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## **“Never Again Is Now ” Use of Cultural Frames in a Social Movement Organization**

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“NEVER AGAIN IS NOW” USE OF CULTURAL FRAMES IN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

ERIK CARLSON

89 Pages

The immigrant rights movement is a social movement that has been active in the United States for many decades and adopted as well as changed focus over time. There are many social movement organizations working within this social movement but one of great interest to my research is Never Again Action (NAA). NAA is a national Jewish protest group, which has called for the end to all deportations and the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). NAA is primarily working from a position of an ally to migrants in a social movement with the aim to further rights for this group. What is unique about this case is NAA’s use of cultural frames to mobilize their social movement organization which juxtaposes the plight of immigrants in the United States with that of Jews in the Holocaust. Cultural frames are a theoretical understanding of social movement mobilization which focuses on how organizations utilize cultural frames, or broadly belief systems, to mobilize individuals into action to support a social movement (Snow and Benford, 1986). From my research I see NAA heavily utilizing a specific culture frame called the Holocaust Framework, which is a frame that uses the Holocaust as a metaphor, usually juxtaposing current events with that of the Holocaust (Stein 1998). NAA’s own rhetoric points to use of the Holocaust Frame, specifically their use of metaphor creating, calling ICE ‘detention centers’ concentration camps, and the use of Never Again as their name, which is a common phrase in American Jewish communities. My research asks the

following questions: what are the motivating factors for individuals to join NAA; how does NAA use cultural frames to motivate individuals to join their organization; how does NAA and individuals negotiate their roles as allies to a wider immigration rights movement; and how is NAA participating in social movement action in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis? These questions are answered through a qualitative study, which utilizes participant observation, interviews, and analysis of materials, specifically their social media accounts. This research furthers our understanding of how social movement organizations mobilize specific ethno-cultural groups into action as allies and how use of specific cultural frame may be utilized to push various groups into action around immigrant rights.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Movements; Cultural Frames; Social Movement Organizations; Never Again Action; Jewish Social Movements; Holocaust Frame

“NEVER AGAIN IS NOW” USE OF CULTURAL FRAMES IN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

ERIK CARLSON

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Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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2021

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“NEVER AGAIN IS NOW” USE OF CULTURAL FRAMES IN A SOCIAL MOVEMENT  
ORGANIZATION

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E.C.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent social movements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the United States is the immigrant rights movements (Pallares and Flores-González 2010; Paik 2020). What started with the May Day protests of 2006 against anti-immigrant legislation, general anti-immigrant attitude, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) inhumane deportation of undocumented immigrants throughout the country, has grown to a national movement with activity across the country (Pallares and Flores-González 2010). The wider immigrant rights movement has been active for decades from the early movement to defend immigrants in the bracero program (Fernandez 2012), to the sanctuary movement of Latino/a/x/ refugees (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991; Cadava 2013), to the modern activism against anti-immigrant legislation (Fox et. Al 2007). However, since the election of Donald Trump there has been increased pressure on immigrant communities by the federal government (Paik 2020). Immigrants and migrants are under greater threat of deportation as the federal government has called for increased deportation and changed deportation policy (Gramlich 2020). There has also been increased detainment of migrants at the border, causing deplorable human rights violations (Amnesty International 2020). Finally, under the Trump administration there has been an increase in rhetoric placing immigrants, and Latino/a/xs broadly in the position of "outsiders" and as the enemy of the United States (Ye Hee Lee 2015; Flores Gonzalez 2017; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2020). These threats to immigrants have caused increased social movement action primarily focusing the end to ICE deportation, the abolition of ICE, and general immigrant/refugee rights. In this period of increased social movement activity for immigrant rights, new organizations have emerged to support immigrants' rights and protest

injustice occurring in immigrant communities. One of these organizations is Never Again Action.

Never Again Action (NAA) is a national organization of Jewish activists founded in the summer of 2019 (Sales 2019). The main goals of NAA are to advocate for the rights of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers, the abolition of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and against immigrant detention generally (Never Again Action 2020). NAA was formed by Serena Adlerstein, a Jewish activist in Massachusetts, who called fellow Jews and Jewish activists on Facebook to protest the inhumane detention of migrants by occupying ICE detention centers and shutting them down (Kessler 2019). This call to action resonated with her network of Jewish activists and social movement actions were set in motion to protest at a detention center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, which now has spread throughout the country.

From there a national organization called Never Again Action, formed to coordinate protest actions and protests continue to today of a wide range of targets in the ICE-apparatus. NAA's social movement actions primarily focus on direct action which targets ICE and the so called ICE-apparatus, or companies and organizations that support ICE's activities (Never Again Action 2019). The ICE-apparatus includes governmental organizations such as local police forces, which collaborate with ICE enforcement, and politicians, who fund the department of homeland security. NAA has used primarily direct action to target ICE. This has included blocking ICE facilities, blockading roads to ICE detention centers, and often activists put their bodies on the line (Kessler 2019). NAA has also performed protest action targeting secondary targets, such as sit-ins at Amazon stores (Sales 2019), performing digital activism against ICE training programs (Peña 2020), and pressuring politicians to cut the ICE budget (Never Again Action 2019).

NAA acts in manner of allyship to the broader immigrant rights social movement and has close relationships with several immigrants' rights organizations (Never Again Action 2020). NAA uses purposeful and very precise rhetoric, specifically in their written "propaganda" which uses a direct metaphor of the Holocaust and the current migrant crisis in the United States (Never Again Action 2019). They also use specific language such as their group name "Never Again" or the use of concentration camp not detention center to describe prisons where immigrants are held by ICE, which positions the migrant crisis as connected to the Holocaust (Sales 2019). NAA action is unique in some aspects and can be seen as an interesting example of a social movement using a cultural framework for allyship towards a group which is not their own.

One of the other interesting facets of NAA is their ability to sustain mobilization throughout the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent social distance measures occurring to a degree across the country (Da Silva 2020). The COVID-19 crisis is clearly a health disaster and changed how society functions substantially but also has put a large amount of pressure on institutions in the United States. During the last year there has been a large amount of social movement activity, specifically the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement. NAA has also been sustaining social movement mobilization throughout COVID and engaging in adapted movement actions. For example, in late July 2020, NAA called for activists to disrupt a proposed ICE Citizens Academy, in Chicago (Da Silva 2020). In this action they proposed to "#FloodICE" with thousands of fake applications to the program to disrupt the ability for ICE to implement this program. Currently, this program has been postponed and activists groups took credit for this change in stance by the agency (Peña 2020). This example and others may point to the ability of NAA to adapt to the changing nature of social movement action during the COVID-19 crisis and deserves further exploration.

This study uses qualitative methods to examine the mobilization of NAA and their use of cultural frames which both mobilizes individuals and frames their own action. This research seeks to address the following research questions: What are the motivating factors for individuals to join NAA? How does NAA use cultural frames, specifically a Holocaust frame, to motivate individuals to join their organization? How does NAA and individuals negotiate their roles as allies to a wider immigration rights movement? Finally, how are organizations participating in social movement actions in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis? These questions guided this research. I completed interviews, participant observations of NAA meetings, and analysis of materials that NAA produced. NAA's core team gave me access to large amounts of internal information on their internal Slack channel, to members of the core team (three of which were interviewed as part of the study), and to additional materials. This gives a holistic view of how NAA is operating and gives a better idea of how NAA is using cultural frames in their work.

This project contributes to the larger literature on social movements by studying a relative recent social movement organization and its mobilization during a time of social crisis. This research will help explain social movement mobilization, what motivates individuals to join social movements, how organizations use cultural frames, and how organizations are mobilizing during the COVID-19 crisis. Research on social movement mobilization also has the potential to contribute to how organizations motivate people to join and can successfully engage people through specific cultural frames. The contributions of this study are significant and will contribute to our understanding of the social phenomena, social movements, uses of cultural frames, and mobilization of Jewish activists.

Findings of this research are multi-faceted and could change our understanding of how the Holocaust works as a mobilizing frame. NAA members seem to engage very strongly with a

sense of cultural Judaism and Jewish history which resonates, particularly when it comes to why they are mobilizing. The Holocaust is part of this culture and history but hard to entangle from a larger understanding of identity that American Jews hold. NAA members seem to complicate the Holocaust and deepen the connection between themselves and Latino/a/x immigrants through an understanding of oppression. This is contrary to Stein's theory of Holocaust frame use, which relies on a oversimplification of the Holocaust, typically using a dichotomy. Finally, NAA is negotiating their role of an ally, which is focused on connecting Jewish identity with a wider liberation struggle. This research opens the door to further research about Jewish activism and understanding of how specific ethno-religious groups are using frames around their identities to mobilize individuals into action.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Never Again Action: A Brief History and Overview**

Never Again Action (NAA) is a national organization of Jewish activists in about 11 US cities and locations who are organized to protest against deportation and imprisonment of migrants and U.S. Immigrant and Customs Enforcement (ICE) generally (Never Again Action 2020). NAA was conceived from an offhanded Facebook comment by Jewish activist Serena Adlerstein in June of 2019 (Kesslen 2019). She said ““ I made an offhand Facebook post like, ‘What if young Jews occupied ICE detention centers and shut them down?’” (Kesslen 2019 Page 1). Adlerstein was already connected to a wide network of activists across the United States, who resonated with this post, and actions were planned for the next week. At the time, there was national debate whether to call ICE detention centers concentration camps. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on June 18, 2019 tweeted saying “This administration has established concentration camps on the southern border of the United States for immigrants, where they are being brutalized with dehumanizing conditions and dying.” (Ocasio-Cortez, Twitter, 2019). This created a national debate and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez drew criticism from Republican politicians as well as Jewish organizations (Gay Stolberg 2019). In this backdrop, leftist Jewish activists began to question the debate of semantics, which they perceived as ignoring the reality of the situation. Serena Adlerstein engaged in this debate and “as she watched pundits and politicians debate whether to call migrant detention centers ‘concentration camps’, she reminded of the Holocaust refrain she was raised on: ‘Never Again.’ ‘Never Again,’ she thought, is now.” (Kesslen 2019). Activists inspired by Adlerstein’s post and organizing protested an ICE detention center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where 36 activists were arrested, and more than 200 protesters attended. Within weeks, 10 separate protests under the banner of Never Again Action occurred across the

country (Sales 2019). Throughout July 2019 there were almost daily protests across the country against a wide variety of targets including, ICE detention centers, Political offices, Amazon Stores (whose parent company Amazon provides web services for ICE), Private Prison targets, and other targets of the “ICE apparatus” (Sales 2019). Never Again Action has become a more organized group with employees and a people dedicated to various positions. NAA has about 10 paid staff and is actively organizing across the country, including in Chicago (Never Again Action 2020).

NAA identifies as a Jewish organization and uses this identity for some of their actions and rhetoric. I would argue NAA is using a Jewish identity which is cultural in nature, not a religious identity. This can be seen in the choice to name their organization. “Never Again Action” is using a rhetorical device, which directly refers to Holocaust remembrance and is a conscious choice by organizers (Kellner 1994). “Never Again” is widely understood in Jewish communities in the United States as a call to action and to never repeat the Holocaust. Finally, Never Again Action actively ties their actions to Jewish cultural identity. For example, over 50 protests were organized to occur across the country on Tisha b’Av, the Jewish day of mourning (Sales 2019). This shows a connection between a cultural indicator and social movement action.

Never Again Action is allied formally with several organizations but also informally with many different organizations working for immigrant rights and immigrants generally. Never Again Actions official website cites their partnership with Movimiento Cosecha, which is an immigrant rights organization and uses similar protest tactic to Never Again Action (Never Again Action 2020; Movimiento Cosecha 2020). The originator of Never Again Action, Serena Adlerstein was an organizer for Movimiento Cosecha, as well (Kessler 2019). In Chicago, Never Again Action has partnered with immigrant rights organizations and other Jewish organizations



at an immigrant rights march in the summer of 2019 and other events (Never Again Action Facebook 2019). According to my interviews, the Chicago chapter of NAA works closely with Organized Communities Against Deportations (OCAD) and other organizations.

There is also a long history of Jewish activism in solidarity with oppressed groups throughout US history and specifically in Chicago, the site of this research. There is evidence of Jewish activists being involved in slave abolitionist movements before the Civil War (Cutler 1995). Jewish activists have also been part of the Civil Rights Movements activities (Nodelman 2019), AIDS/HIV activism (Stein 1998), and Women Rights Movements (Beyerlein and Ryan 2018). Jewish activists have been involved in social movements which pertain to their own ethnic identity including around the resettlement of soviet Jews in Chicago during the 1970s (Cutler 1995) as well as the Palestinian/Israeli conflict (If Not Now 2020). Never Again Action outwardly does not take a stance on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict as it is a divisive issue within the Jewish community, and they state that their movement activity is separate from this conflict and the immigrant rights cause should unite Jews (Kuruvilla 2019). Additionally, Jewish activists have a history of being involved in social movement action around immigration causes (Argueta 2010; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). There also seems to be a strong history and culture of Jewish activism in Chicagoland. This phenomenon is something I have observed but also supported by participants in this study, who spoke of networks of activists across the city and nationally. Within Chicago there are chapters and/or offices of Never Again Action as well as other Jewish activist groups such as If Not Now, J Street, Avodah, among many others. I argue that not only is there a culture of activism in the Jewish ethnic group, especially in Chicago, but that this community of activists are working within a frame of Jewish identity and shared history

which has been activated and used by Never Again Action to mobilize participants for social movement goals.

### **Theories on Social Movement Mobilization**

Theorists of social movement mobilization see three main areas of mobilization in successful social movements' activities. These are political opportunity, mobilizing structures and cultural frames. For my research, cultural frames theories are my focus and I believe explains Never Again Actions mobilization technique most accurately. Although all three areas of mobilization are always in play, the cultural framework that Never Again Action is using, I believe to be unique in the context of the immigrant rights movement and is the central focus of my research. Mobilizing structures and political opportunity theories will be explained briefly below but I will focus primarily on cultural frameworks theory, which drives my research.

Where mobilizing structures and political opportunity theories focus on systemic and structural components of social movement mobilization, cultural framing theory changes the focus on the individuals and social movement organization's use of frames and understanding of self within a wider society.

#### *Political Opportunity Theory and Mobilizing Structures Theory*

Political opportunity theory and mobilizing structure theory is the lesser of three theories explaining and supporting Never Again Actions movement mobilization. All social movements are using these three mobilization techniques but to different extents. Political opportunity theory states that there is a need for time of weakness in a political superstructure for social movements to immerge (McAdam et. Al. 1996). Many theorists also believe the opposite has been seen to occur, as when there is time of great oppression social movements also could immerge (Tilly 1978). All social movement work in the United States is within a society dominated by rhetoric

and counter-movement activity of the Trump Administration. From day one of his campaign, Donald Trump used rhetoric which was divisive and put blame of many of society's ills squarely on the shoulders of migrants and refugees (specifically Latino/a/x migrants and also to a large extent Muslim refugees) (Ye Hee Lee 2015). During the Trump Administration, there has been an increase in the imprisonment and deportation of migrants, which is considered to be inhumane and excessive (Amnesty International 2020). Political opportunity theory argues that in both times of weakness and strength of the super structure there is motivation for social movement mobilization. I would argue that we are currently in a time of oppression by the super structure on migrants and asylum seekers, as the Trump Administration and the federal government is actively trying to oppress these groups. This is clearly at play as we are living in a time of galvanizing political activity. I think the allyship of Never Again Action confirms that there is political opportunity occurring in the present that allowed their specific movement to emerge.

The second theory of social movement mobilization is mobilizing structures. This theory is based on the idea social movements emerge from organizations or groups with a structure already in place (McAdam et. al. 1996). As we can see in the origin of Never Again Action, the organization gained traction from a network of Jewish activists and quickly grew (Kesslen 2019). A formal structure or organization was created around this emergence, which supports theoretical understanding of structure emergence. There is also a long history of Jewish activism, which could be seen as a structure of mobilization, which just needed to be activated around a cause or movement activity (Argueta 2010; Cutler 1995; Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). Mobilizing structure theory is important in explaining the emergence of Never Again Action but I see the preexisting connection of Jewish activists to be the explanation of this theoretical understanding. The emergence of NAA will be revisited in the findings section.

### *Cultural Frameworks Theory*

Cultural framework theory is the closest to classical social movement theory, which focused on the psychological reasoning for social movement activity. Erving Goffman's (1974) theories on frame analysis and in general framing have been adapted to relate to social movement activity and the ability to frame movements for individuals as well as society as a whole. His theory on framing processes and frame alignment built a foundation for further theoretical work in this area relating to social movement mobilization. Goffman saw that people have many frames and view themselves in comparison to others. Thus, individuals are continuously displaying frames of understanding as well as shifting between frames depending on the situation. David Snow and Robert Benford (1988) elaborated on Goffman's theory with a distinct connection to social movement mobilization. They saw that movements themselves create their own frames in which participants buy into and mobilize around. Snow defined culture frames as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understanding of the world and themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam et. al. 1996 page 6) As participants in social movements become part of a movement, they create and start to align with the frame the movement represents or uses. Snow et. al. (1986) found that movements are often successful when the frame of the movement aligns with the frames of the individual already has significant buy in. This is coined as frame alignment, where the individual and the movement have the same frame of their participation or movement activity. This frame helps to build social solidarity of individuals in the social movement and the movement more widely. As movement frames and individuals' frames align there is furthering of social movement goals and building of social capital with individual group members, which as we have seen also further movement cohesion. This theoretical understanding greatly relates to

the psychological prospective on social movement action, which was the focus of classical social movement theory. The classical theorists Smelser (1962) and Turner and Killian (1957) understood the group solidarity which came from framing and how a group could gain relation by their understanding of their own oppression. By understanding their own oppression, they would form groups, which could potentially lead to social movement action. This is an early way of understanding of framing devises. As the frame of movement and individuals align, there is a likelihood the individual will identify with the movement and join, which is similar to Smelser (1962) and Turner and Killian's (1957) understanding of psychological motivations for movement participation.

Culture and the context of when and where a social movement emerges is vitally important to the understanding of cultural frames theory. Snow et. al. (1986) and Snow and Benford (1988) focused on individual actions and participants, however Snow and Benford (1992) further elaborated on framing with their understanding of master framing devises and cycles of protest throughout period of time. Snow and Benford (1992) elaborate on how there are cultural times of great social movement action, often of similar type or theme, and these times are cyclical. They use the late 1960s as an example of a time where there was a great surge in social movements based on various forms of disillusionment and go into detail about cycles of "religious cult" movements, which challenge the status quo. We can see in the present that there is a great deal of movement action by many different groups around immigration, refugees, anti-ICE, and pro-immigrant topics (Pallares and Flores- González 2010). This relates to political opportunity theory, where movement emerges in a time of opportunity within the structure, however they also are emerging in a culture, which resonates or allows for the resonance of that social movement frame. Snow and Benford (1992) call this a protest cycle, where the emergence

of similar social movement organizations occurs because of overall cultural acceptance of that frame. I see this relating to Never Again Action, especially its emergence out of a singular Facebook post (Kessler 2019), which was within a master frame of social movement action and historical understanding of Jewish identity (Kellner 1994). Morris (1984) went into great detail of cultural frames which resonated with the general public that the civil rights movement used to their advantage. The civil rights movement used a strict adherence to non-violence and framed their movement within this framework, especially when projecting movement activity to the general public. This framework was generally accepted by the general public, and because movement activity was strict in their adherence to non-violence and consciously picked this tactic, they were able to gain support and allies from the general public. This was particularly true when the protest activity was met with state violence, which greatly contrasted their own non-violent tactics. This frame was widely accepted by the general public as a “correct” way to lead to social change thus was supported at a larger level. This relates to Snow and Benford (1992) who saw that if a culture accepts a frame on a wider level, this frame should find support within a wider cultural sense. They elaborate on the civil rights movement use of cultural frames stating, “Because of its considerable elaborative and resonant qualities, it is a national movement that, conceptualized broadly, has spanned several decades. More specifically, its punctuation and accentuation of the idea of equal rights and opportunities amplified a fundamental American value that resonated with diverse elements of American society and thus lent itself to extensive elaboration.” (Snow and Benford 1992 page 148) As the civil rights movement was working within several widely accepted cultural frames their movement activity resonated with the general public and arguably was more successful. This could also explain the action of Never Again Action, as they are mobilizing within a long history of Jewish activism, a strong sense of

cultural Judaism and social movement activity around immigrant rights. The concept of master frames is important in our understanding of social movement generally and show that as social movements mobilize, they do so within a wider cultural context, which allows for their frames to resonate across a specific community.

The theories of cultural frames continue with more micro-approaches to understanding social movement mobilization. In this theoretical approach, the culture of an organization uses a framework which already has extensive buy in and shape social movement actions within that framework instead of having two frames which align. Stephen Hart (1996) elaborates on this theoretical with his critique of previous social movement literature and its understanding of religion. He states, “culture-making within social movements is often carried out by people with strong commitments to pre-existing traditions. People with such commitments do not just use these traditions opportunistically for movement objectives, and in fact usually care more about the fate of the movement. Church members who become involved in the peace movement, for instance, typically have a stronger and more enduring commitment to their churches and faith than to the peace groups they join.” (Hart 1996 page 96) Hart comes from a religious studies background but as many important social movements have emerged from various religious sects, it is important to understand this perspective. He argues that the emergence of social movement from religious institutions is not necessarily frame alignment but is more of frame emergence. Leaders of social movements use existing frames, such as those adhered to by various religions, to propel social movement mobilization. As individuals already buy into one set of frames, they then buy into social movement activity which uses the same frame. Hart shows that as many Christian people buy into a biblical framework, they then are easily motivated into social movement action, which uses the same framework (Hart 1996). I also see that Never Again

Action is using some religious frames but are adhering to a more cultural understanding of Judaism and of a strong culture of Jewish activism. Although some activists are deeply connected to their religion, they are also working from a standpoint that they are a singular ethnic group, which has faced historical state oppression throughout history. This could also be argued that as an ethno-religious group they have participated in social movements as allies, such as in the Civil Rights Movement etc. thus are justified in their place as allies in social movement activity around immigration. As we will see, NAA buys into a frame of collective oppression, which shapes their allyship with the wider immigration social movement. Rick Fantasia (1989) saw this too in communities which mobilized into Workers Union action. As all the workers bought into the framework of labor, “hard-work pays off” narratives, and felt wronged by their workplace, they were quickly and easily motivated to participate in social movement action. In his case study these groups were unsuccessful, however Fantasia (1989) found that the group grew in solidarity and self-identified as workers as well as participants in the social movement action. This supports that existing frames not only motivates individuals into action but also can strengthen this frame by participating in movement action and make the convictions of participants stronger, even if the movement fails. In both these examples individuals were stronger in their convictions (or their framework they buy-into) by their participation in a social movement.

However, without a universal cultural frame there seems to be issues with mobilization especially from groups. Mary Erdmans (1998, 2006) elaborates about this in the Polish Community of Chicago and their inability to form group cohesion around anti-communist social movement activity in the mid-1980s. Polish activists who were exiled from Poland in the mid-1980s resettled in Chicago and were quick to want to keep up political and economic pressure on



the communist government of Poland, as they had been doing from within Poland before being exiled. Polish activists attempted to mobilize the entire Polish diaspora of Chicago by using a framework of ethnic identity, in this case Polishness. Although, this framework was had universal buy-in from the entire target community, there was disagreement of what that framework meant. For some older generations of immigrants, it was more of a cultural identity, not a political one. This led to deep disagreement of the role of this community in social movement action and disintegration of group solidarity, primarily because of disagreement of frameworks. From this theoretical perspective the use of frames can come from micro-organizational units not necessarily structure wide frames. However, there needs to be near universal understanding of this framework. This approach supports the idea that Never Again Action is not using a master frame of Jewish identity but are engaging in a framework of historical and cultural understanding, specifically around “Never Again” or Holocaust rhetoric. This is clear in findings about critique from the political right of the American Jewish community. This framework potentially resonates with activists (a hypothesis of my research) and also carves out a place for these activists to engage in immigration work.

Finally, in this section, is the conception that macro-frameworks also are cyclical and thus a framework may support movement activity at some points in time but, they naturally fade away. Snow and Benford (1992) elaborates on this saying, “master frames can either lose their interpretative salience owing to the profusion of events and the proliferation of alternative framings or be neutralized by the repressive tactics of more powerful groups, or both. Hence the mobilizing potency of the master frame begins to dissipate, and the cycle with which it has been associated begins to decline.” (Snow and Benford 1992 page 151). As frameworks fade, the movements they supported must adapt to a new framework or change tactically. Snow and

Benford (1992) elaborate with an example of the peace activism movements in the early 1900s. There was significant movement activity before both World Wars and one of their main requests was a significant effort by international government to prevent wars. However, as the belief in international government began to have less resonance societal wide, the peace social movement moved away from that framework. This frame of belief no longer supported movement thus became less resonant and less useful to movement action. This can be seen in other movements as well and other adapt their frames to the times, such as the environmental social movement, which have been happening for decades. As the immigrant rights movement has been sustained by religious institutions for many decades (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991; Greer 1997; Hagan 2006), I do not see this concern of frame cycle to be of grave importance to the mobilization of Never Again Action. On the contrary, this may be a cyclical peak as the group emerged very naturally and quickly from a network of activists. However, as there is no longer a common enemy in ex-president Trump, there could be break down in what frame resonates and with who. Cultural framing is vital for understanding social movement mobilization and helps to connect the classical and modern theoretical understanding of social movement mobilization. I believe cultural framework theories is vital to the understanding of the emergence of NAA and individuals' motivations for joining this organization.

### **The Holocaust as a Framework**

As we have seen above there is a long history and theoretical understanding of use of cultural frameworks by social movement groups to mobilize individuals into action. The Holocaust Framework is an established framework which has been used to mobilize and/or a rhetorical device of many social movements. Arlene Stein (1998) wrote extensively on how both left- and right-wing activists have used the Holocaust framework to justify, frame, and mobilize

their social movements. She argues the Holocaust has a wide cultural understanding, especially in the United States. Stein writes:

*“The Holocaust, then, has emerged as a familiar historical template evoking profound emotional associations. In our late modern age, when the moral boundaries separating good and evil are often amorphous, when the mediatization of political discourse results in the dominance of image-based politics, and when communism no longer exists as a clear-cut, visible enemy, the Holocaust stands out as an indisputable instance of immorality, evoking images of apocalypse. These factors have made it a resonant “collective action frame” for contemporary social movements in the U.S.” (Stein 1998 Page 523)*

Stein argues that many social movements have used a Holocaust frame because it has wide understanding and can easily be understood in a dichotomy of victim and perpetrator. We can see this in many social movements but one that stands out is the LGBT movements around the AIDs epidemic. For example, ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) used Holocaust frameworks to place gay men and AIDs patients as victims by comparing their plight with that of victims of the Holocaust, in particular Jews and Gay Men (Stein 1998). This flipped the narrative around AIDs, which had been very focused on blaming victims of AIDs as sexual deviants thus deserving to die of AIDs. ACT UP was able to portray themselves as the victims and the government and religious right as perpetrators, using a narrative that was metaphorically connected to the Holocaust. ACT UP also used the symbol of a pink triangle, which was used in concentration camps to distinguish gay men, as a way of symbolically associating their movement with the victims of the Holocaust.

Stein (1998) sees that social movements use two different types of appropriation of Holocaust frames, revisionism and metaphor creation. I potentially see Never Again Action relying heavily on the metaphor creation use of this framework, as they are comparing Latino/a/x

migrant's plight today with that of European Jews in the Holocaust. There is debate on the use of the Holocaust as a framing device for social movements, as its use is often in a way that removes the Jewish victims of the Holocaust from the framework (Stein 1998; Kellner 1994). In many uses, such as abortion activist's metaphor creation of abortion clinics as "gas chambers", Jewish victims are removed from the rhetoric and the frame is appropriated for that specific social movements need, devoid of historical significance and "uniqueness" (Stein 1998). This can also be seen in gay rights activists' protests of Fidel Castro's visit to New York City in 1965, which juxtaposed gay men being interned in Cuban labor camps to Nazi death camps, however removed the Jewish victims (Marcus 2018). I would argue that NAA is not only putting Jewish victims of the Holocaust in the forefront of their framing but is also using this frame in a way that allows for their message, as allies, to get across clearly to a general audience and gain attention to the plight of Latino/a/x immigrants. It could be argued NAA holds a moral high ground, in this argument, as they are the directly related to the victims of the Holocaust and are bearing witness to that history (Kellner 1994). Participants point to themselves as having the right to use this narrative as they feel like its part of their shared history. Stein argues that "the Holocaust is both unique and comparable. It belongs to Jewish history, but it also belongs to human history" (Stein 1998 Page 534). My research dives deeply into if NAA is using this framework to mobilize their social movement activity, which could further literature on use of the Holocaust as a framing device for social movement action.

### **Never Again Actions place in wider Social Movement Activity**

There have been several significant waves of social movement mobilization around immigration in the United States (Paik 2020), but of particular interest is the sanctuary movement of the 1980s and the modern immigration movement starting in the mid-2000s and

ongoing. The sanctuary movement is of particular interest to my research as activists were often associated with religious institutions of various kinds and sanctuary activists usually pointed to religious belief systems, or frames, as their motivating factor to participate (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). As a “growing number of documented and undocumented immigrants of Latin American descent incited both a nativist backlash and the formation of equally forceful movement for immigrants’ rights” emerged (Cadava 2013 Page 172). A humanitarian crisis caused by US intervention in Central America, caused a refugee crisis along the US-Mexico border, where many migrants fleeing political repression were being apprehended by border patrol and were deported (Cadava 2013). From this crisis the sanctuary movement emerged as a way to both help migrants but also protest the inhumane system causing significant suffering (Hagan 2006). A particularly large part of this movement was religious institutions, specifically Catholic and Protestant churches (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991; Greer 1997; Hagan 2006). Religious facilities in the US fall into a legal grey area of how or if law enforcement can enter, thus activists were able to use the church to protect migrants from immigrant authorities (Nail 2019). Scholars have pointed to the clear connection between the sanctuary movement and religious doctrine of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic tradition, which emphasizes giving sanctuary to those without (Paik 2020; Greer 1997). Wiltfang and McAdam’s (1991) quantitative study of sanctuary movement activist’s motivations found that religious beliefs were prevalent throughout their sample and many activists saw their activism as religious response to a refugee crisis. They also found that higher frequency of church attendance led to greater amounts and degrees of activism in this study. These findings support cultural frames theory, as activists bought into ideologies which emphasized their need to assist migrants, especially liberation theology. Greer (1997) found that activists found the response of the government to be inadequate and inhumane,

thus justified their actions through a biblical or religious way. She also points to how religious institutions “moved out of the realm of purely sacred, declaring that the state was wrong” (Greer 1997 Page 114-115). Hagan (2006) found that the sanctuary movement was a national and trans-national movement as activists were able to activate people around the country and internationally (specifically in Mexico and Central America) because of a shared belief system and the trans-national nature of the Catholic Church. This could be compared to the ways the Never Again Action has been able to tap into collective belief systems and spread quickly through social networks nationally. The sanctuary movement points to the use of religious institutions tapping into cultural frames to mobilize a large and wide-reaching coalition into action for immigrant rights. I see many parallels with the sanctuary movement of the 1980s with how Never Again Action is mobilizing and the tactics they are using to mobilize individuals for immigrant rights, specifically around cultural framing of movement activity.

The modern immigrant rights movement is commonly understood to have really come to the public’s attention in the mid-2000s (Paik 2020). The formation of ICE increased inhumane deportation of migrants, and the increased stigma of “illegal” immigrants led to a building of the immigrant rights movement activity. Pallares and Flores-González (2010) point to this and state “The spring of 2006 will forever be marked as the Primavera de los Inmigrantes (the Spring of the Immigrants). Between late February and May 1 [2006], an estimated 3.5 Million people participated in immigrant rights marches and public demonstration across the United States” (Pallares and Flores-González 2010 Page 4). Mass mobilization occurred of millions of people (particularly Latino/a/x people), shows that this topic and movement resonated with a wide breath of the country. Mobilization around immigrant rights continues today (Paik 2020), especially under even more draconian enforcement of laws, lack of immigration reform (Pallares

2010), and increases in ICE enforcement (Amnesty International 2020). In this setting, Never Again Action is mobilizing and participating in this wider movement for immigrant rights. NAA is working closely with other immigrant rights organizations, specifically Movimiento Cosecha, for greater immigrant rights and for a wider goal of the abolition of ICE (Never Again Action 2020; Never Again Action 2019). This allyship is of interest for this research explaining how this effects NAA's mobilization, how NAA relates to a wider immigration rights movement, and what tactics NAA are using. The long history of sustained immigration rights movement activity through history is the context in which NAA is mobilizing and viewing their own movement activity. This and our understanding of NAA origins, social movement mobilization theory, cultural frames in social movements, and studies on Holocaust frames in social movements, helps contextualize the activities of NAA in a wider discussion of social movement action.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

I completed a multi method qualitative study on the social movement organization, Never Again Action, guided by my research questions. These research questions were: What are the motivating factors for individuals to join NAA? How does NAA use cultural frames, specifically a Holocaust frame, to motivate individuals to join their organization? How does NAA and individuals negotiate their roles as allies to a wider immigration rights movement? Finally, how are organizations participating in social movement actions in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis? For this research I used several qualitative methods to collect data. These include interviews with NAA members, participant observation of NAA virtual meetings, and analysis of materials that NAA has created, specifically social media posts. These methods helped me gain a better perspective of individuals involved in NAA and of the organization itself.

This research is highly influenced by previous research done in the area of social movements, specifically Mary Erdman's *Opposite Poles* (1998). This study is a case study in the area of social movements and should be considered in the time and place it was conducted. Erdmans and I both used mixed methodology to study a specific ethnic group in Chicago engaging in social movement action, which highly relied on framing and cultural frames theory.

The most robust part of my research was participant interviews. I recruited participants through an informant, who introduced me to my initial participant. I then used snowball sampling to recruit other participants in the study. This recruitment strategy was initially successful. However, as it stalled during the time period of my research, I had to again used my informant to introduce me to other participants. Additionally, I reached out to study participants multiple times to help recruit other participants, which was successful. I also attempted to recruit participants through reaching out to individuals via Slack on the NAA internal Slack channel.



This was not successful in recruiting any participants. Finally, I asked core member interviewees to include my contact and my wish to interview participants in the email list of the Chicago membership and via their Slack channel. This again was unsuccessful to recruit any further participants. In the end, my informant and study participants helped me get in contact with all interviewees in this study.

Interviews were conducted over Zoom and lasted between 40 minutes and an hour and a half. These interviews were recorded on Zoom and then transcribed and coded. Recorded interviews were later destroyed, and names and specific identifying information were removed from transcriptions. I was able to interview five individuals. Three were core team members, who are employees of NAA, and two were in the strategy circle of the Chicago chapter. All participants were part of the Chicago chapter in some capacity but only three participants lived physically in Chicago. This could be partly due to the COVID-19 crisis that allows for people to organize remotely but my research does not explain this, and I did not ask more details. Three interviewees identified using masculine pronouns, one interviewee identified using feminine pronouns, and one interviewee identified using gender neutral pronouns. All participants identified as Jewish. Three participants self-identified as Ashkenazi, which typically means of the Eastern European Jewish diaspora. This was not part of my research questions, so I did not ask participants to identify further. I used an interview guide to lead my questions and hit on all four of my main research questions. The interview guide can be found in appendix 1.6. Interviewees all were part of NAA, and I would argue very involved in leadership positions in the organization. Participants I attempted to recruit that were not in leadership positions, did not respond to requests to be interviewed and were difficult to recruit. This may be because those who are more involved are more willing to participate in research and NAA is a larger part of

their lives, thus are motivated to participate in this study. Although not a large number, these interviews were very robust and often went over an hour of discussion, which I had scheduled for each interview. The insights from these members helped shape this research and point to finding for each of the research questions.

The second part of this research was participant observation. This methodology was very limited because of the nature of doing social movement organizing during COVID-19. I was unable to do as much participant observation as I had hoped and was only able to attend two meetings, one in January 2021 and one in April 2021. Several factors led to this small number. These include limited number of meetings during the time of my research (only one chapter meeting and one national meeting), slow approval of the IRB for this research, and miscommunication between myself and the Chicago chapter's leaders. These meetings were not as robust as I had hoped. Both meetings were done via Zoom. One meeting was a national meeting pertaining to a call to action after the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capital Insurrection and the other was a Chicago chapter monthly meeting. The national meeting was a Zoom webinar, and the Chicago monthly meeting was done via Zoom. I took field notes during both of these meetings and took screenshots of specific things shared on the Zoom feed. For the national meeting about 250 individuals were on the webinar call and for the local chapter meeting about 10 participants were on the Zoom call. From interviews it is clear that NAA is able to activate a large amount of people national in low stakes and less commitment actions, including jumping on a national Zoom webinar. These field notes and observation speak to some of my findings, specifically around how cultural frames are used in the day-to-day operations of NAA and how the local chapter is working with their immigrant partner organizations.

The final methodology I used was analysis of materials. This was primarily focused on NAA's social media accounts. I originally was only going to observe NAA's Facebook and Instagram accounts, however there was not as many postings as I had hoped so I added in their Twitter account to have more robust data sample. I collected these materials from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. NAA's Twitter account ended up having the most robust number of postings during this period. For the purpose of this study, I only collected data from the national NAA social media accounts, as they had the most robust social media presence and to go further could be beyond the scope of this study. I collected this data by taking screenshots of these posts and analyzing for specific indicators I was interested in. NAA's Twitter and other social media accounts unfortunately did not have as much original content as I had hoped for. Many of the posts NAA made were reposting or retweeting things from partner organizations. This is part of NAA's strategy to raise up voices of their partner organizations, but it was not very useful data to explain their own mobilization. Ultimately, over 130 social media posts were recorded in this two-month time period. Some of these posts, especially after the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capital Insurrection, speak to some of my findings and ultimately inform my research on use of cultural frames. Also, the reposting and spreading of their partner organizations' messages helps to inform how NAA is using their position as an ally.

These three methods helped inform my data and findings. The interviews by far are the most robust methodology used in this study and helped inform my findings. The interviews were also the most personal of the methodologies and helped explain motivation the best, as I am interested in why individuals are motivated to join this organization. The main limitation to these methods was time, as I had a short window to complete this research. Ultimately, this study did

have interesting findings and can be a case study of organizations using specific cultural frames in further research.

## CHAPTER IV: PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVATIONS

This research I completed on NAA was exclusively qualitative in nature and focused on interviewing participants, participant observations, and analysis of materials. I completed 5 interviews of members, three of which were of national core team members. All participants identified as Jewish. To better understand the perspectives and findings of this study I will share short bios of participants I interviewed. Participants were interviewed with confidentiality so some details will be kept private.

Participant one is a Jewish activist who is a member of the core team of NAA and a paid staff member. They use they/them pronouns. They have done previous immigrant rights movement work with migrant rights organizations. They attended one of the first NAA events on the east coast in the summer of 2021 and have been part of the core team since the beginning of the organization. Participant one was based in Chicago in 2019 and recently left to live in Arizona. Their role in NAA is an organizer and Chicago is one of the of the locations they oversee.

Participant two, is an activist that is one of the members of the strategy circle of the NAA chapter in Chicago. Although NAA doesn't officially have leaders, participant two led meetings, created the agenda, and communicated when meetings were happening. Participant two goes by he/him/his pronouns. He is a social studies teacher at a high school in Chicago and identifies as Jewish. He has been heavily involved in If Not Now, before becoming involved with NAA. He was also at some of the original NAA events in Chicago in 2019 and became more involved from there because of his previous organizing experience.

Participant three is also a Jewish activist living in Chicago and is one of the trainers in the Chicago chapter of NAA. Participant three goes by he/him/his pronouns. His main role in the

chapter is to train new organizers and new members to the organization. At the time of his interview, he was about to start a multi-week training on the basics of organizing focus on new NAA participants. He works at a university in the Chicagoland region and has been involved in previous Jewish activism before coming to NAA.

Participant four is a member of NAA core team and is a paid employee of NAA. Participant four identifies with he/him/his pronouns and as all the participants is Jewish. He is originally from the east coast but now lives in Chicago. Already an activist elsewhere, he got involved with NAA through his social network. Participant number four was an organizer for a certain region of NAA chapters, which didn't include Chicago. However, he was involved in the Chicago chapter by attending meetings and being present at events. Participant four talked about how he had grown up in a conservative Jewish household and went to a Jewish day school for most of his primary education. He talked about this as part of his political awakening and the legacy of Jewish activism.

Participant number five was also a member of the NAA core team and a paid employee. Participant number five identified with she/her/hers pronouns. From our interview participant five seemed to be on the strategy part of the core team. Like all the other participants, participant five was involved in other forms of activism before joining NAA. Participant five was also at one point based in Chicago but now was living with family in Colorado. Participant five co-lead one of the national meetings I attended. She was important in the strategy of NAA next campaign, focused on ending ICE under the Joe Biden presidency.

In addition to interviewing participants, I attended several NAA meeting to take part in participant observation. I attended one national meeting and one local chapter meeting in Chicago. Both meetings were held over zoom. The national meeting was immediately after the

January 6<sup>th</sup> Capital Intersection and was very focused on actions that participants could take. There were around 250 participants in the meeting, however I couldn't confirm this as it was a Zoom webinar format. This meeting was run by the national core team and Participants 1 and 5 were leading the meeting. This meeting started with a reflection on some of the feelings that people were having. Meeting leaders used a digital tool called Mentimeter to allow participants to write a word they were feeling and then it produced a "word cloud" live as people entered their word. This word cloud indicated people were feeling a sense of anxiety or negative feelings in the aftermath of the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection. Core members then explained some of their own feelings and the how the history of fascism has affected their own families. They then talked about actions that were happening throughout that week to hold people accountable for the insurrection and called for the impeachment and removal of Donald Trump. They also launched a campaign about holding people responsible for the insurrection. You can see an example of this in Appendix 1.1. Finally, the meeting closed taking another poll on Mentimeter about how participants were feeling now, and they were much more positive and empowered. In the days after this meeting NAA shared posts on their social media with news about NAA protests calling for impeachment and removal of Donald Trump.

The other meeting I attended was a monthly meeting of the Chicago chapter. The meeting was held over zoom. There were eight participants in the meeting excluding the researcher. Participant number 1, 2, and 4 were in attendance. Participant 2 led the meeting and Participant 1 presented on some of the NAA initiatives from the national organization. The meeting started with a theme about the celebration of Lag BaOmer, a Jewish holiday which commemorates the end of a plague. As this meeting was in April 2021 and most participants had just received COVID-19 vaccines, this theme was very timely. We did introductions with names, pronouns

and how we were going to celebrate the end of a plague. Participant 2 then talked about some of the things the Chicago chapter has been up to. This included launching a fellowship training, which participant number 3 was running. Then, Participant 1 talked about NAA newest campaign called “End All Deportations”. This new campaign was to refocus the organization after the Trump presidency and make it clear that deportations under the Biden presidency was continuing. The focus of this campaign was to make every deportation a moral crisis. Their targets were the president as well as ICE. Next in the meeting, participants had a discussion on “what it would take for every deportation to be a crisis in Chicago?”. These discussions were done in breakout rooms with 4 or 5 people. There was a brainstorming session of what good targets would be in each group and then there was report back where each breakout group discussed some of their ideas. After discussing the campaign locally, participants talked about meeting up at a protest event for May Day the following week and logistics of where the group would meet. About a third of the meeting agreed to come and would promote to more group members via their email list. The meeting closed after that.

Through meeting observations and interviews I was able to get a clear view of how NAA operates and what participants do day to day in the organization. Although this is not necessarily the focus of my research it was interesting to see how individuals participate in meetings as well as their roles in the wider organization. Meetings were relaxed and all meetings were run by more than one individual. There seemed to be a fluid nature to meetings and were semi-informal. Additionally, there was ample space to contribute thoughts or concerns to group discussion. I will discuss the interviews thoroughly in the next section and my findings from these study participants.



## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

From interviews, analysis of materials, and participant observation of NAA events and meetings, interesting findings were revealed about my research questions and on how NAA operates. Particularly participants collaborated on their own personal motivations to be part of NAA and on cultural frames which clearly motivates participation. The most fruitful method used in this research was interviews, which revealed many interesting findings from personal to organizational. For my study I interviewed 5 individuals who are part of NAA and are connected to the Chicago Chapter of the organization. Of these five, three participants were employees of NAA, who has a paid staff team of around ten to eleven individuals. All participants identified as Jewish. Finally, 3 of the participants identified as men, 1 as a woman, and 1 as gender non-binary. Although my research was specifically about the Chicago chapter of NAA, only 3 of the 5 participants physically lived in Chicago at the time of my research, however all have lived in Chicago at some point of their involvement with NAA. Although only 5 participants were interviewed, this was about half of the members of the NAA Chicago chapter who attended meetings. This sample represents the most devoted members of the NAA Chicago chapter, who attend meetings and are doing the brunt of the organizing for this chapter. As indicated in interviews NAA is often able to mobilize individuals for specific actions but it is more difficult for sustained participation in meetings etc. From these participants interviews and observations of meetings there are significant findings on NAA that helps explain social movement mobilization more widely.

### **Social Media and Social Networks**

One of my main areas of research was on what are motivating factors for individuals to participate in NAA and be part of this social movement organization. Participants had many

different reasons for being part of NAA and most had multiple compounding reasonings they identified. When asked how they had first heard of NAA, all participants had heard of NAA through social media postings in the summer of 2019, the early days of the movement. All participants had gotten involved with NAA during this early period of the organization before there was a formalized national organization and heard of NAA from social media, specifically Facebook. From here members were organized or motivated in various ways. Participant 5 cited specifically signing up to help the first action in Elizabeth, New Jersey through a Google Form, a way of collecting contact information easily on social media.

*“I sort of I was, you know, I’m in the all these Jewish networks, and I saw this sort of Google Form going around that was like, I was really activated when I heard that that origin story around AOC, and saw the Google Forms going around people organizing.” – Participant #4*

Other participants saw posts on Facebook about upcoming actions in Chicago and were mobilized by members of their social network via social media posts often.

*“...a friend of mine, who was one of the people who’d been at literally, the very first ....action in it was New Jersey, .... And so, she got back from that action and called me and was like, we need to do one of these in Chicago. Like, help me. So, the two of us headlined... coordinated that action together. And that was the beginning of the Chicago chapter.” – Participant #3*

*“I saw a friend like a couple different friends posted on Facebook being like who wants to take action and Jews at detention centers, and hopped on a call. And was helping do recruitment for the first New Jersey action from Chicago, I was working full time as a volunteer coordinator and had a lot of free time to pull together spreadsheets and send emails so was on the like, original kind of core team helping recruit people who are going to get arrested at the first action. And I just, I felt really called in that moment, to be throwing down and doing something and ultimately decided to book a plane ticket to New Jersey.” – Participant #5*

This shows the deep network and connection nationally of leftist Jewish activists, who were engaging to form NAA in the summer of 2019. These connections are both on social media and deep connections with individuals, who activated each other as the organization grew. All

participants identified various social movement organizations they had been connected to before their participation in NAA. Most prominent in my research was the Jewish organization, If Not Now, which is a leftist organization doing work around the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Four of the five participants interviewed identified If Not Now as an organization they were a part of. All participants identified Jewish social movement organizations as part of their previous organizing experience.

*“I became involved was most of the people founded Never Again, were some way shape or form involved and If Not Now, and I have been very involved in, If Not Now, since 2016. And so I started seeing all these Facebook posts from all my friends and whatever else. And emails being like, Never Again new thing you should do it.... And I was like, Okay. And then like, I found out when the date of the Chicago action was, which was in July 2019.”- Participant #2*

*“So I was I was sort of plugged in through that work, and then had been doing a lot of Jewish organizing in college. And so it was like this, it was sort of like, but sometimes like the Jewish organizing and the like worker immigrant rights stuff felt pretty separate in my life, even if they didn't feel separate in my body and brain.” – Participant #1*

*“And then my now supervisor... posted in the If not now, Chicago Facebook group and was like who's trying to ... shut down a detention center. And I was like, me. And it was a little rocky, at first, because I think, you know, taking I think some of the conflicts that emerged in a moment ... of a whirlwind, I think I was, I was, I was like, Oh, this is good. I'm really activated.”- Participant #4*

As no one had zero previous organizing experience and from observations of meeting, we can conclude that most participants in NAA have been involved in other movement actions or social movement organizations. At least two participants had previous experience working with immigrant groups, or groups who are organizing undocumented laborers. The members of NAA are bringing in previous organizing experience, and other leftist social movement organizations, specifically Jewish ones, may be good places to recruit new members or advertise an upcoming action.

It is hard to ignore the importance of social networks, both of people known by participants and social media websites/apps, to help initially spark interest in the participants of NAA. The organizational origin story specifically cites a call on social media which helped ignite NAA and motivated people from across the country, including participants in this study. Research and mobilizing structures theory show a significant activist ecology within certain times and places, can lead to quick mass mobilization. Several participants pointed to this informal network of Jewish activists, which is in Chicago but also nationally.

*“I think there's a fairly strong ... relatively small and borderline incestuous like, Jewish leftist activist community. ... you see a lot of the same names pop up at ... Never Again stuff. If Not Now stuff. JCUA stuff. Bend the Ark stuff ... there's a couple of 1000 people whose names kind of bouncing around. ..., if you tell me that somebody is like, a leftist Jewish organizer, I assume that if ... if I don't know them, I'm ...almost for sure. know, someone who knows that person” – Participant #3*

On the surface we can see that the social networks of Jewish activists in NAA as well as the medium of social media was used to quickly mobilize individuals into collective action. However, there seems to be resonance with the message of NAA and the intersection of the wider immigrant rights social movement and Jewish identity, which has allowed for this mobilization to be sustained and organized around.

### **Intersection of Jewish Identity with wider Immigration Social Movement**

What seems to be a motivating and sustaining part of the story of NAA is the intersection of Jewish cultural identity with the wider goals of the immigrant rights social movement. NAA has positioned itself as an ally or as participants said “in solidarity” with a wider movement for immigrant rights. The narrative NAA has used which links Jewish identity with this movement seems to resonate with participants in a both personal and intellectual way. This intersection has also allowed for Jews to engage in solidarity in a genuine and potentially effective way, which

speaks to them and allows them to put skin in the game. I will engage in my research of allyship later on but believe that NAA heavy use of narratives of Jewish history, collective memory, and culture is a motivating factor for participants to engage in this social movement organization.

When asked to describe NAA, all participants described NAA as a Jewish organization or primarily Jewish organization. From observations and interviews, this seems to be both the majority of participants identity as well as a wider frame utilized by the organization.

Participants found NAA to be a safe space to organize within and a way to be an ally, in a way that was genuine and met the needs of local immigrant partner organizations. Participants talked about how they wanted to act in solidarity with effected groups in a way that was not parachuting in for one action or taking space (physically and metaphorically) from Latino/a/x immigrants.

*“What do you want us to do for you is sometimes an appropriate answer to that question. But I think that ... people from immigrant communities are justifiably often a little wary of like, being used for the photoshoot ... Here come these, these, you know, Jews who are going to come in and get a bunch of nice photos of them, like handing out whatever to the people and then they're going to bail it. And it's not actually long term and sustainable.” – Participant #3*

*“...the executive director of United We dream, like a pretty big, big, big person in the immigrant rights movement. And he was talking to her she was like, what is your stake, why this work, ...and then she basically said, she was like, here's my stake in you, here's why I'm invested in you. .... white supremacy relies on amnesia It rises on people who are absorbed into a supremacist group to forget that they once experienced a marginalized identity. And that has happened over and over in history,” – Participant #4*

All participants saw the activism they were doing as being in solidarity with immigrant groups, and for the long haul. Activities that NAA took up were to help organize actions, train members, and reallocate resources as well as other forms of capital from NAA collectively to their immigrant partner organizations. Study participants often cited fundraisers that NAA has

been able to do, which they saw as a way as using their own privilege to redistribute resources to those most effected by the immigration crisis.

*“And actually, what we're better equipped to do is move resources from our community to directly affected communities to fund to just make it Yeah, have them hire their own organizer, like, add capacity to them to hire organizers and, and invest in sort of, like their own self community defense.” – Participant #4*

*“I got my .... Mom and Grandma did a latke fundraiser, which is like, not a thing that I ever thought where they like, taught everybody how to make latkes. And it was like one of the most successful fundraisers I've ever done I never thought I would do like a fundraiser with my like with my grandma” – Participant #1*

Another interesting aspect of Jewish identity that one participant talked about was that participants in NAA did not have to answer for their identity as Jews, specifically when it came to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is particular importance in political left organizing spaces because of their support of the Palestinian cause. This topic often becomes complicated in most Jewish institutions in the United States. Participant #2 specifically talked about how in many leftist spaces, Jews are specifically singled out to answer for the actions of Israel.

*“So one of the things that I've noticed in non-Jewish leftist spaces is that the conversation around Israel can go like this very quickly, and you can be really sort of singled out, um, in a way that is, can be problematic, in a way that, frankly, can be anti-Semitic, ...being in a Jewish space, where an understanding, I guess, is there, like, and to say it's complicated is unfair, because it's bad, but it's also complicated. Um, and so that it can be a nice thing where ... I don't have to justify Israel's existence, or how Israel treats its immigrants in relation to how the United States treats its immigrants. And I can focus on just one of those things. I don't have to do my activism around sort of justifying my existence in the space. ...which can be a problem.” – Participant #2*

In an organization that holds a Jewish identity, this singling out is unnecessary and may come from a different place where the participants do not feel targeted to answer for the State of Israel. Participant #2 also talked about not having to answer for the immigration policies of

Israel, which could be considered worse than US policy. By creating a leftist Jewish space in solidarity with the wider immigrant rights movement, this could motivate individuals wary of other leftists spaces, that may single out Jews. NAA could be seen as creating this space for Jews to do activism for a wider immigrant rights movement, which feels genuine and safe.

Finally, I think the major factor motivating Jewish individuals to join NAA is that the immigration crisis is made personal to participants. From my observations this has come in several forms. Major themes would be the following: 1. Personal history as well as collective history of Jewish immigration; 2. Collective trauma surrounding deportation and detention; and 3. Jewish resistance, specifically against the Nazis. Personal history and space to share migration stories, which connects Jews with the current immigration crisis seemed to motivate participants to NAA. Although interview participants did not share specific stories of familial immigration, they pointed to a sense of collective migration of Jewish people to the United States within recent memory.

*“One of them is the sort of concept of ancestry right like there are very few Jews in the United States of America, who are not second or third generation immigrants, just statistically speaking, right, like the vast majority of the Jewish population, either was fleeing Eastern Europe in the late 18, early 19 hundred's, my grandfather, or the Holocaust in the 1940s, my grandmother, I don't know any Jews off the top of my head who have like, American ancestry pre 1800. There are some they exist, like there are synagogues in America that are that old. And there were certainly Jews around at that time. But if you look at like, how many Jews there were in America, in 1825, versus 1975, it's like, millions more. So we are here largely as the result of a relatively recent immigration wave. So understanding like, you know, in the sort of grand American story of like, we are a nation of immigrants, like, we are pretty recently, an immigrant population, even though we are maybe not immigrants, ourselves, those of us the 20, something 30 somethings who are like out doing Never Again work right now. And I think connecting to the Holocaust component of that also, like, you know, imagine if your grandmother instead of going through Ellis Island had been shoved in a cage. Like, that's what's happening.” – Participant #3*

This participant pointed to how the American Jewish community is not far removed from a history of migration. Although this might be circumstantial compared to other ethnic group, when engaging in a narrative about Jewish immigration, it is not hard to see the connection and make that personal connection to Latina/o/x immigrants in the present. Participant number two also pointed to historical examples of Jews being denied asylum in the United States and being expelled to their death in Nazi Germany.

*“...that's a part of history that a lot of people don't know. And I think is very important. ... There is there is a bill to bring in 500 or 800 Jewish children into the United States as refugees. And she was like these 800 really cute kids will become 800 super ugly Jewish adults don't let them in. And then they were not let in.” – Participant 2*

This example and others point to a sense of collective trauma of that are part of a collective history of Jewish migration to the United States. To be cautious, Jewish trauma can quickly take on a sense of being exceptional or without comparison, which participants frequently spoke on how NAA tries to move the conversation to current victims of the immigration/border crisis. However, this sense of collective trauma can be a highly motivating factor of participants in NAA and potentially could be a cultural frame within the American Jewish community that NAA is using, as it has resonance with participants. I will speak below about the specific use of a Holocaust frame to motivate people into action but participants also spoke about the looming threat of fascism, anti-Semitism, and imperialism as part of a wider threat to Jews, as well as immigrants/migrants.

*“And as we like, I think that from there, we're kind of trying to move people from that surface, and like deeper layers also being like, also Jews are impacted. And both impacted by and have been complicit in like white supremacy, and trying to, like bring people into like, more of a deeper analysis of anti-Semitism. And I think that in like with all the Trump trumpism, and everything that ... way easier to make those ties. And now, I think that we're still trying to, use those connections, ... initially activating people around the detention because that's a really*



*clear connection and talking about our own like lineage of being diasporic people, and then bringing up further into like, this is why we're doing solidarity work, one because like, your liberation is tied up and everybody else's.*" – Participant #5

*"I think there's a lot of reasons why that is, I think one is like claiming the power of victim narrative and our like, political ecology, a lot of political to, like, have that as a victim, I think it's also about anti-Semitism."* - Participant #4

Participants saw many of the same larger forces that oppress Latino/a/x immigrants in the present, as the same forces that have caused harm against Jews in the present and past. The insurrection of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, dramatically showed a threat to the democracy of the United States and was reminiscent of the failed Nazi coup in 1926 which was a precursor to Adolf Hitler's rise to power in 1933. NAA had prepared and trained their members for an attempted coup around the November 2020 election, which did not materialize.

*"Because in like, in like the moment of the election where we were like, We have to prepare for a coup, like this shit might happen. We were like Jews know about coups or like this is like 1923 like, this is a moment where we need to, like acknowledge it, and then like root out fascism. Like we've seen it all before. And it was really easy to be like, we're Jews, we know about it, like, listen to us."* – Participant #5

However, after the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection at the US Capital, NAA mobilized a national call and pushed a narrative on social media which connected the failed insurrection of 2020 with the failed coup of the Nazis in 1926. This narrative focused on the lack of consequences for Hitler and the Nazis, which emboldened them and eventually lead the Nazis rise to power in 1933. This narrative push, starting on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, juxtaposes the events of January 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 with that of Nazis in 1926. Participants in a national meeting Zoom Webinar talked about the relationship between these two events and the trauma that Jews in America, especially Holocaust survivors and people who escaped the Holocaust, must be feeling seeing another right-wing coup occurring. The leader of meeting shared a story about her grandmother's fear of

witnessing two coups in her life, the first being the Nazi coup and the second being the capital insurrection of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. We also see the connection between Jewish identity relating to the Holocaust and the capital insurrection in social media posts by NAA (See Appendix 1.1).

Although not a main focus of this research, it is important to point out that all interviews were done after the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection and NAA had clear plans and narratives that they mobilized immediately after this event. Their meeting following the insurrection was a call to action, to impeach ex-president Trump, and was a place to vent emotions, which were high. This narrative clearly connects Holocaust narratives to the capital insurrection, and thus Jewish shared history. However, there are limitations to this research ability to explain these events and their effects.

The third part of Jewish identity that participants touched on, is a shared history of resistance. As stated above there are already many leftist Jewish organizations organizing and a history of participation in activism. Participants also pointed to a history of Jewish resistance in the Holocaust and fight against fascism.

*“And so yeah, I think another like really beautiful part of my growth and sort of like in relation to this history is being like, no people resisted the Holocaust of course people fucking resist to the Holocaust with every bone in their body ... they did blow up trains and build secret schools and escape and fight in the forests and seduce and kill Nazi soldiers and you know, do mutually aid just like, there's the list is like, no, they use every tool in their power.” – Participant #4*

*“By arming themselves and fighting in ghettos, forests, and on the front lines with independent Jewish partisan units, Allied armies and anti-fascist resistance movements; By sabotaging supply lines, blowing up train tracks, and exploding crematoriums; By escaping jails, ghettos, and concentration camps; forging documents and crossing borders; By running secret schools, prayer services, weddings, concerts, and dances; By creating illegal propaganda and secret newspapers; By practicing mutual aid; sharing food, medicine, and supplies; By orchestrating uprisings in Warsaw, Minsk, Bialystok, Bedzin, Mizocz, Lachwa, and Vilna ghettos and in*

*Sobibor, Auschwitz, Kruszyna, MinkMozewiecki, and Janowska concentration camps, and many more.” – NAA Zine, See Appendix 1.4*

This shared history of resistance, although might not a prominent motivating factor connects participants to NAA, who are activating that Jewish identity of collective resistance. This is also in the narrative that NAA produces (See Appendix 1.4), which connects shared oppression by imperialism, racism, fascism of Jews with Latino/a/x immigrants who are oppressed by the same forces. By activating these shared identities and history NAA may be creating an organization in which this relationship between Jews and current immigrants can be teased out. I believe this also creates space for Jews to act in solidarity with Latino/a/x immigrants in an authentic and meaningful way. Instead of creating space for themselves in other groups, NAA is creating a space for Jewish activism and activating an identity and history which connects two distinct ethnic groups. I believe that by tapping into a shared identity, NAA has been successful in making a space for Jews to organize in solidarity with immigrants and refugees and has given the opportunity for Jews to engage in this social movement broadly. This may show some ways that Latino/a/x immigrant rights groups can gain allies from various ethnic groups, who could activate their own shared history of migration, oppression, and resistance. From narratives created by NAA they are actively making these connections which has allowed their organization to emerge and makes people feel that their identity is integral to this social movement.

### **Never Again Action use of a Holocaust Frame**

What drew me to this research and potentially attention to Never Again Action is their narrative use of a Holocaust frame to mobilize individuals into action. From my interviews no participants said that NAA is not actively using this frame, and many applauded this, and saw it as taking back their history from the political right. However, all participants also acknowledged

that there are limitations to the use of the Holocaust frame and is not universally seen as acceptable by a wider American Jewish community. The Holocaust frame is an important part of the origin story of NAA, the continued narrative NAA creates, and what could potentially motivate people to join NAA as the Holocaust is part of a shared history of American Jews. From materials produced by NAA and several interviews, we can see that Stein's (1994) theory on Holocaust frame may be complicated or more complex than her theory of universal understanding of the Holocaust. This is also made more complicated because the frame is being used by Jews who are acting in solidarity with another oppressed group. The Holocaust frame was part of interviews and materials analysis but not mentioned or referenced in my participation observation of meetings. I conclude that the Holocaust frame may be a motivating factor to movement participation and a narrative device that NAA uses but not a vital part of NAA day to day activity and could be part of a wider Jewish identity held by participants.

NAA's origin story in part is about the use Holocaust metaphor used by representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and taken up by leftist Jewish activists. One of the most interesting part of my interviews of participants was that all five interviewees repeated the same origin story of NAA and how representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) compared migrant detention centers to concentration camps.

*"AOC, called detention centers, concentration camps, and there was this huge backlash from the center and the right thought was anti semitic, and then Never Again, kind of stepped in to say like, actually, not only is that not anti-Semitic, we're actually like, don't really care about the semantic debate," – Participant #1*

*"AOC had some post I don't remember where she compared the kids in cages to the Holocaust. And there were a bunch of Jewish orgs that were like, nope. And then the lefty Jewish orgs were like, Yeah, no, this is fine. Like, children getting separated from their parents or being forced into subhuman conditions. That sounds super Holocausty." – Participant #2*

*“...in June of 2019, there was a congressional delegation to go to some of the migrant detention facilities on the border. One of the Congress, people who was a part of that delegation, was Alexandria, Ocasio- Cortez, who then tweeted, a comparison to the Holocaust, you know, basically, like, this feels Holocausty” – Participant #3*

*“One is definitely like the moment of our, founding in 2019. When Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez went to the border and referred to detention centers, as concentration camps.” – Participant #4*

*“...Alexandria Ocasio Cortez went and visited one of these sites, and call them concentration camps. And the Jewish community started like, flipping out and criticizing her rather than criticizing, like what was actually happening in these centers” – Participant #5*

This origin story, which is quoted in my literature review, shows a direct correlation with the actions of representative Ocasio-Cortez and the birth of NAA as a social movement organization. I found it interesting that all participants were able to represent this story in their answer my question “how you would describe Never Again Action?”. This origin story shows the power of a Holocaust frame, backlash against it, as well as the reclamation of this history by NAA. AOC compared migrant detention centers to concentration camps in a quote, using a Holocaust frame of reference and as a narrative metaphor. The backlash, by primarily the right, for using this metaphor was also referenced by participants in this study, who criticized the use of Holocaust narratives by the political right. Finally, the founder of NAA calling for Jews to put their bodies on the line to close detention centers, and that “never again is now” (Kesslen 2019). This origin story is clearly understood by all the participants I was able to interview. This may be different for newer recruits to the organization, however this story of social movement organization immergence, clearly resonates or at least is known by participants. Knowledge of this origin story by all participants in this study could be a way of orientating members, however this may need more research. This origin story shows the power of reframing the Holocaust for social movement purposes, which from my research NAA is actively doing.

It is hard to ignore that NAA, as an organization, seems to really lean on a Holocaust frame or narrative to both motivate participation, but also potentially to define the roles of Jews (and their organization) in a wider immigration rights movement. From my interviews, observations, analysis of materials, and specific training materials created by NAA, there seems to be a heavy reliance on Holocaust frames. However, this frame has been redefined by NAA and is not as simple as Stein (1994) or other theorists wrote about. In Stein's definition of the Holocaust frame, she saw that the Holocaust is a frame because it is understood by a wider audience and is "simple", especially when talking about victims and perpetrator. From a surface level this may seem what NAA is doing as well, but participants as well as materials NAA has produced muddy this definition and makes the Holocaust not only complicated but may reject a victim/perpetrator dichotomy. Participant number four resisted that idea that the Holocaust could be a simple narrative or could even be a metaphor.

*"Um, I don't think it's an oversimplification. I disagree. I think there are some ideas, like there's some dangers, there's some risks that we ...incur when we talk about the Holocaust. And ... it's not the right thing to do in every moment. You know, there's, I think the biggest risk to me is actually less around."* – Participant #4

*"But no to me the Holocaust comparisons are not are not a metaphor. ... They're not also not claiming identical that the two are identical in nature. There actually drawing connections between what I see as the and ... what I think are historically, the same systems are power, and the same systems of state control. And, like, I think, that are expressed most powerfully through fascism, but are also latent in like any racial capitalist system..."* – Participant #4

This resistance to this potential oversimplification of the Holocaust might speak to the demographics of the participants, who probably think about Holocaust much more than the general public but shows that the employees of NAA are actively reframing this historical frame. To add to this, when talking about cultural frames at the end of our interview, participant one quickly ran with the idea and made the frame more complicated.

*“And we're positioning ourselves as an ally direct action, which means we're also positioning ourselves as Germans in that story time, right. Like it's, it's a really, in terms of what ...we're asking people to locate themselves, who are joining us to do the work. It's both like you're joining us because you're a Jew. And because you don't want to be a bad German” – Participant #1*

Participant one, also an employee of NAA, complicated the idea of a dichotomy of good and bad, which Stein’s theory relies on. This muddying of the Holocaust frame might not be a factor in mobilizing individuals into action or recruiting new members but might be a way to define the relationship between NAA and the wider immigrant rights movement. I would argue that there is not very strong evidence that a Holocaust frame is the main factor in mobilizing individuals into action, however, I think that NAA uses this narrative device to relate a shared Jewish history with the current oppression of immigrants and migrants in the United States. As Jewish members of their organization have a shared history, it may be necessary to complicate or elaborate on the Holocaust narrative, as an oversimplification most likely does not resonate with their target audience. This may need more research of a wider audience, but from my interviews and analysis of materials, specifically a Zine made by NAA (See Appendix 1.3) shows that the leaders of NAA are actively using the Holocaust in their framing of their movement.

*“Rather than relying on a Holocaust narrative that isolates and exceptionalizes Jews and Jewish suffering, we can reclaim a Holocaust memory that understands the systems that enabled the Holocaust to happen and leads us to an intersectional fight for collective liberation.” – NAA Zine Page 18*

Particularly this Zine helps to show the narrative thread that NAA is trying to reframe the Holocaust as not a simple story of good and evil. NAA from both interviews and materials make a connection between the Holocaust and wider social phenomena, such as colonialism, racism, xenophobia, racial capitalism. Participants used this language to describe the connection between the Holocaust, the current migration crisis and other forms of oppression.

*“... on some deeper levels, I think that work is deeply connected to the fight against fascism in the name of our history and the fight against racial capitalism in the way that it connects to anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant racism, and also just the building of like political home for ... allies in in the immigrants’ rights movement and movement for racial and economic justice” –*

*Participant #1*

*“And over and over and over again, people have forgotten people have, you know, chosen to, to say, Oh, actually, the Holocaust was a story. It wasn't a story about white supremacist genocide, it was a story about the triumph of American imperialism and why America is the good guy in the world, or the Holocaust wasn't a story about white supremacist genocide. It's actually a foundation story for Zionist security state and occupation. And those are narratives that are deeply entrenched in American politics and Jewish community. And to me, ... that's the thing to overcome. And like... that's the crux ... of how racial capitalism and imperialism were.”-*

*Participant #3*

*“I feel like it's deepened in the sense that it actually opens up just like more of the linkages between ... all of the fights under like racial capitalism. And like when we think about ..., just like mass incarceration and private prisons, and policing, and all the other, like more urgent, like crises that are here for, like black and brown people in the country, like it's really connected. And I think it's like, there's one, there's one way to be like, okay, like, let's find the most urgent thing and use that as like the energizing piece. And I think that there's another like now, like, let's go really deep. And I think that that's what everyone on our team has been trying to do also, because both like, as Jews and as white people, everybody is like connected to it and impacted by like, yeah violence and capitalism”- Participant #5*

Clearly these social phenomena, which NAA point to as factors of both the Holocaust and current migration crisis, are not widely understood, agreed upon, and often rejected by a wider public. This rejects an aspect of Stein’s Holocaust frame theory which relies on simple understanding of the Holocaust and/or a dichotomy. NAA complicates this frame and shows that the victims of the Holocaust can also benefit from these systems, be oppressed by these systems, and can resist. I argue that NAA both engages in a Holocaust frame to push their narrative and begin to mobilize members as well as gain attention but are also reframing or adapting this



framework to push their perspective of history, which helps to justify their organization and their mobilization in solidarity with immigrant communities.

An interesting finding from this study has been that members of NAA's core team of leaders are actively thinking about and considering how to use the Holocaust frame in their organization and narrative. Several interviewees vocalized that the core team is actively thinking about and debating how and when to mobilize this frame.

*“Well, we're still for this for the deportation campaign, we're still doing some narrative development. And I think we're, we're playing with like a few, a few different things like one that is like really trying to be centered around like a Jewish lens and experience to be like, people have been deported. And you're like really making those ties and another that's like were Jews and we're allies like, this is actually like a human thing that everybody should care about.” – Participant #5*

This shows that the core team is actively shaping a narrative and trying to understand how it will play to a wider audience. With this debate is the consideration if this frame is effective or if it turns people off of the organization. Also, to consider is this frame may be used too much or by organizations that do not align political with NAA. One of the major questions of the core team regarding this cultural frame is if it is effective for the goals of NAA. From my interviews and the above argument about shared history of Jews and members of NAA, I would argue this framework is at least effective in bringing people to the organization.

However, members of the core team suggested that the Holocaust frame could and does turn some people off. This is particularly true about the Jewish right in the United States. Also, it is clear from NAA's origin story where there was a backlash against Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, which many Jewish groups decried (Gay Stolberg 2019). Interviewees talked about how their message is not universally accepted by members of the wider Jewish Community and how they have tried to adapt their message.

*“...I actually think that we pretty successfully shifted that conversation. Because I don't think that's the conversation that I hear now when we say things like 'Never Again', I think there's like still going to be people on the right. And maybe in the center who sort of bristle at that analogy or like some sort of Holocaust museums that are still unhappy with us but I think that there's like um, I think there is a way that lets people really locate themselves” – Participant #1*

*“...it is something that I think I think about it, and I think other people think about, I think the other one is in the Jewish community. Obviously, the Holocaust is ... held in a very specific way by the communities. And what that means is different generationally, and how that looks is different across the religious and political spectrum, and so I think that, interestingly enough, I think it activates a lot of people in the Jewish community. And I think it deactivates some people in the Jewish community. You know, most of the Jews, I know, get into it, because that imagery feels evocative and feels profound and feels compelling. But there are also people who say, you know, this is not the same thing and comparing it just like deletes the trauma of our ancestors, and what a waste of time and who feel that profoundly...”- Participant #3*

However, interviewees also spoke about how people critical of NAA's message may not be politically aligned to NAA and thus not willing to support their organization to begin with. For example, critics of NAA are often more conservative Jews, which most likely are more conservative politically. NAA is vocally politically left so it would make sense that these critics would not agree with the mission of NAA, regardless of how it was presented. The NAA core team, vocalized that they may turn people off certain people, but they may not join regardless of the narrative uses.

*“So I think it, you know, and again, I don't know if those people would buy into the thing if we were talking about it in a different way either. But it is a it is a thing that then becomes a talking point. You know, for every dope leftist rabbi who's jumping up on Twitter being like, 'yo, these Never Again Action people are awesome.' There's Ben Shapiro being like, 'what a joke someone take their Jew card', .... So I think I think it's a complicated, I think anytime we get into the sort of internal dynamics of the Holocaust, or the internal dynamics of Israel as a Jewish community, shit gets complicated. I think that that's just sort of always true” – Participant #3*

*“... I think that like Never Again, frame is, in my mind, it's one of the ways that we talk about [the Holocaust], which is like about like risks and opportunities, like there's risks talking about the Holocaust, like people can get really defensive, really territorial, it can be like, nothing is as bad as the Holocaust. Why are we comparing that like, whatever. Um, and, and then I think there's real opportunities, which are like, I think it gives people a really clear sense of urgency”-*  
*Participant #1*

The critique of the Holocaust frame is part of the origin of NAA and a continued critique of the organization. However, this may be coming from parts of the Jewish community, which would not join a group like NAA regardless of the cultural frame they were utilizing. This critique does not seem to deter the use of a Holocaust frame by NAA and its members. However, there is acknowledgement that this frame has limitations. The two main limitations cited by interviewees is that a Holocaust frame can only explain so much about the present and that this frame centers Jews as victims. First there are limits to how the Holocaust and current immigration policy relates. This limit revolves around the idea that the Holocaust is fundamentally different. Migrants and immigrants are not being systematically murdered by the state as Jews and other groups were during the Holocaust. Interviewees acknowledged that the atrocities of the Holocaust, are arguably worse than the deportation of Latino/a/x immigrants/migrants and thus a metaphor linking the two has a limitation.

*“And because like because we know ... you have a story that might like resonate. I think that, yeah, the way we like or think about us, like immigration is like, a surface symptom and using that as a way to draw connections for people and taking that and then say, Okay, now that we've like, got you, let's like, unpack it and bring you further into like more of a more of an analysis of white supremacy and anti semitism and how to be and like true solidarity.” – Participant 5*

This limitation also could be critiqued by those who consider the Holocaust to be an exceptional event. Interviewees both rejected this concepts and others engaged in this exceptionalism as well. There is argument that the Holocaust is exceptional and can not be

compared. However, at the same time the Holocaust is being metaphorically compared to the migration crisis. This rejection of the Holocaust as an exceptional event, helps inform NAA attempt to not center Jews in the trauma of the migration crisis. This is tricky as NAA is both trying to motivate Jews to engage in this social movement at the same time recognition that this fight does not necessary effect Jews in the present and they are acting in solidarity with another oppressed group. This leads into the second critique expressed by study participants who thought that the Holocaust frame of social movement mobilization can quickly center Jews in a story of oppression, when Jews are not the target of ICE in present day. Participants cautioned this frame can quickly center Jews:

*“yeah, it's like, a really constant conversation, actually. I think in part again, because of this piece around like, yeah, I think there's total risks in in using it. I think that's, .... really real. And I think in addition to the sort of risks that I hear talking about, in terms like, the risks of maybe like, desensitizing, or the risks of like, not Yeah, or again, I think there's like a risk of exceptional like, re-exceptionalizing Jewish trauma that is not that helpful. It actually really isolates you know...” – Participant #1*

*“The risks to me are decentering immigrants and moving the conversation to Jews and Europe. And I think also just disconnecting the current immigration system from the long legacy of the violence of the United States as an empire.” – Participant #4*

*“....and try to make some of those ties and still rely on some of the Holocaust narrative. But I think we're also if there can be a fine line between like really activating that and exceptionalizing it which is something that we've like, done more work and like thinking about in the last year” – Participant #5*

Talking about future campaign *“that's the main focus, as far as I know, of where the narrative is at is that we're really going to try to highlight individual stories and active and be like this is happening and to make people pay attention. Just be like, ... this is a human impact of it. And yeah, I'm actually really curious to see what we end up deciding in terms of like how Jewish centered or Jewish forward like the narrative itself will be.” – Participant #5*

NAA is walking a tricky negotiation as they are both trying to motivate Jews into social movement action by using a Holocaust frame but also not necessarily centering Jews in this narrative, as Jews are not the victims in present day. From my understanding this is part of the negotiation of allyship NAA is attempting to do. Interviewees also spoke about how when getting down to work the Holocaust frame is not always helpful. Participant 4 expressed that also the Holocaust frame is useful and important to motivate Jews into action but not very helpful in direct action with Latino/a/x immigrant groups.

*“...there are just so many moments where I think in protests and stuff where I saying that all that shit, I was talking about the Holocaust, all the shit I was talking about Jewish stuff really doesn't matter, shouldn't get a moment at the microphone, shouldn't be part of the public messaging. It's ... actually it's an organized, it's an internal organizing frame, not a public message,” – Participant #4*

As Jews are acting in solidarity in the wider immigration social movement, NAA sees an importance to not center Jews as victims in this movement, which can be difficult when you are relying on a Holocaust frame, that naturally centers Jews as victims. These limitations don't necessarily mean that use of a Holocaust frame is bad or not desirable but is not universally understood and has a point where it no longer is relevant. The core team of NAA is actively debating these uses and how to use this frame of mobilization.

One of the final interesting findings about use of Holocaust frame by NAA, is that interview participants saw it as important to not allow the political right to dominate the use of the Holocaust narrative, and more seriously that it is disturbing for many interviewees how this narrative is used by the right. From the literature review, we can see that the political right has used a Holocaust frame for various social movements for decades (Stein 1994). Interviewees often brought up the right using the Holocaust as a metaphor for abortion. Three participants spoke about how it was vital for leftists Jews to take back this narrative and not allow the right to

use it for their own means, to target the same targets that were victims of the Nazis. Several participants talked about not ceding Holocaust memory to the right and instead taking back this narrative.

*“...and that the legacy of that memory and I think it makes them so angry that the legacy of that memory right now is used by people... on the right are like, the, you know, a mask mandate is the Holocaust or gun control is the Holocaust or abortion as a holocaust or whatever it's like, No, those are my fucking ancestors. And like, you know, we [use] this phrase, you know, like, may their memory be a blessing that's sort of ... what you say when someone ... dies and it's like, Yea I want those ancestors memories to be a blessing. And what that means to me is that ... it is that sort of source of grounding as sort of mandate, right and agitation...” – Participant #4*

*“...the right uses the frame of the Holocaust all the time for like abortion, and like, masks like insane thing[s], ... and it's like, if we don't use it there, the right will. And it's actually like, a deep, ... it's the central, like, way that we have this country to articulate with something as bad, ... Like, it's like, bad, then it's like Hitler or Nazis, right. ... it's like a very fast oriented, it's like very clumsy. But also, ... if we don't use that shorthand... the frame is seeded to the right.” – Participant #1*

*“I was on Twitter earlier today. And somebody had a Jewish star that said, COVID-caust to wear a mask. And I was like, No, ... that's not right. But when you have literal kids in cages in prisons, for trying to get to a new place, and they're being randomly and arbitrarily separated from their parents or guardians, at a border, I think that that's very clearly it brings back metaphors memories of things that had that happened to Jews, particularly in the Holocaust” – Participant #2*

These participants clearly voiced their discontent with political rights use of the Holocaust as a framing device in their own movement, citing anti-maskers and anti-abortion activists. Several participants thought the rights use of a Holocaust narrative for their own means to be offensive and disgusting to the memory of their ancestors killed in the Holocaust.

*“I'm sick and tired of the memory of our, Jewish and queer and socialists and anti-fascist ancestors who were massacred in the Holocaust, to have their memory weaponized against other*

*people experiencing oppression and instead of that memory as a as a source and ... wellspring of solidarity.” – Participant #4*

These participants found the political rights use of a Holocaust frame to be adherent and that NAA not only has a right to use this narrative but should take it back from the right, who they disagree with on many levels. This could relate to Stein’s theory of the Holocaust frame about who and how this frame can be used. NAA is pushing this issue and from their perspective they are allowed to use this frame to mobilize individuals, while the political right should not be able to control this narrative. NAA is a Jewish organization using this framework, which makes it very different from the examples in Stein’s research and an interesting case study. I would argue that NAA is actively trying to take back the Holocaust frame to not allow the right to control this narrative and use it for their own political gains.

The Holocaust is an important part of the narrative story that NAA is actively producing and arguably is part of a wider shared history, which has helped mobilize Jews into action. However, from my participant observations at meetings, there was almost no mention of the Holocaust, and the majority of NAA’s social media postings during my time of observation did not mention the Holocaust. I would argue that the narrative around the Holocaust that NAA is cultivating has a lot of power to mobilize individuals but might not be the most important factor in mobilization and is definitely not part of the day to day organizing done by NAA. The core team of NAA is actively thinking about this narrative and use of the Holocaust frame, but other members, who are not paid staff, mentioned the Holocaust significantly less when talking about their involvement in NAA. From my research it seems that the Holocaust is part of a wider shared history, which resonates with American Jews widely and thus could be part of a history that is motivating Jews into action. This is not to say that a Holocaust frame is not at play. As

participants said, the Holocaust grabs attention and is a way to get press and more traction on their social media accounts.

*Talking about the Twitter Post in Appendix 1.1 “it was like one of the tweets that we'd had in a minute that had gotten like, pretty viral. Which is just interesting... our comms always said like, people love when we say Nazis. ... on social media. It goes so much farther, which is interesting and complicated.” – Participant #1*

This narrative might create attention, which in turn brings members into the organization, which have a shared history or identity with other Jews and the messaging of NAA resonates with them. No participant in this study said that the connection between the Holocaust and the detention of immigrants in the US was the primary motivating factor to join NAA. However, many found this frame to resonate and be provocative in their own lives. I would argue that this frame resonates because of a shared sense of Jewish identity rather than the metaphorical connection solely. A wider study might be necessary but from this qualitative study, it is hard to conclude that the Holocaust frame is the primary factor for mobilization.

### **The Role of Never Again Action as an Ally in Solidarity**

NAA's stated purpose is to be an ally, or as study participants stated, in solidarity with immigrants and migrants and to a wider immigrant rights social movement. Throughout the study, all interviewees, spoke about how NAA purpose is to be in solidarity with immigrants and migrants. This negotiation of allyship takes several different forms and seem to be informed by an understanding of privilege and positionality of the American Jewish community.

At a basic level NAA chapters work with local organizations led by immigrants or migrants, who are working in a wider social movement. NAA has over eleven local chapters across the country which the national organization supports. All of these local chapters are working with or closely supporting local immigrant organizations partners. Early on in the formation of NAA as an organization, activists asked if NAA was a long-term organization or



was just activating a zeitgeist in the summer of 2019. NAA engaged their local immigration partners, who challenged NAA to really invest long-term in the immigrant rights struggle.

*“But we got really agitated by partners to be like, actually, ... what ends up happening is that over and over, there's these moments where it's in the headlines, and a lot of people come out and care about immigration, and then it leaves the headlines, and nobody sticks around. Beyond the ... folks who are directly impacted, who are doing the ... sort of daily work. And it was a really powerful agitation that that there was a gap around organizing allies in a consistent way, in a way that wasn't just like, a way it was actually also showing up with our own stake and saying, like, okay, ... we're here as allies. And we actually have our like, our own really deep stake in this fight and in winning, and we're like, in it for the long haul, and we're not just you know, showing up out of, you know,” – Participant #1*

This stake is part of the origin of NAA as a formal organization and shows how NAA has really leaned on these relationships with Latino/a/x immigrant organizations to help lead them within the immigrant rights movement. NAA's chapters have relationships with local immigrant led groups and the national core team of NAA has relations with national groups as well. These local relationships take a variety of forms and is often a negotiation of interests, identity, and action priority. One of main issues that came up in interviews is that NAA has to take into consideration the interests of various partners in each local chapter as well as their national partners. As there are a variety of groups that NAA works with, there is thus a variety of interests of these groups and opinions on how to run their organization.

*“it's interesting, because partnerships look really different in different places. Like we have national level partnerships. And we have local partnerships. And sometimes those partnerships don't want the same thing. Like the Immigrants Rights Movement is like incredibly diverse, incredibly non monolithic. And I think some of our biggest, like challenges sometimes can come from being like, our partners don't agree, and we're supposed to follow our partners. So like, how do we decide which partners to follow?” – Participant #1*

Different groups have different priorities, and this negotiation can be difficult when considering that NAA is a national organization and producing a narrative which is supposed to resonate nationally but could be counter to the interests of local partners at the ground level. This messaging can also come across in how NAA markets itself to its partners. Participants talked about how groups they are in solidarity with, or want to be, have questioned the intentions of NAA and they have had to negotiate this role and how NAA shows up for these Latino/a/x immigrant or migrant centered groups.

*“...generally an immigrant rights movement ecology for us to not just be a group of mostly white people who show up for a summer and disappear, which is the pattern in immigrant rights spaces especially for Yeah, for white folks and for allies. But actually, we had to stick around ... and build and do this sort of longer, slower organizing.” – Participant #4*

*“And there's a lot of organizing, I think there's a lot of bad solidarity organizing .... Also, white people need to organize each other. White people need to identify their own stake and be able to articulate it really deeply and powerfully. And white people also need to be thinking about their ... their own role in strategy formation.” – Participant #4*

This negotiation, according to participants, is because of a lack of solidarity from ally groups in the past and a sense of these organizations showing up for a photo-op or not in real solidarity. NAA has had to negotiate their role with these groups, which has taken several forms, but has made it clear that they are in long-term solidarity with their local partners. This negotiation has taken several forms of how NAA can support local groups and what kind of actions are important. Participants talked about how they support local groups in a variety of ways. These include doing fundraisers, showing up for actions, supporting other groups organizing etc.

*“Um, sometimes we're in support, sometimes we're working with... sometimes we're leading and they're working with, it's a question of sort of resources. Um, and what are our resources versus, you know, this other groups, resources, so sometimes it makes sense for us to be in the lead. And*

*sometimes it makes more sense for them to be in lead. So just OCAD [Organized Communities Against Deportations] we did a Hanukkah fundraiser for them. And so it made sense, considering was a Hanukkah fundraiser that we would be in the lead, and they would show up”*  
– Participant #2

This variety of actions was also clear in meetings held by NAA, where actions were brainstormed and considered what partners to bring in. In the April 2021 Meeting of the Chicago chapter, most of the business was about organizing within their own movement, there was time devoted to planning on logistics for a May Day protests held by immigrant rights groups and where NAA members would meet. Additionally, participants talked about being in solidarity with groups who are doing organizing around immigration/migration issues but not led by immigrant leaders. All this solidarity with other organizations is part of wider understanding of privilege and access to resources by interviewees. Interviewees indicated that although they positioned themselves in a non-dominant ethno-religious group, they understood their own privilege compared to Latino/a/x immigrants and migrants. This is part of a wider understanding of economic racism and wider access to resources that interviewees saw themselves as having access to, particularly economic capital. Participants talked about having access to capitals both financial and social, which they saw as one of their roles is to distribute more equitably.

*“... being an organization of Jews we get, and that we have a certain amount of privilege that other groups don't have. We have a bunch of people who, you know, read the Jewish press who are in specifically large newspapers are in positions of power to get our word out, and to get the word out about what's going on in a way that I think other groups and organizations would, frankly struggle to”- Participant #2*

*“...we are talking about right now is like building out local campaigns in collaboration with partners, so that might be around like, even fundraising campaigns or campaigns around pieces of the detention deportation machine manifesting locally” – Participant #1*

These understanding of their own relative privilege and their access to capitals, obligated participants to fight perceived economic racism that this privilege was part of a wider fight of racism, classism, and against capitalism. Several participants talked about how Jews have gained whiteness in America's racial hierarchy and thus are given privilege, which comes with whiteness. This understanding of whiteness allowed participants to take greater risks in political actions, as the consequences were lessened, but also to distribute some of the capital gains which has come with whiteness and systemic racism in the US. Participants talked about their own understanding of their whiteness and how that relates to Jewish identity.

*"I like to say me, personally, I like to say that Jews are white accessing rather than white passing. I think white passing implies that you're not white, but you look white, whereas I think Jews like white accessing is like, we access a huge amount of white privilege. And at the same time, the definition of white as it is held by the people who care about it does not include Jews, and the Holocaust was rooted in racial demographics and stereotypes, and the Nazis executed literally hundreds of 1000s of people who fit the racial criteria of Jews without fitting into the religious criteria of it." – Participant #3*

The role of NAA was also seen in a lens of whiteness and how to use that in solidarity with oppressed immigrants and migrants, typically who are not white. We can see this in narratives NAA produce which encourage Jews to put their "bodies on the line" (NAA 2020). One of the interesting concepts that participants talked about was giving members of NAA a place to work through their personal thoughts of whiteness and privilege in a safe space that would also not burden Latino/a/x groups. The thought is that members of NAA could really engage in their own understanding of whiteness, Judaism, and privilege without taking up "space", time, or resources of immigrant/migrant groups, who should be able to access NAA resources (mainly people) without spending their own resources.

*“Also, white people need to organize each other. White people need to identify their own stake and be able to articulate it really deeply and powerfully. And white people also need to be thinking about their own how know their own role in strategy formation.” – Participant #4*

This was part of why NAA was doing a series of trainings for new members on the basis of organizing, and part of this training was to talk about and work through some of these ideas of whiteness and privilege. From the perspective of NAA, this would help members understand their own personal connection to the wider immigrant rights movement. From interviews and literature created by NAA, allyship and solidarity with immigrant rights groups is a vital part of the organization. In most cases NAA takes their directions from partner organizations who are immigrant-led. The negotiation between NAA, who is primarily made up of people who are not directly affected by the immigration crisis, and immigrant rights groups is complicated but based in solidarity. This has taken lots of forms and will continue to adapt as NAA continues to organize.

### **Organizing during COVID-19**

Never Again Action, formed in the summer of 2019, has now existed longer during the COVID-19 pandemic than it did before the crisis. This worldwide crisis affected everyone including NAA, and how they organized. NAA is defined as a direct-action organization, which quickly became not possible to have mass amounts of people in one location. Participants of the core team informed me that they were planning a mass meeting of all the leaders, over 100 people, in Arizona in March 2020, before most of the United States was in lockdown. Study participants echoed that some aspects of the organization had changed, but also the pandemic gave the organization a chance to reorganize and spend more time and energy on trainings, instead of direct action, which took up much of the bandwidth of the organization before the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most interesting findings is that NAA had to adapt to reposition to other forms of protest instead of direct action, which they describe themselves as a direct-action organization.

Participants all talked about a variety of forms of protest they tried, including car-based protests.

*“I think there's been a lot of conversation on like, what actions look like, in a way that is also safe, and socially distance and all that. So you know, there was a big car action, back in the fall around that ICE headquarters building in downtown. There's a car action that we're helping organize up in Wisconsin, then a couple of weeks, stuff like that, that I think is, is an interesting way to sort of approach actions as a as a notion. And then there's been a lot of discourse around like, you know, COVID is really terrible in detention centers, and is really disproportionately affecting immigrant communities, and how are we supporting that kind of work and things like that...” – Participant #3*

There was also a push to other forms of protest, which does not need to be done in person, such as circulating petitions or calling government officials. One of the biggest successes they had in this area was working with other immigrant organizations to petition and eventually shut down an ICE citizens training program in Chicago (Peña 2020). From the perspective of NAA, this would have been a form of citizen surveillance on immigrant communities. This success showed that this form of protest, although is less based on direct action, can be effective.

*“...in Chicago ...they're supposed to have an ICE Academy, where ICE was basically going to train vigilantes to, like do ICE tactics. And we started to organize against it, then actually got canceled, which was very cool.” – Participant #2*

Although there has been a shift to different forms of protest, there does not seem to be a long-lasting change to the organization in their tactics. However, one of the major findings was that COVID-19 allowed NAA to reposition in several ways. This primarily was to take time, not organizing direct action campaigns which took up most of their time before the COVID-19 pandemic. This energy was then used to create training plans and train members, specifically new members in the organization. Training included a “*How to Organize* crash course” but also

helped position members in a wider narrative of the immigrants' rights movement and understand their own stakes in this social movement.

*“it's basically like a 12 week. It's sort of like how to how to be a organizer boot camp. Like maybe so it's it's a combination of movement, building stuff in the things of like talking about identity and power dynamics and the history of the issue and looking at the ecosystem of immigration in Chicago and stuff like that. And then also focusing really heavily on like, okay, how do you plan a campaign? How do you plan an action? How do you coordinate hundreds of people doing stuff simultaneously? Protests safety, know your rights things and all that kind of stuff?” – Participant #3*

*“And, which isn't to say that we, you know, there hasn't been direct action happening there. There has, but it's just been, it hasn't ... been as much of a main focus, right, the shifting into training. So I'd like do we make sure that we're like ready to do it when it's like, safe to do. So I yeah, I would say, I think it's like, it's changed to kind of everything that we've done, but it's also given us some space and time to do some deeper dive work.” – Participant #1*

Time during COVID-19 lockdowns have helped reorient the NAA to think of long-term strategies and get buy-in from a wider audience, who they saw as important for the continuation of their fight for immigrant rights. While it has given members of the core team more time and energy to think strategy, it also interestingly gave time to develop a more accessible organization, specifically in a framework of disability rights. All three core team members interviewed in this study mentioned that the organization had spent time and resources trying to make NAA a more accessible space. This included having technology resources which allowed for more accessibility in meeting, describing the content of images on their social media accounts, and how meetings were held, which allows for more individuals to join in.

*“Well, another really, like, Good thing, I think that came out of this is that we also really incorporated a lot of like Disability Justice principles and started doing a lot more better work around accessibility, which is very good. And I'm hoping that we have a lot, we have some really clear intentions to keep that going. We were going to try to, like, include some zoom sessions, in*

*that leaders gathering anyway. And I think now it's like, we want to, like make it accessible to as many people as possible...” – Participant #5*

*“...like the other growth, our movement has gone up through over the last year is a lot of investment and accessibility in Disability Justice. There's like we have a lot of disabled membership, and disabled leaders who also like see their own identities and ancestors like within this Holocaust memory and within sort of, like, the larger fight against or, like, for against ableism and against incarceration. And so we've had a lot of learnings to do around how ... accessibility and disability ... like movement spaces that are really rooted in Disability Justice look, in the pandemic, and online versus in person direct action. So that's the other thing that we've got a lot of thinking about.” – Participant #4*

The core team talked about how this will become part of their organization after COVID-19 and is important as a lot of their membership/participants identify as disabled in some form. By having to refocus during COVID-19 there has been time and energy placed into this conversation and action to make NAA more accessible to individuals of varying ability. Although COVID-19 has derailed a lot of NAA's direct action plans, there has been readjustment of expectations and an attempt to form a stronger organization which has buy-in from its members in a way that could be for the long term. This readjustment helps to show how NAA has adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and may shed light on how other social movement organizations have continued their organizing.



## CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Overall, this research is a case study of a social movement organization in a specific time and place, which has greatly shaped the organizations actions. NAA has not had major research done on their social movement organization. This research is novel in many ways but is part of a wider body of research on social movement mobilization and specific organizations. I would argue some of the major findings are: the adaptation of the Holocaust as a frame for mobilization, how a shared Jewish history may be the main cultural frame mobilizing individuals, and the negotiation of identity of NAA's membership is doing in solidarity with immigrants and migrants. These three findings, reflect previous research but also contrast with our understanding of particular theories of mobilization. This research helps to explain these phenomena and further our discipline's understanding of social movements.

### **Adaptation of the Holocaust Frame**

One of the major findings of this research is how NAA leadership utilized a Holocaust frame to create a narrative that appeals both externally to the wider population and internally to participants- I would argue that NAA leadership deliberately uses the Holocaust frame to advance their own organization, gain attention from the wider public, and as part of a wider mobilization which centers on a shared Jewish identity and history. However, as participants buy-into this narrative NAA adapts the Holocaust frame as part of a wider understanding of the Holocaust as being part of a shared Jewish identity. As alluded to in the findings section, NAA leadership actively and consciously uses the Holocaust as a framing device for their social movement actions. This was clear from interviews with the core team members and recognized by all study participants. NAA also emerged from a use of Holocaust metaphor and backlash against this metaphorical device. Aldon Morris (1984) and others saw that groups actively and

consciously use cultural frames to bring members to the organization, but also create a narrative about themselves and their actions (Morris 1984). NAA is clearly active in this narrative creation and are attempting to shift a frame to justify their actions and relate their own ethno-religious group with the current immigration crisis. This effort has taken many forms, such as their social media accounts which used both direct and indirect metaphors to the Holocaust (See Appendix 1.2), materials they create (See Appendix 1.3 to 1.5), and their own understanding of the Holocaust and their shared history. What becomes less clear is if this truly resonates with participants who are part of their organization. I would argue that the Holocaust frame itself does resonate with participants to bring them into the organization. What is less clear is if the Holocaust frame is vital for participant's continued mobilization or if this frame may be part of a wider understanding of Jewish identity participants hold. NAA does seem to reject aspects of the Stein's theory of the Holocaust frame while supporting some parts of this theory simultaneously. NAA is using the frame but is shifting what it means to participants for their own purposes as a social movement organization.

From interviews with participants, there seems to be a rejection of certain aspects of the Holocaust frame theory, coined by Stein (Stein 1998). Stein sees the Holocaust as a singular event, which is understood in simple or dichotomous terms, of good and evil, and can be widely understood by the general public. Participants interviewed in this study seem to reject parts of this theory outright and in their organizing often complicate the meaning of the Holocaust and its relationship to the immigration crisis. Specific participants cited examples of how the Holocaust is significantly more complicated than a simple good and evil dichotomy. This included things such as the US St. Louis, to the legacy of the National Holocaust museum in Washington DC, to the politicization of Holocaust memory by the political right and left. This complicates what this

history means for both participants and potentially a wider Jewish audience. These examples reject a dichotomy of good and evil. This dichotomy is rejected by the NAA as well as a dichotomy between victim vs. perpetrator. NAA of course sees ICE as the perpetrator and often compares them to Nazis, but they also implement a wide range of public, private, and individual actors in being complicit in the face of immigration crisis. One could metaphorically compare the complacency of many such groups in the Holocaust, and from interviews as well as NAA social media they do connect the metaphoric dots. However, this again complicates the narrative of the Holocaust and how we understand this history. Stein's theory may not stand up to this critique. Stein's example of anti-abortion activists and ACT UP AIDS activists, shows that the narrative of a social movement can be aided by a Holocaust frame and often relies on this victim vs perpetrator dichotomy. NAA is actively not portraying itself as victims and are thinking about how not to center Jewish historical trauma exclusively. NAA uses a Holocaust frame in a specific way, which is in solidarity with immigrants and migrants. Stein and NAA both found it to be problematic (in the case of NAA, repulsive) for certain groups to be actively framing their actions with the Holocaust frame. This becomes complicated as NAA sees themselves as owning a shared Jewish history which includes the Holocaust, which allows for them to use this frame to mobilize. Several times in interviews participants brought up how they should use their history as a way to mobilize individuals and that it was justified. Although there are acknowledged limits to this frame, participants saw Jewish people as the owners of this history.

Finally, NAA and its members are actively thinking about and crafting a narrative which connects the Holocaust and the immigration crisis with a wider understanding of colonialization, racism, racial capitalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia. This is primarily internal to the organization and complicates how the Holocaust is understood but crafts a narrative that

connects Jews to current day migrants. This narrative deepens participants understanding of this connection and could create buy-in, but it also complicates a frame, which according to Stein is more simple. NAA may make a clear and simple message to a wider audience, such as via social media, but quickly this message becomes part of a narrative to participants, which positions the organization in a wider fight against these systemic forces. I would argue that NAA complicates Stein's theory of social movement mobilization. They complicate the history of the Holocaust, by both using the Holocaust frame as a metaphor to a wider audience but also making a more nuanced narrative, which may be needed for continued group buy-in from their members who themselves have a strong understanding of their shared history and its relation to the migration crisis.

### **Jewish Identity and Shared History**

The other significant finding is that members of NAA seem to be motivated strongly by a sense of group identity and history. Part of this is making a place for Jews in the immigration social movement ecosystem, but also how NAA is engaging in a shared history of its members, who are primarily young Jewish activists. NAA emerged out of a moment when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez engaged a wide audience in a Holocaust metaphor comparing the detention of migrants at the US border with concentration camps (Gay Stolberg 2019). In this national debate, NAA emerged as a group because of a shared Jewish history predicated on learned cultural understanding that a repeat of the Holocaust should never happen again, thus the name Never Again (Kessler 2019). From my research, the emergence and NAAs' continued mobilization relies heavily on a shared history of Jewish people, not necessarily the Holocaust frame itself. The Holocaust frame is important, as it may be the defining feature of NAA, which has given it national media attention, however I argue it is not the main motivating factor for people to join

NAA. Instead, a shared Jewish history has sustained NAA and its members, as they see themselves in a group which brings its identity to the forefront as well as a way that Jews can authentically engage in the immigrant rights movement.

NAA has used the Holocaust frame to successfully engage thousands of Jews across the country into the immigrant rights movement, who maybe would not have engaged as deeply as they have before if not for NAA. However, I would argue that the Holocaust is not the main motive behind individuals' mobilization, rather that a majority of individuals involved in NAA are part of a Jewish identity group and have a shared history, which NAA is activating. This is very clear in the group, especially when study participants spoke about group activities that were specific to Jewish culture. Some of these include highlighting Jewish holidays, fundraisers such as selling latkes, and social media accounts which called for actions on specific days in the Jewish calendar. These shared cultural references help to show how Judaism is part of NAA's culture and how they operate as a Jewish group. This identity is part of the group's origin, identity, and definitely part of their organizing strategy. This suggests that the appeal to participants has more to do with a group engaging this frame of Jewish identity and shared history, rather than exclusively a Holocaust frame. However, as the Holocaust is widely part of American Jewish experience, it is hard to separate the Holocaust from a more general Jewish cultural and historical identity. Finally on this point, all participants spoke about finding out about NAA through social media, which was posted or promoted by their wider social network. This seems to indicate that individuals might have been mobilized or at least became aware of NAA through their social networks and social media. These social networks might include other Jewish activists, but we do not know clearly from this research. Additionally, several participants talked about networks of Jewish activists, who are very connected socially and through their

activist work. From the data collected in this study, it is hard to say that the Holocaust frame is the singular mobilizing factor of individuals in the study. It is more likely to be a combination of several factors, such as social network, identifying with the group, etc. From these data it seems to point to Jewish identity and shared history as factors which have helped motivate study participants to engage more deeply with NAA and to continue their mobilization.

### **Identity and Solidarity with Wider Movement**

The final important finding of this study is how NAA is negotiating their role as an ally to a wider immigration rights social movement. NAA's public materials and all study participants spoke about how NAA is working as an ally or in solidarity with immigrant partners. It is clear in this research that NAA is not working for the benefit of their own members, who are primarily Jewish. However, NAA is doing work and actively engaging cultural frames which strengthen the connections of oppression suffered by Jewish people (historically and in the present) with that of Latino/a/x immigrants in present day America. This strategy has been done by previous social movement organizations, especially religious organizations in the sanctuary movement starting in the 1980s (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). These organizations explicitly engaged in a cultural frame based on religious belief, which is almost completely absent in NAA's organizing. NAA relies heavily on a cultural and historical frame of Judaism which connects participants with Latino/a/x migrants. Again, a combination of factors helps make this negotiation happen but data point to participants shared history and identity strongly motivating this connection and strengthening these two groups, which joins them in a long line of oppression, present day and historically.

One of the main factors that connects NAA with a wider immigrant rights movement is that they are engaging participants in a narrative which connects American Jews with Latino/a/x immigrants. From my understanding, NAA seems to be engaging several cultural frames which

American Jews already engage or buy in to. One of these is a narrative of “never again” or the thought that a genocide or the Holocaust must not happen again, and that Jews must lead to prevent this from happening again (Kellner 1994). Kellner speaks about how the phrase “never again” is widely understood and taught to Jews in the United States in many different forms. NAA is actively engaging this frame, which is widely understood by American Jews, to motivate participants and as a way to connect Jews with the immigration crisis. NAA is both using frames that are widely understood by the American Jewish community and adapting these frames in an attempt to strengthen ties between Jews and Latino/a/x immigrants, focusing on systemic oppression. However, before participants are engaged in these systems, they are engaged by frames which are widely understood and have significant buy in from the American Jewish community broadly and have resonance with the broader movement for social justice.

As a way of both negotiating their role as allies and strengthening the ties between participants and Latino/a/x immigrants, NAA is pushing a narrative which connects the Holocaust and the migration crisis on a continuum of oppression which both groups have suffered from in different time periods. Study participants, who are members of the core team really emphasized this point and NAA created materials (See Appendix 1.3 to 1.5) that help to create this narrative. The story that NAA is crafting is that the Holocaust and the migration crisis are both results of larger systems of racism, colonialism, xenophobia, and racial capitalism. and that NAA’s role is to dismantle these systems. This narrative creates a distinct connection between American Jews and Latino/a/x immigrants by focusing in on systemic oppression that both groups have suffered. For NAA this is an interesting narrative as it casts Jews as both the victims of and the resistance to these systems of oppression. This may be a way of understanding the Holocaust and other forms of oppression which Jews have suffered in a historical continuum,

which relates to current day oppression of Latino/a/x immigrants. This narrative is further strengthened from trainings that NAA does with newer participants to their organization. These trainings focus on making these connections between participant's own personal history and that of Latino/a/x immigrants. Study participants talked about how they had very few connections with the Latino/a/x undocumented community but were nonetheless able to talk about how their own oppression was related to that of Latino/a/x immigrants. These connections help sustain the group and to make personal the identities and history of participants and the work they are doing. This relates to previous scholarly work on social movement organizations, which used cultural frames to encourage individuals to take more risky actions and deepen their connection with a movement that they were allied with, specifically the sanctuary movement (Wiltfang and McAdam 1991). NAA is using a narrative which connects the oppression suffered by Jews with oppression of Latino/a/x immigrants in a way that justifies their organization and actions but also strengthens the ties of participants to the wider immigrant rights social movement. This both helps create participants who are more connected to NAA work and also serves the purpose of justifying NAA's place as an ally in a wider movement. NAA is of course working with other immigrant rights groups to negotiate their place in different cities around the US, but this wider strategy helps to create a narrative which connects two ethnic groups in a resistance to system oppression. There is need for further research into whether and how these narratives work and are motivating for individuals in the long-term.



## CHAPTER VII: LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Although many interesting findings can be seen in this research, there were major limitations in my research as well as areas for future study. The major limitation was the difficulty in finding participants and reluctance to be interviewed. For the interview portion of my research, I was only able to complete 5 interviews. This is about half of the people who showed up for meetings I participated in but was skewed to those who are most invested in the organization. Several other potential other participants did not respond to requests to participate in this research or did not respond to my informants who assisted me in recruiting participants. Additionally, I did not receive any responses to messages I sent to groups of hundreds of members of NAA in their private Slack channel, as well as in meetings notes sent to the wider Chicago email list. It was difficult to recruit the participants I did interview. I feel the participants I did interview agreed to participate because they are closely connected with NAA, such as being paid employees or on the Chicago organizing circle. Although I was only able to interview five participants, only about nine to ten people showed up to the Chicago chapters meetings. Thus, I was able to interview about half of these members. This could indicate a robust sample for the size of the organization but in my original research proposal I was hoping to interview more individuals. As there was no in-person opportunities to meet NAA members, this could have made it more difficult for members to trust me and for me to talk to people one on one, rather than cold call them.

COVID-19 was one of my research questions but was also a major barrier to my research. It made it almost impossible to do participant observation, limited my ability to connect with members, and limited NAA's activities, thus limiting my ability to observe these activities. The major issue with COVID-19 was it limited the ability of this research to happen in-person and

therefore, how much could be observed. However, I was able to observe how NAA has strategically changed to adapt to COVID-19 and its impacts on their organizing. Finally, the effects of COVID-19 might have skewed some of this data as it has influenced our society. This research needs to be considered as a case study in a specific time and place because of these events.

An issue that came up often in interviews and from my own observations was that many of NAA's members and participants in this study were very focused on organizing happening around the Black Lives Matter protests (or as participants called them uprisings) which came to a peak in the summer of 2020. This was compounded by the 2020 Presidential Election, which NAA did organizing about to counter a perceived fascist takeover, but really seemed to be top of mind for a large part of participants, who were interviewed in early 2021. These events compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, dominated the political moment of the time of my interviews and could skew the answer of participants. However, this research is a case study during a specific time and place, and maybe should be considered under that frame.

There is potential for more research to be done about Never Again Action and their social movement organization. NAA is a rich data source on both a social movement organization that is a specific ethnic group but also a group working in solidarity with an oppressed group. There is more to explore in a study with fewer limitations of time and scope. I would argue there is also a lot more to learn about networks and the ecology of leftist Jewish activism in the United States. I was surprised there was not as much research on Jewish activism as I had assumed there was before embarking on this research. From my own understanding of the community of leftist Jews in Chicago, this could lead to significantly more research and it may show similarities to research done on religious groups doing social movement action trans-nationally. Regardless, NAA could

be researched further and there is potential to understand different aspects within the study of social movements, that were beyond the scope of this research.

## CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

Never Again Action at its core is a Jewish social movement organization, working in solidarity with immigrant communities to resist and dismantle ICE and an oppressive immigration system. How they engage in cultural frames is what makes NAA interesting and part of a wider discussion on Holocaust frames and the role of social movement organizations, whose role is as an ally to a wider social movement. NAA relies heavily on a Holocaust frame as a narrative to connect Jews with current oppression suffered by Latino/a/x immigrants but complicates Stein's theory on Holocaust frames as simplistic and a dichotomy. NAA positions themselves as both the victim and the resister of oppression. From study participants it also seems that the Holocaust frame may not be a primary factor in participants mobilization, but instead be a part of a rich shared history of American Jews, which encompasses previous social movement work, social networks, and shared cultural indicators. It may be impossible to tease out the Holocaust frame as the Holocaust itself is such an important part of a learned American Jewish cultural and historical identity. This study found that the Holocaust frame may not be as simple as previously understood, especially when used by Jewish activists. Additionally, this data shows interesting insights on how Jewish activists are engaging in narratives of shared history and identity to mobilize individuals, and finally how NAA is negotiating their role as an ally to a wider social immigration rights social movement. This research is a case study of one organization but could help us understand how other ethnic groups could mobilize individuals into action for immigrants' rights, using narratives which connects their oppression with that of Latino/a/x immigrants. This research also furthers our understanding of how groups work in solidarity, when a specific issue does not affect their constituencies personally. Finally, this study complicates the use of a Holocaust frame for mobilizing individuals into social movement action.

From these data it seems that a Holocaust frame may not be the primary factor for individuals joining NAA but is part of a wider shared history that really resonates with participants. This may not be true for a non-Jewish organization as the Holocaust is very intertwined with the American Jewish community and hard to separate. However, the Holocaust frame utilized by NAA has benefits including bringing them attention and initially resonating with organization participants. Finally, NAA is actively using this frame and its core team members are debating its use and how it will be perceived by the wider Jewish community, who they are engaging.

NAA is a fascinating organization, which is consciously considering its own narratives, cultural frames, and messaging. NAA opens a door to understanding Jewish social movement organizations and their work in solidarity with the immigrant rights social movement. The role that NAA is taking could be considered by other ethnic or religious groups as they engage in solidarity work in many social movements. NAA is engaging part of Jewish history and culture that propels Jews into action and argues that never again is now, thus action must be taken.

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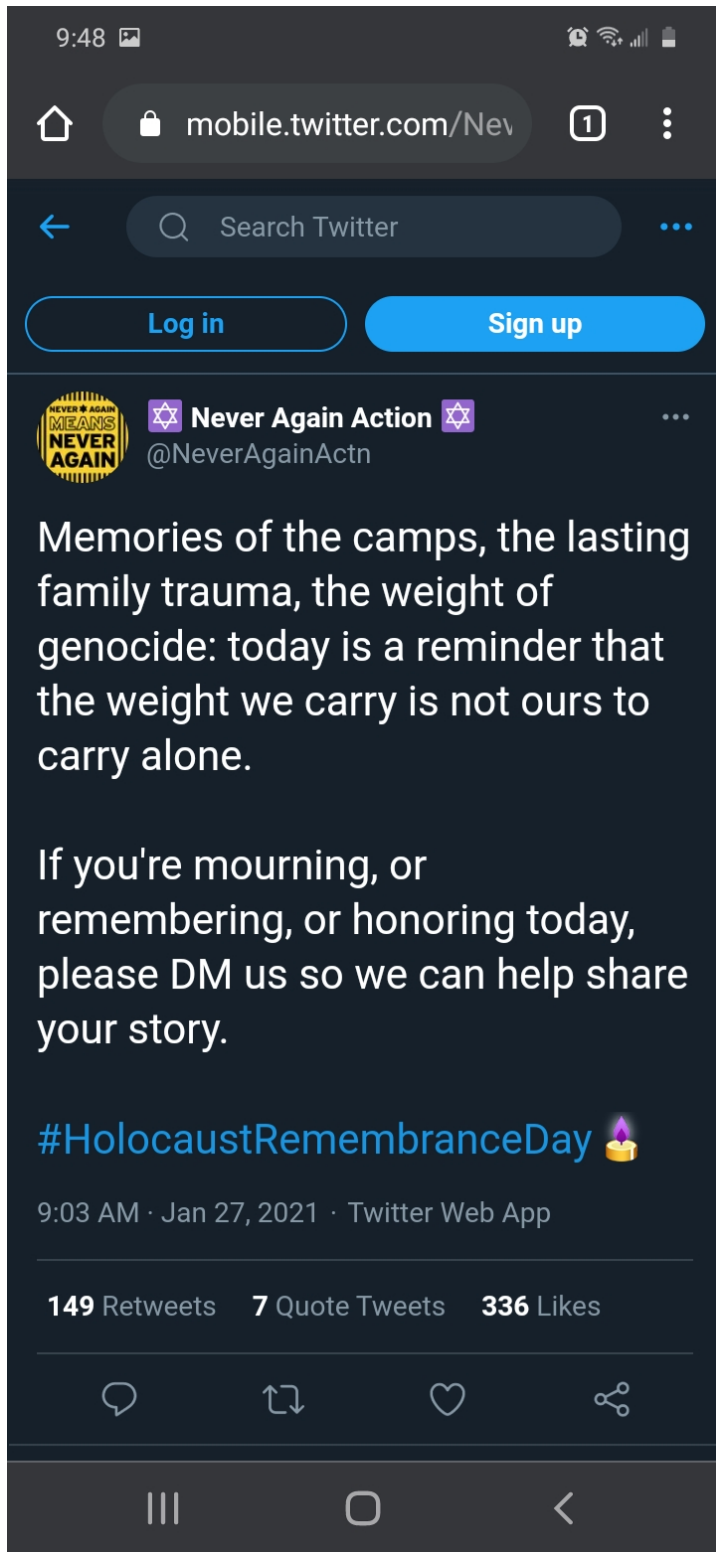
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APPENDIX A



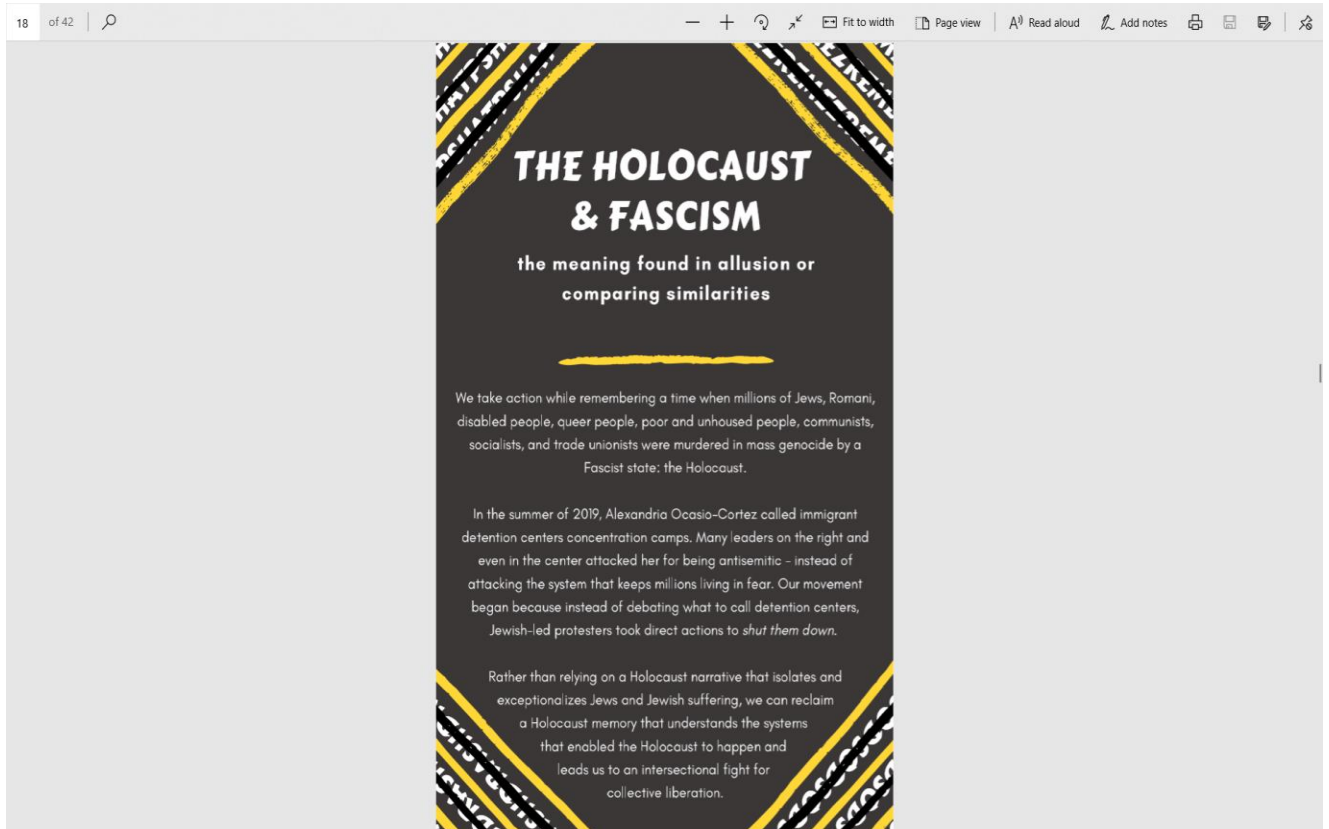
Screenshot from never\_again\_action Instagram - Instagram Story Posted January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021

APPENDIX B



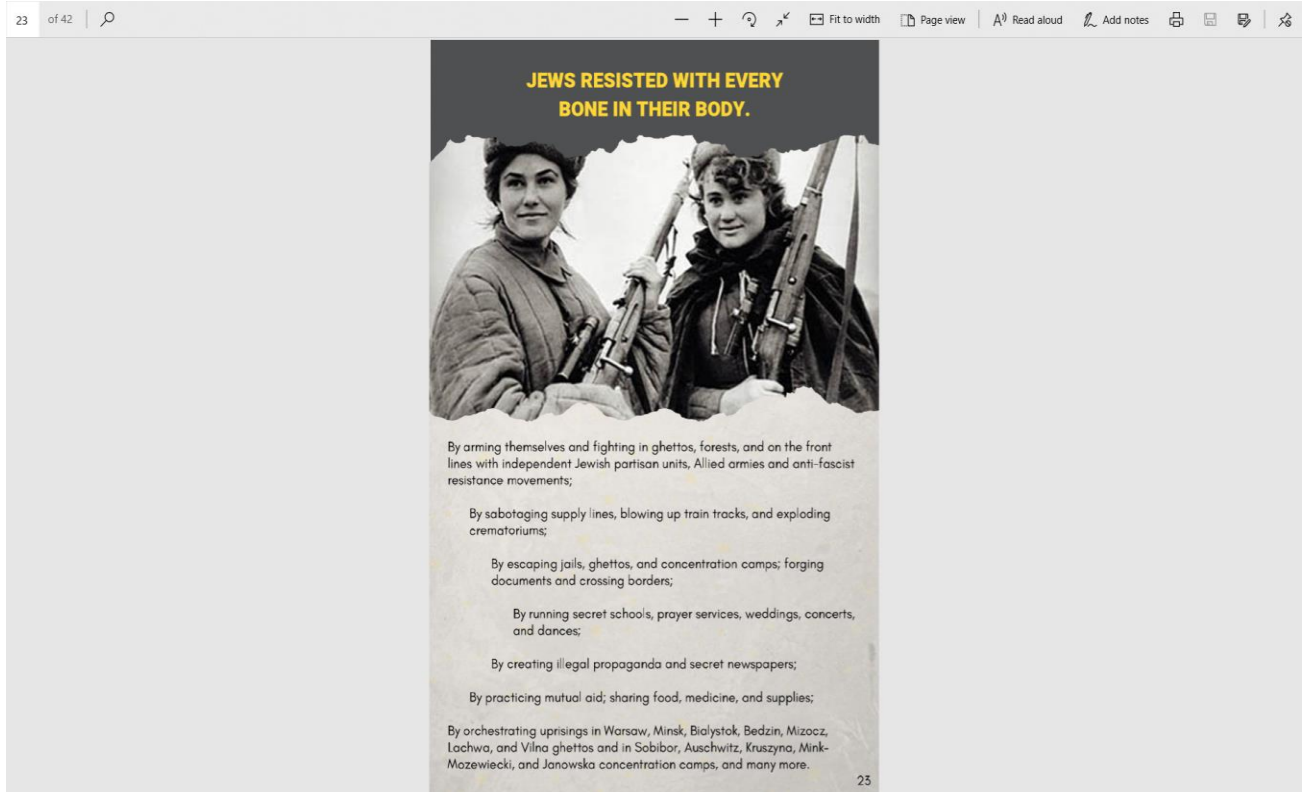
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## APPENDIX C



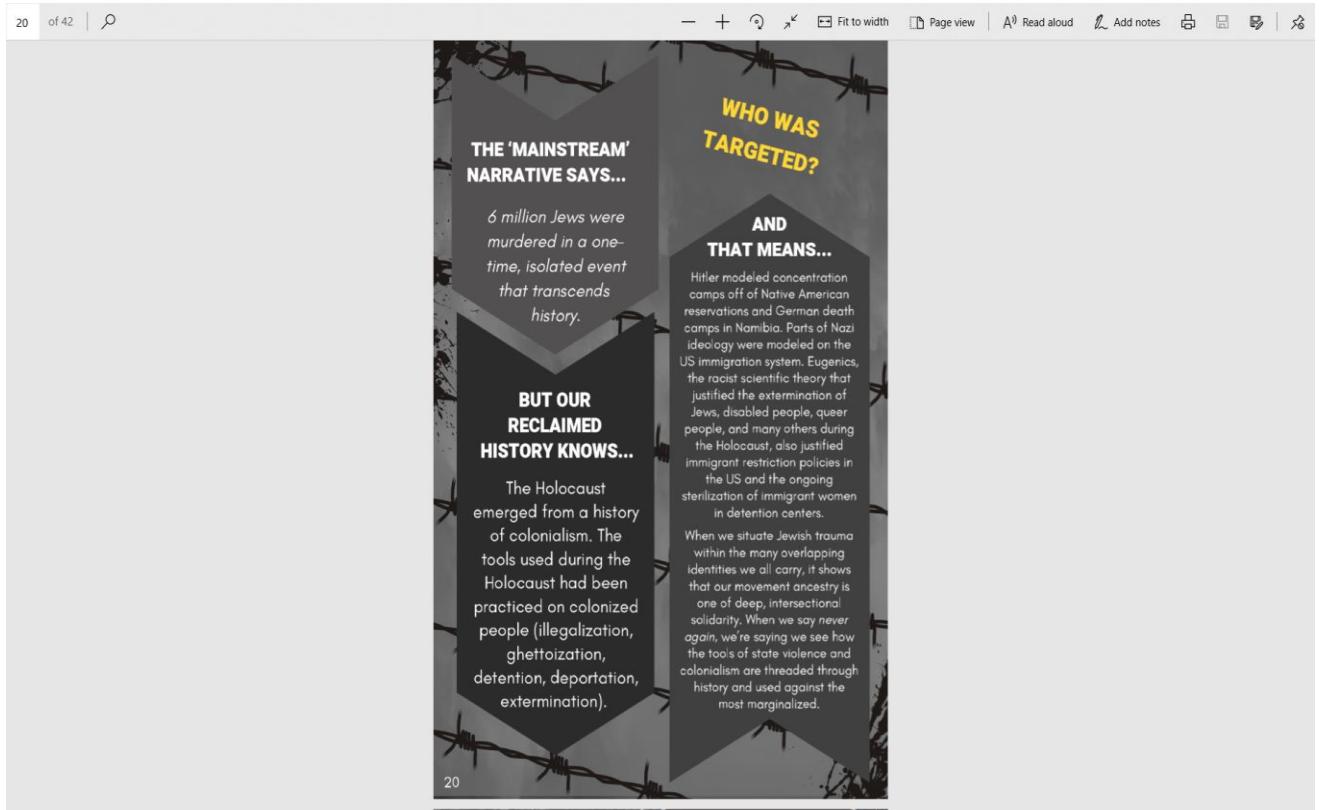
Screenshot from “Never Again Action: Collective Roots to Disruptive Action” Zine – Spring 2021. Page 18

## APPENDIX D



Screenshot from “Never Again Action: Collective Roots to Disruptive Action” Zine – Spring 2021. Page 23

# APPENDIX E



Screenshot from “Never Again Action: Collective Roots to Disruptive Action” Zine – Spring 2021. Page 20



## APPENDIX F

### Interview Guide:

#### Intros

#### Organization:

- Please describe Never Again Action?
- Can you describe the organizational makeup of NAA?
  - Who leads? How are they “elected” or “become a leader”?
- What is your role in this organization?
  - How often do you interact with NAA monthly? Weekly? Etc.

#### Involvement:

- How are you involved in Never Again Action?
  - To what degree is your involvement in Never Again Action?
  - Can you give examples of how you have participated? Such as protests, meetings, online campaigns, talk with other people etc.
  - When and how did you first hear about Never Again Action?
  - Are there other people in your social circle involved in Never Again Action?
    - What is their involvement?
  - How has your involvement changed since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis?
- What originally motivated you to get involved with Never Again Action?
  - What continually motivates you to get involved with Never Again Action?
  - Why is this motivation so important?

#### Identity:

- Are there aspects of Never Again that are specific to Jewish individuals?
- What does the phrase “never again” mean to you?
  - How does this phrase relate to the current immigrant rights movement?
    - Do you see this as a reality? Why?
      - Does this understanding motivate you to be part of Never Again Action?
  - What aspects of Never Again Action resonate with Jews?
    - Why is this?
      - Is this different than other groups or ethno-religions etc?

#### Holocaust Frame:

- What is your family history or relation to the Holocaust?

- Is there a relation between the Holocaust and your family's immigration to the United States?
- If there is no relation, how do you relate your identity with the Holocaust?
- Do Jews have an obligation to be involved in protest movements?
  - Why?
- What do you think of the use of the Holocaust as a metaphor?
  - Does Never Again Action use the Holocaust as a metaphor? Something else? They don't?
    - How?
  - Are there pitfalls to using the Holocaust as a metaphor?
  - Does the use of the holocaust as a metaphor denigrate or lessen the events of the holocaust?
    - Who can use the holocaust as a metaphor?

#### Organization Part 2

- What is the role of NAA in the wider Immigration-rights movement?
  - How does the organization negotiate that role?
    - Is that role as an ally?
- Does Never Again Action see themselves as allies to other groups specifically latinx immigrants/migrants?
- Does Never Again Action work with other organizations?
  - What are ones?
- How do you engage people who may not see themselves as being effected by an issue?

#### COVID-19

- Has the activism of NAA changed since March 2020 COVID-19 Crisis? How has your activism changed since then?
- What are some difficulties of “doing” activism during COVID-19?
  - What are some positives?
- Do you see any long lasting effects of COVID on mobilization? Activism? Etc.

#### Loose End Question:

- Are you involved in other activist groups and/or movements?
- Do you have anything else you would like to tell me?