to dismantle the current state and replace it with a white-only ethno-state. In short, ethnic cleansing.”<sup>1</sup>**

To be sure, many current immigration policies were in effect under both the Bush and Obama administrations—born out of the nationalist impulse after the 9/11 attacks that led

1 <https://popcollab.org/white-supremacy-falls-white-nationalism-stands/> It is important to note that Ward continues, arguing that anti-Semitism animates white nationalism. “Unlike white supremacy, white nationalism is rooted in the anti-Semitic belief that Jews are responsible for the defeat of white supremacy and seek to destroy the ‘white race’ through mass immigration, gay marriage, and a host of inclusionary policies.” For more, see JFREJ’s resource on anti-Semitism: <https://jfrej.org/understanding-antisemitism/>

2 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/19/reminder-trumps-needless-cruelty-migrants/?utm\\_term=.30d2d31ff8fd](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2018/12/19/reminder-trumps-needless-cruelty-migrants/?utm_term=.30d2d31ff8fd)



Consider this roster of policies, which—taken together—aim to remove non-white people from America or prevent them from entering:

- The **Muslim ban**, about which Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote, “Taking all the evidence together, a reasonable observer would conclude that the proclamation was driven primarily by anti-Muslim animus.”
- Rescinding **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** for more than 300,000 people who fled violence and disaster in Haiti, Sudan, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. In his ruling blocking the administration’s decision, U.S. District Judge Edward Chen said there were “serious questions as to whether a discriminatory purpose was a motivating factor” and as to whether it was based on “animus against nonwhite, non-European immigrants.”<sup>3</sup>
- Seeking to add a **citizenship question** to the 2020 census, which has been revealed as a blatant—and Cabinet-level—attempt to reduce the political power of Latinx communities.<sup>4</sup>

- Setting historically low limits for **refugee admission**—and then admitting fewer than half of the 45,000 maximum for 2018. In 2015–2017, the top five countries from which refugees fled were Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia, with five other African countries rounding out the top 10.<sup>5</sup>
- Reducing the number of **visas** available for immigration, with a particular focus on reducing family-reunification immigration (which the administration derides as “chain migration”). In 2018, the State Department denied 620,311 visas, green cards, and other legal immigration statuses, an increase of 37 percent from 2016.<sup>6</sup>
- Interfering with **asylum procedures** on the southern border by processing only a handful of asylum claims each day at legal points of entry, making asylum seekers wait in Mexico while their cases are being considered, and attempting to deny people crossing the border between ports of entry the right to seek asylum.
- Threatening to end **birthright citizenship** via Executive Order.
- Proposing, via a rule change in the Department of Homeland Security, to amend the definition of who constitutes a “**public charge**,” which in effect would function as a wealth test for immigrants seeking to get a visa to enter the U.S. and would penalize immigrants already in the U.S. who receive non-cash government benefits for which they are legally eligible.

White nationalists “reframe the rejection of white superiority as an attack on patriotism,” writes Eric Ward. **That is why one of our crucial tasks is to tell our story of America—a multicultural America—over and over again, loudly and proudly and publicly, in a thousand different ways, and to work to make it a reality.** Because even when this administration comes to an end, the social movement of white nationalism that helped bring it to power will not simply go away.



3 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/03/federal-judge-citing-trump-animus-against-nonwhites-blocks-removal-of-haitians-salvadorans-and-others/?utm\\_term=.c43e7ef454e7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/03/federal-judge-citing-trump-animus-against-nonwhites-blocks-removal-of-haitians-salvadorans-and-others/?utm_term=.c43e7ef454e7)

4 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/19/opinion/columnists/wilbur-ross-census-trump.html>

5 [https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/handout\\_-\\_definitions\\_and\\_top\\_5\\_facts.pdf](https://www.hias.org/sites/default/files/handout_-_definitions_and_top_5_facts.pdf)

6 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/1/19/18123891/trump-immigration-statistics>