

# **The Shortest Path to Zionism**

*A Network Analysis of the US Nonprofit Industrial Complex*

Yarden Azoulay Katz\*

\* Department of American Culture and Digital Studies Institute, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Correspondence to: yarden@umich.edu

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“Imperialism and empire may be the order of the day, but they are soulless institutions that induce moral sickness and thrive on paradigms that rationalize greed and murder. They also create political cultures that exist with these acts silently at their moral center.”

—Steven Salaita, *Holy Land in Transit*

## **Abstract**

Activists have shown how the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) co-opts grassroots social movements, and how the dependence on donors limits what nonprofits can say or do—especially concerning Palestine. Yet the NPIC is rarely analyzed as a whole system. This article analyzes the massive funding network of the NPIC, reconstructed from tax forms, and highlights Zionism’s place within it. I show how the NPIC’s funding web binds many organizations to Zionist nonprofits that directly fuel settler-colonialism in Palestine. The links between these organizations are facilitated by donor-advised funds, which form the “hubs” in the interconnected funding network. I explain the political implications of this finding using two “activist” nonprofits: the Black Lives Matter Global Foundation (BLMGN) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). I argue that being a major player in the NPIC not only limits what an organization can do but also normalizes the broader funding networks driving colonial projects.

## Introduction

The nonprofit sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the US economy.<sup>1</sup> This sector—which includes private foundations, universities, hospitals, and other entities falling under the 501(c)3 or 501(c)4 sections of the IRS tax code—wields enormous power and wealth. By analogy to the military-industrial complex, activists have called this set of institutions the “nonprofit industrial complex” (NPIC). The problems with the NPIC are many. It provides ways for the very rich to shelter wealth, advance political agendas, and launder reputations. The NPIC also co-opts grassroots social movements, misdirecting them away from radical initiatives and into electoralism. Moreover, the dependence on donors and grants limits the political directions of nonprofit organizations, favoring fundraising over commitment to real struggles. All these problems and more are discussed in the seminal book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (2007) by the INCITE! activist collective.

Palestine has been central to these critical examinations of the NPIC. In 2004, the Ford Foundation cancelled a grant to INCITE! because the group expressed solidarity with Palestinians living under Israeli occupation—INCITE! thus “learned from firsthand experience the deleterious effects foundations can have on radical social justice movements,” motivating it to work on *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*.<sup>2</sup> More groups have since lost foundation funding for showing solidarity with Palestine. Last year, the Schusterman Foundation cut ties with an abortion fund it had sponsored because the group issued a statement, in late October 2023, arguing that “Reproductive Justice Includes Palestinian Liberation.”<sup>3</sup> But beyond its punishment of solidarity, the NPIC also deserves scrutiny because of the major roles US-based Zionist nonprofits play in advancing Israel’s interests.

While there have been many insightful studies of the NPIC, it is rarely analyzed as a whole system. This article examines the NPIC as a massive funding network, reconstructed from IRS tax forms, and highlights Zionism’s place within it. Using these data, I show how the NPIC’s funding web binds many nonprofit organizations to Zionist nonprofits that directly fuel settler-colonialism in Palestine. The links between these organizations are usually facilitated by donor-advised funds (DAFs), nonprofits that are the “hubs” in the highly interconnected funding network. The resulting proximity to Zionism applies even to groups with an unrelated or even opposing agenda, as I show using two examples of “activist” nonprofits: the Black Lives Matter Global Foundation (BLMGN) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). Participation in

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Nonprofits: A Look at National Trends in Establishment Size and Employment.”

<sup>2</sup> INCITE!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, 1. For a more recent critical discussion of the NPIC that is similar in spirit to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, see Rivera et al., “The Nonprofit Industrial Complex.”

<sup>3</sup> ARC Southeast, “Reproductive Justice Includes Palestinian Liberation”; Alden, “Defunding Dissent.”

the NPIC therefore not only limits what nonprofits claiming to represent grassroots movements can do but also normalizes the funding network that is behind the colonial projects these movements are fighting against.

The quantitative analysis presented here uses elementary tools from computer science and graph theory. While there has been much hype in recent decades about these tools and their promise of “network analysis,” they have mostly been used for surveillance, profit-making, or studies in narrow scientific domains. This article can be viewed as an experiment in whether these “master’s tools”<sup>4</sup> (to borrow from Audre Lorde) can be used subversively: to enrich our understanding of the NPIC and support efforts to resist it.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.”

<sup>5</sup> My approach also draws inspiration from the work of Richard Levins, a communist ecologist and activist who used what we might call today “network analysis” (with graphs) to analyze complex social and biological systems, emphasizing the contradictory forces within them. See Levins, “The Road to Wholeness in Medicine and Public Health”; Katz, *L’Shleimut: A Jewish Radical Tradition Against Capitalist Science and Medicine*, chap. 4.

## **The NPIC As a Highly Connected Funding Network**

To understand the structure of the US-based NPIC, I analyzed hundreds of thousands of tax filings by nonprofit organizations. Every nonprofit (with some exceptions) must file a tax form, called Form 990, that gives basic information about the organization, including its revenue, expenses, and salaries of the highest paid employees. Form 990 also lists any grants the nonprofit has given other entities (which may or may not be nonprofits themselves). Using this information, I constructed a graph representing the funding relationships between nonprofit organizations.

In this graph, each node represents a nonprofit organization, and every edge (arrow) represents a transfer of money. An arrow from node X to node Y,  $X \rightarrow Y$ , indicates that X gave money to Y. A node may be connected to another node and/or to itself (self-edges happen when, for example, a national nonprofit gives a grant to one of its own local branches and the two entities are identical for tax purposes). For simplicity, this article analyzes one year's worth of tax returns, filed in 2024 (which cover fiscal year 2023). Of the 647,111 organizations for which tax filings are available, 260,139 have exchanged money with at least one other nonprofit organization. From this set, I selected the subset of organizations that (1) have given or received at least \$1,000, and (2) have had at least \$1,000,000 in expenses—resulting in 75,866 organizations. This subset represents significant players in the funding network, which usually have several paid employees (hence the large expenses).

Figure 1 shows the graph for 20,000 organizations, sampled randomly from this set of significant nonprofits, so that the funding patterns can be seen without clutter. The graph shows that most organizations are part of highly connected networks that have a “hub-and-spoke” structure (Figure 1, center of graph). Only a minority of organizations are part of “islands” in which only a handful organizations are connected.

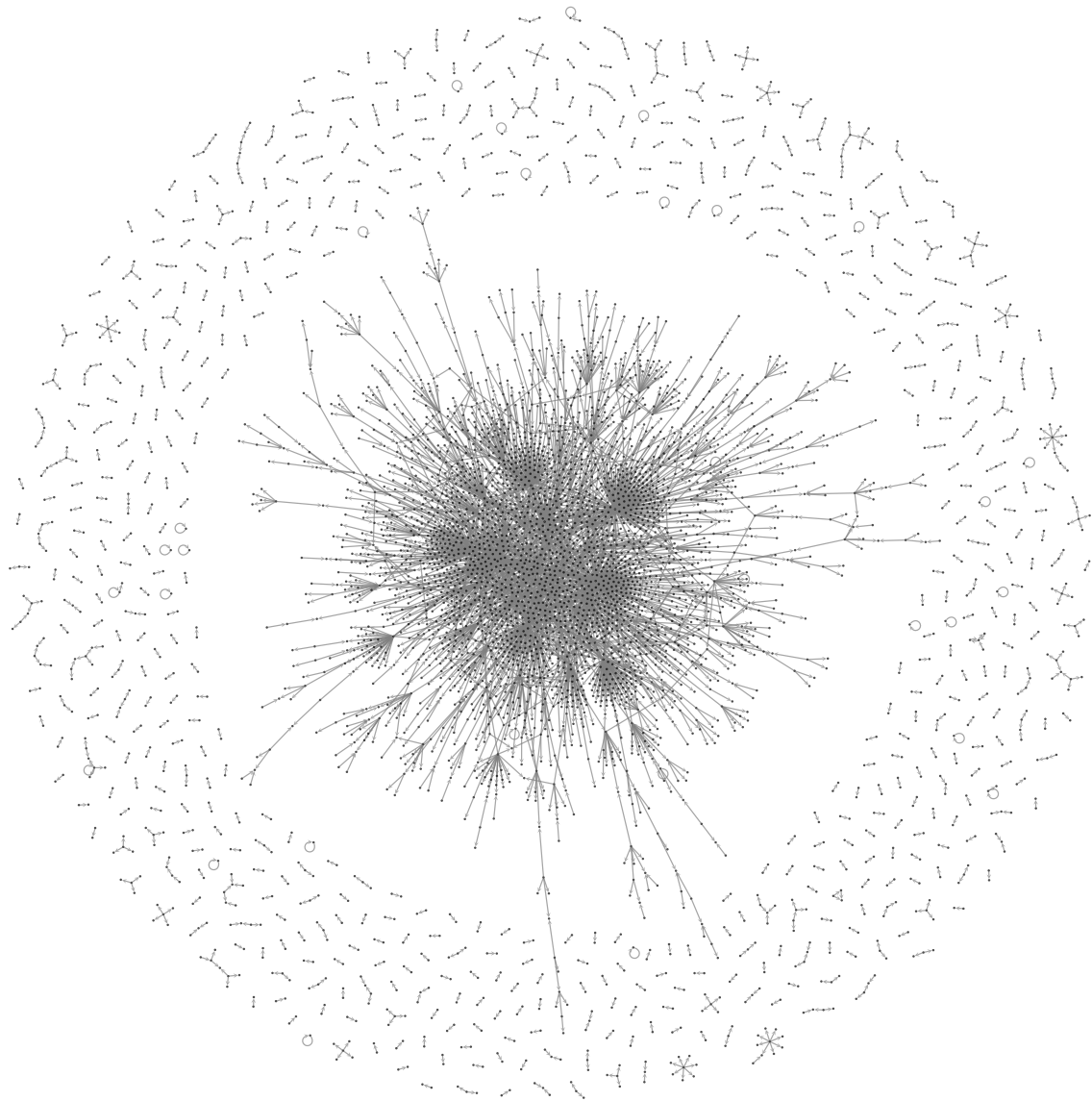


Figure 1: The funding graph of 20,000 randomly sampled nonprofit organizations, based on tax forms filed in 2024. Each node (black circle) is an organization, and each edge (directed arrow) indicates a transfer of funds.

In the highly connected regions of the graph, organizations are often linked through donor-advised funds (DAFs). DAFs are nonprofits that take cash or other assets (such as stocks) from donors and funnel them to other nonprofit organizations chosen by the donors. DAFs do this without disclosing the donors' identity; the tax forms only state which organizations the DAF gave money to. DAFs are therefore justifiably viewed as a mechanism for the rich to advance their own interests without fear of public

scrutiny (while also enjoying the tax benefits that come from giving to “charity”). The leading DAFs were created by for-profit financial corporations, such as Fidelity and Schwab, who manage the investments of their own DAFs—meaning these corporations profit as well. Indeed, while DAFs have existed since the 1930s, they only became popular in the 1990s as major financial firms established their own DAFs.<sup>6</sup> Today, the DAFs run by firms such as Fidelity and Schwab bring in billions in revenue.

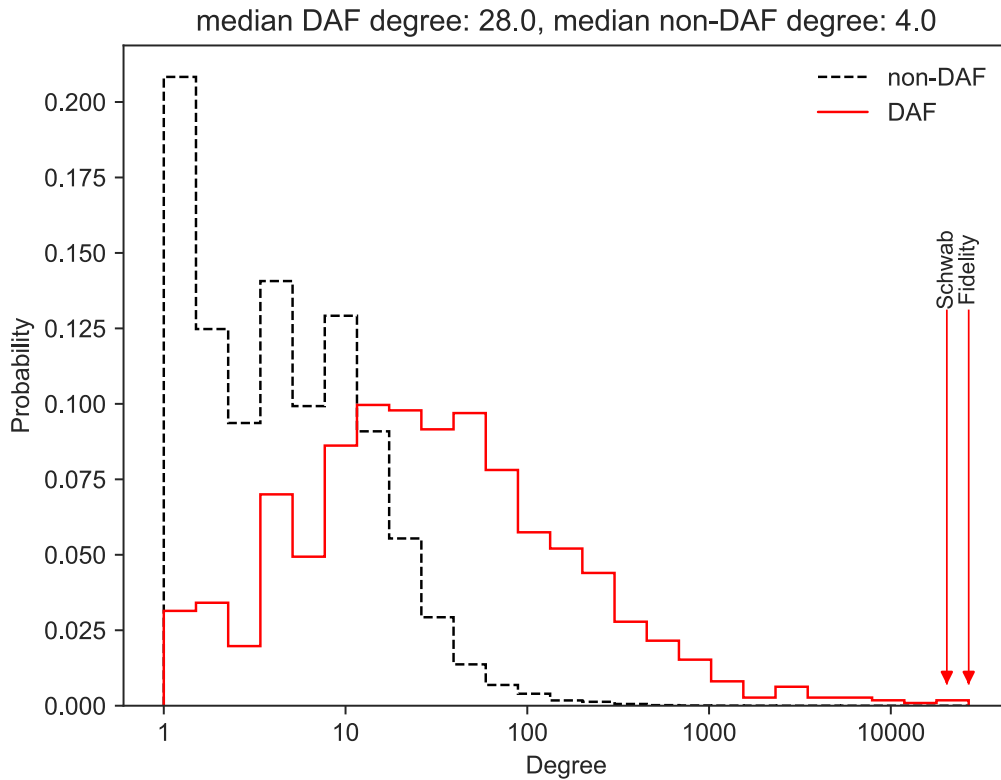


Figure 2: Degree distributions of donor-advised funds (DAFs) compared to non-DAFs. The degree of an organization is defined as the number of total connections (regardless of direction) it has to other organizations. DAFs have systematically higher degrees than non-DAFs, while the major DAFs run by Schwab and Fidelity (marked by the red arrows) are on the far end of the distribution, with degrees in the tens of thousands.

<sup>6</sup> Collins et al., *Warehousing Wealth: Donor-Advised Charity Funds Sequestering Billions in the Face of Growing Inequality*; Collins et al., *The Independent Report on DAFs: A Transparent, Comprehensive Analysis of Donor-Advised Funds*. These reports take a moderate capitalist approach that seeks to reform the “broken incentive system” in which DAFs operate. The reports are also naïve about the intentions of the wealthy donors who feed these organizations. Nonetheless, they contain useful facts about DAFs and their growth in recent decades.

Because the role of DAFs is to distribute money, they are far more connected, on average, than non-DAFs (Figure 2). For example, according to 2024 tax filings, Fidelity Charitable (a DAF created by Fidelity Investments) had \$14.7 billion in revenue and gave money to or received money from 26,825 other nonprofits. Schwab Charitable, another major DAF, had \$7.6 billion in revenue and exchanged money with 20,338 nonprofits in the same fiscal year. DAFs therefore serve as “hubs” that connect tens of thousands of organizations. As we will see, the existence of such hubs means that many organizations are linked to other organizations with different, or even opposing, agendas to their own.

### **The Shortest Path to Zionism Is Very Short**

Using this graph representation of the NPIC, we can ask: How far away, generally, is any given organization from Zionist organizations? At a technical level, this question reduces to a classic problem in computer science and graph theory known as the *shortest path problem*: Given two nodes in a graph, what is the shortest path between them? This problem is easily solved with standard algorithms for graphs of the size used in this article.<sup>7</sup>

We next need to decide what constitutes a Zionist nonprofit organization. Rather than systematically categorize organizations—a complicated and laborious task—I approached the analysis with one unambiguously Zionist nonprofit: Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF). Founded in 1981, this US-based nonprofit organization raises money for Israeli soldiers and galvanizes support for the army. FIDF is extremely well funded, reporting \$281 million in revenue in its 2024 tax filing. Of this revenue, \$45 million came from other nonprofits, including DAFs. FIDF received \$2.78 million from Fidelity’s DAF, \$1.69 million from Schwab’s DAF, and \$1.33 million from Goldman Sachs’s DAF. FIDF’s top nonprofit sponsor, however, was the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, an organization jointly run by Israelis and American evangelical Christians, which gave FIDF over \$6.36 million in that year. FIDF also gets its money from flashy fundraisers. A few months after Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza in summer 2014, FIDF held a fundraiser in Los Angeles attended by celebrities such as Robert De Niro, Barbra Streisand, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Pamela Anderson, who appeared alongside billionaire donors including Haim Saban (a FIDF board member) and Larry Ellison (of Oracle). FIDF raised over \$33 million in that event. Following the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation of October 7, 2023, FIDF managed to get \$280 million in revenue, more than in any previous year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cormen et al., *Introduction to Algorithms*, chap. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Stub, “FIDF Chairman and CEO Resign amid Reports of Financial Abuse, Mismanagement.”

Armed with a method for computing shortest paths, we can find the shortest paths between FIDF and every other nonprofit organization. In this context, path lengths have specific meanings in terms of funding relationships. If organization X is connected to organization Y via a path of length 1, it means that they are directly connected: either X gave money to Y ( $X \rightarrow Y$ ) or X received money from Y ( $X \leftarrow Y$ ). If the shortest path between X and Y is of length 2, it means that X and Y aren't directly connected but have a common sponsor ( $X \leftarrow S \rightarrow Y$ ), a common recipient ( $X \rightarrow R \leftarrow Y$ ), or that money flows between them through an intermediary organization ( $X \rightarrow Z \rightarrow Y$  or  $X \leftarrow Z \leftarrow Y$ )—and similarly for an arbitrary path length  $k$ . The larger  $k$  is, the less direct the relationship between X and Y.

Strikingly, over 50% of the organizations that play a significant role in the NPIC are just *one or two links away* from FIDF (Figure 3). Within three links, FIDF can reach well over 80% of organizations, and within four links 99% of organizations are reachable. In other words, FIDF is a very highly connected nonprofit. Is the FIDF “special” in reaching so many other organizations in such short distances? For comparison, I found the shortest paths between every pair of nodes in the graph and plotted the median number of organizations that can be reached within path lengths from 1 to 7 (Figure 2). FIDF differs considerably from this median expectation. About half of the organizations can reach merely 7.5% of all other organizations within two links. Only about 3% of organizations have the FIDF’s property of reaching 50% or more of all organizations within two links. This means that while FIDF isn’t singular, it belongs to a small minority of highly connected nonprofits. This small set of organizations includes other influential Zionist nonprofits, such as the Jewish National Fund (which has been facilitating the theft of land from Palestinians for well over a century<sup>9</sup>), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and the Central Fund of Israel.

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<sup>9</sup> Lehn, “The Jewish National Fund”; Massad, “Jewish National Fund: A Century of Land Theft, Belligerence and Erasure.”

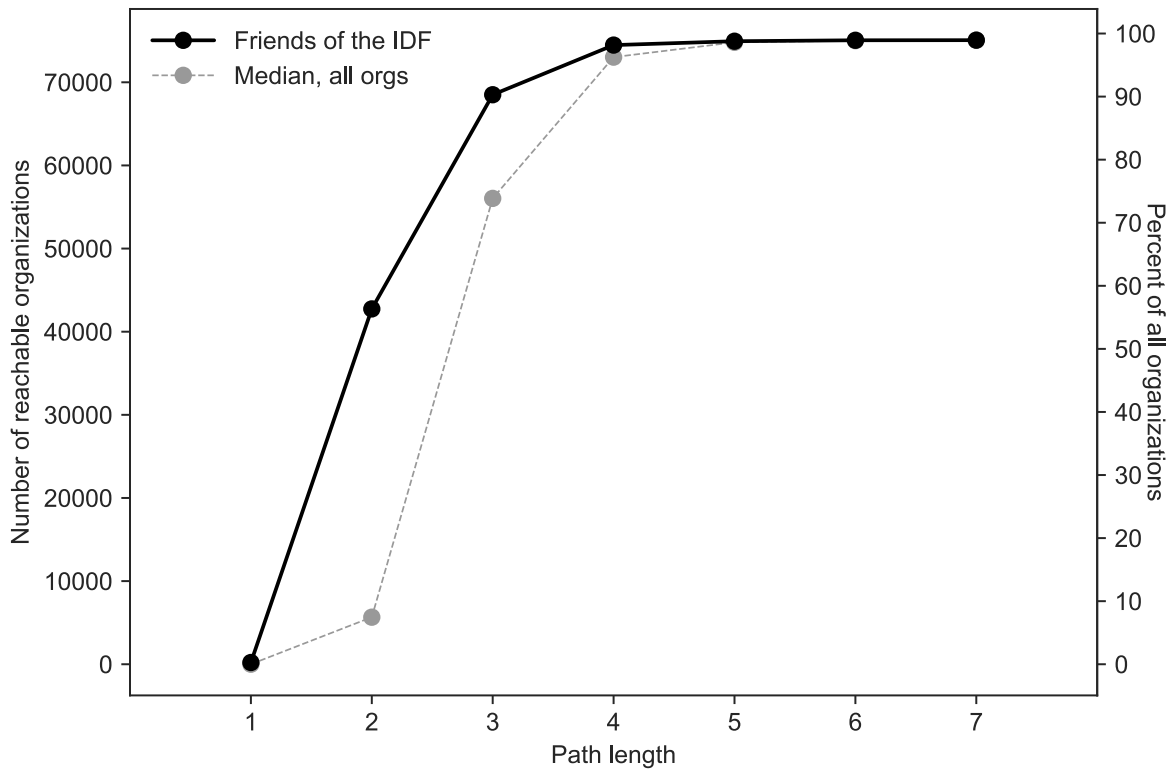


Figure 3: The fraction of organizations that can be reached from Friends of the IDF (black curve) as a function of path length. The gray curve shows the median values from computing shortest paths between all pairs of organizations.

Yet this property—high reachability in short distances—isn’t unique to Zionist organizations. It is crucial to dispense with any kind of conspiratorial thinking that sets Zionism apart from other dominant political agendas in the US (exemplified by recent right-wing talk of “Zionist-Occupied Governments”). A more accurate view is that Zionism has been integral to Euro-American imperialism and has served the agenda of the US political establishment.<sup>10</sup> This is reflected in the NPIC, where Zionism plays a central role alongside (and often in partnership with) other dominant interests, such as those of the health care industry, the financial industry, elite private universities, or the Christian evangelical right. All these interests have corresponding nonprofit organizations that are as highly connected as FIDF. Nonetheless,

<sup>10</sup> Sharif, *Non-Jewish Zionism: Its Roots in Western History*; Salaita, *The Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan*, chaps. 1–3; Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*; Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Who Israel Arms and Why*; International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), *Israel’s Worldwide Role in Repression*.

Zionism is among the major agendas that many organizations will, merely by participating in the NPIC, be linked to.

The remainder of this article focuses on two examples that illustrate this proximity to Zionism and elaborate on its political significance.

### **Example 1: Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN)**

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has been an influential force in the US and beyond. The movement drew fire from the US political establishment for its anti-capitalist stand, its abolitionist vision of defunding the police, and, perhaps above all, its solidarity with Palestinians. This solidarity emerged in part from activists in Palestine and Turtle Island facing similar tactics of repression. Palestinians in Gaza have advised Black activists in Ferguson, Missouri on how to deal with police tear gas during the summer 2014 uprising, sparked by the murder of Michael Brown (Gazans were facing a genocidal assault by Israel that summer). Activists on Turtle Island have in turn protested the American companies who supply the tear gas to both Israeli and US forces.<sup>11</sup> They also exposed the “riot control” and “counterterrorism” trainings that US police departments travel to Israel to receive, paid for by Zionist nonprofits such as the ADL. And in Palestine, the Black martyrs who reenergized the BLM movement have also been honored. George Floyd’s image was painted many times on Israel’s apartheid wall, as Gazan writer Refaat Alareer reminded us shortly before he himself was martyred by Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Solidarity with Palestine became integral to BLM. In 2016, the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of over sixty organizations, published a document stating their political vision where they referred to Israel as an apartheid state and described its actions against Palestinians as genocidal.<sup>13</sup> The statement also embraced the use of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) and called for US “aid” to Israel to be cut. In response, the ADL and other major Zionist organizations labeled the document “antisemitic,” continuing a long Zionist tradition of smearing (and sometimes even framing) Black liberation

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<sup>11</sup> Miller, “Policing or Occupation? Crowd Control Practices in the US and Palestine”; ArtForum, “‘You Can’t Hide’: Protesters March from Whitney to Warren B. Kandors’s Home During Biennial Opening.”

<sup>12</sup> Alareer, “‘George Floyd Was All over the Walls in Occupied Palestine 🇵🇸, from Gaza to the West Bank. Palestinians Have Supported Black Lives Matter and Sent Virtual Tips for the Ferguson Protesters to Deal with Tear Gas. Meanwhile, Israel Trains American Police to Kill Black People. #blm <https://t.co/YS0Qn7WswJ>.”

<sup>13</sup> Kelley, “What Does Black Lives Matter Want?”; Erakat, “Geographies of Intimacy: Contemporary Renewals of Black–Palestinian Solidarity.”

organizations as anti-Jewish.<sup>14</sup> Desperate to end Black-Palestinian solidarity, the ADL published a piece in early 2015 titled “Don’t Compare Ferguson and Palestine.”<sup>15</sup>

Since BLM was popularizing such threatening ideas, powerful institutions have tried to co-opt the movement. While the movement grew from the grassroots in a decentralized fashion, the US political establishment expected leaders who could officially speak on behalf of BLM and work within existing institutions. A nonprofit organization called Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN), founded in 2013, has largely stepped into that role. The story of BLMGN exemplifies the problems with the NPIC that activists have been documenting for years. As we will see, it is also a good example of how an organization’s espoused politics contradict its material existence in the NPIC.

BLMGN was able to raise a lot of money quickly, especially following high-profile police murders of Black people—from Michael Brown in Ferguson and Tamir Rice in Cleveland (2014), to Freddie Gray in Baltimore (2015), to George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville (2020). Donations poured in through BLMGN’s website ([blacklivesmatter.com](http://blacklivesmatter.com)), which presents itself like the movement’s official page. By the end of 2021, BLMGN reported nearly \$80 million in revenue. But BLMGN has been sharply criticized by many activists who have worked with it, especially for its handling of funds. In November 2020, BLM chapters from ten different cities issued a public statement criticizing BLMGN for being unaccountable. The statement explained that most chapters affiliated with BLMGN “received little to no financial support” from the nonprofit, despite doing the essential (and generally unpaid) organizing labor that BLMGN feeds on.<sup>16</sup> As expected of a nonprofit, BLMGN’s decisions were made by its leadership, who also received large salaries from the organization. As the chapters put it in a second statement criticizing BLMGN, “nepotism, proximity to power, and access to resources became more important to the Network [BLGM] than making sure that they had a radical vision, objectives, and strategies created through a transparent, democratic decision making process and a solid foundation of shared governance and political alignment.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Khalek, “Black Activists Slam Israel Lobby Attack on Movement for Black Lives”; Gelman, “The Anti-Defamation League Is Not What It Seems”; Blankfort, “ADL Spies.”

<sup>15</sup> Jacobson, “Don’t Compare Ferguson and Palestine.” See also Abunimah, “Pro-Israel Racist Group ADL Moves to Co-Opt Black Lives Matter.” For historical context about Black-Palestinian solidarity in the US, see Kelley, “From the River to the Sea to Every Mountain Top: Solidarity as Worldmaking”; Erakat, “Geographies of Intimacy: Contemporary Renewals of Black–Palestinian Solidarity.”

<sup>16</sup> Ford, “BLM Chapters Demand ‘Accountability’ from Trio That Cashed in on the Movement.”

<sup>17</sup> BLM10Plus, “Tell No Lies: Statement From The Frontlines of BLM.”

The families of those murdered by police have also criticized BLMGN along similar lines. Samaria Rice—mother of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy who was killed by Cleveland police—said families like hers are often suffering marginalization and poverty “while Black ‘leadership’ that has not been selected by the masses flourishes through celebrity status.” Rice called for the families to be given “the resources to sustain themselves, their families, and their work dedicated to building community infrastructure” and urged for “an end to the political-economy’s parasitism on Black death and poverty.”<sup>18</sup>

How does this contradiction—claiming to fight for Black liberation through an organization that in some ways profits from racist violence and sidelines Black grassroots activists—manifest in BLMGN’s funding network? While the broad BLM movement’s goals are as antithetical as can be to those of the Israeli army, BLMGN, as a major nonprofit, participates in the funding networks that boost that army. It turns out that there are 104 paths of length three or shorter connecting BLMGN and Friends of the IDF (Figure 4). The shortest path between BLMGN and FIDF is through their direct common sponsor: Schwab Charitable, a major DAF. According to its 2024 tax filing, Schwab gave \$7,491 to BLMGN (along with tens of thousands of dollars to other BLM organizations) and \$1.68 million to FIDF, in addition to sponsoring other Zionist groups such as the New Israel Fund and Jewish Communal Fund (see Table 1). Schwab also gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to police-associated nonprofits that represent the agenda BLM has been fighting against, including \$284,100 to the Sunshine Division of Portland Police, \$74,600 to the St. Louis Police Foundation, and \$34,250 to the Atlanta Police Foundation (which is behind the “Cop City” facility in Atlanta), among others. Moreover, Schwab has been recently exposed for bankrolling extreme right-wing organizations and think tanks; those groups trying to ensure the visions of the BLM movement won’t become reality.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Perry, “Stop Hustling Black Death.”

<sup>19</sup> Birnbaum, “Schwab Charity Funnels \$250 Million to Right-Wing Causes.”

<b>Funder</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Schwab Charitable	BLMGN	\$7,491
Schwab Charitable	Global Exchange	\$21,340
Schwab Charitable	Sunshine Div. Portland Police	\$284,100
Schwab Charitable	St. Louis Police Foundation	\$74,640
Schwab Charitable	Boston Police Athletic League	\$70,600
Schwab Charitable	San Diego Police Foundation	\$55,100
Schwab Charitable	Atlanta Police Foundation	\$34,250
Schwab Charitable	Los Angeles Police Foundation	\$14,000
Schwab Charitable	Friends of the IDF	\$1,681,221
Schwab Charitable	Jewish Communal Fund	\$1,140,948
Schwab Charitable	New Israel Fund	\$650,877
Schwab Charitable	American Enterprise Institute	\$1,132,850
Schwab Charitable	Heritage Foundation	\$988,310
ImpactAssets	BLMGN	\$20,000
ImpactAssets	New Israel Fund	\$333,850
ImpactAssets	Heritage Foundation	\$10,500
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	Love Not Blood	\$21,000
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	Friends of the IDF	\$53,200
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	American Enterprise Institute	\$105,000
Paypal Charitable	Trayvon Martin Foundation	\$7,931
Paypal Charitable	Sunshine Div. Portland Police	\$5,947
Paypal Charitable	Friends of the IDF	\$399,302
Paypal Charitable	Jewish Communal Fund	\$6,837,529
Paypal Charitable	New Israel Fund	\$10,038
BLMGN	Trayvon Martin Foundation	\$50,000
BLMGN	Love Not Blood	\$30,632
BLMGN	Global Exchange	\$15,000

Table 1: Donations given by donor-advised funds to BLMGN, Trayvon Martin Foundation, Love Not Blood, and the human rights nonprofit Global Exchange, as well as to police-associated nonprofits, Zionist groups, and right-wing think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation, based on 2024 tax filings.

Yet even if BLMGN were to cut ties with Schwab, it would remain connected to these nefarious agendas. We can again see how using only FIDF. BLMGN sponsors several organizations, including the Trayvon Martin Foundation, Global Exchange, and Love Not Blood Campaign, that are funded by nonprofits which also fund FIDF. For example, Love Not Blood Campaign received \$30,632 from BLMGN, but also \$21,000 from Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a donor-advised fund that gave FIDF \$53,200 in the same year.<sup>20</sup> That is, both the sponsors of BLMGN and the recipients of its funding are connected to

<sup>20</sup> This pattern holds for other tax years. According to its 2023 tax filing, BLMGN received \$108,000 from Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program, a DAF that gave \$614,550 to Friends of the IDF that same year.

FIDF via multiple paths. This shows that it's not so simple to avoid "complicity" while being a significant player in the NPIC; the major funding streams are simply too entangled with Zionism.

The same argument holds for other dominant agendas within the NPIC, such as policing, that DAFs also link BLMGN to (Table 1). But obviously these DAFs funnel more money to Zionist groups, police-associated nonprofits, and right-wing think tanks than to "social justice" nonprofits like BLMGN.

20 / 104 paths of length 3 or less

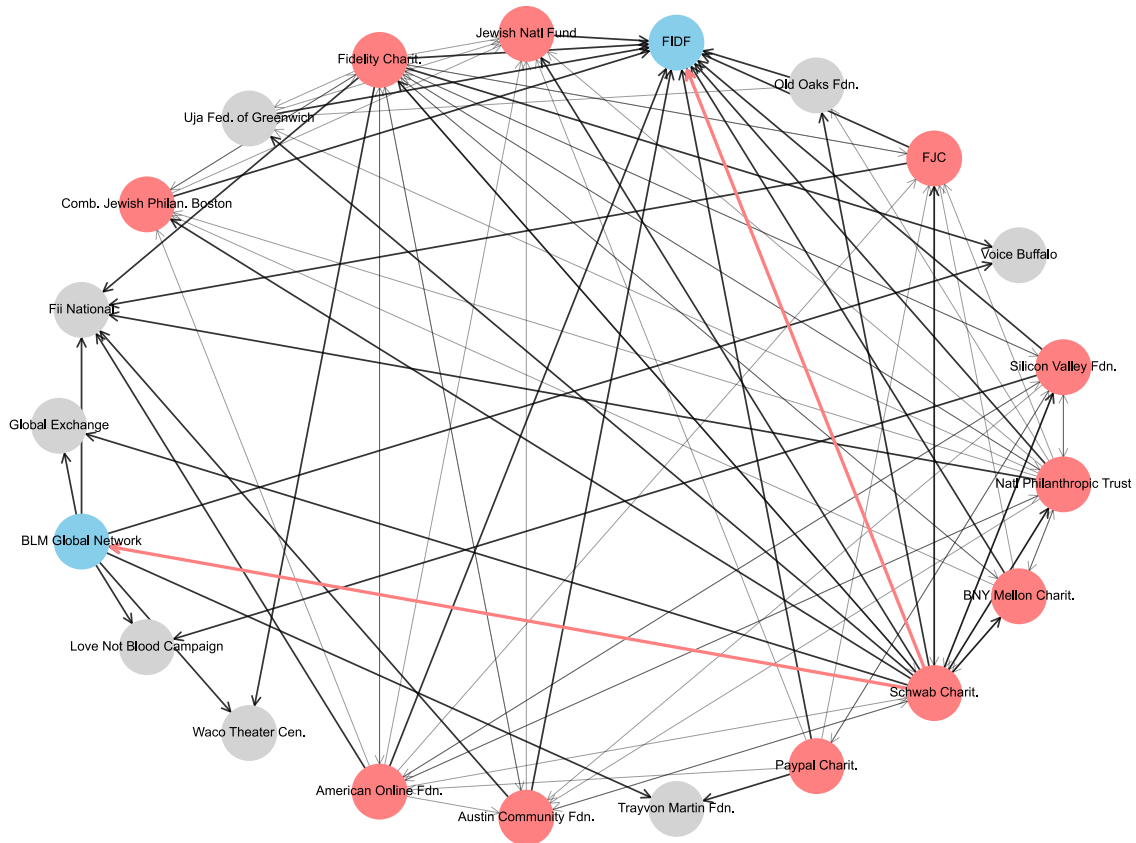


Figure 4: A subset of the shortest paths (under length three) connecting Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN) and Friends of the IDF (FIDF), based on tax filings made in 2024. Edges belonging to one of the shortest paths (of length two) are shown in red. Edges that are part of any shortest paths (up to length three) are shown in black, and other edges (not part of shortest paths) are shown in grey.

## Example 2: Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)

The material similarities between nonprofits that espouse different political views can be missed if we focus too much on organizations' rhetoric. A nonprofit that says it is fighting Zionism, for example, can be entangled with the very Zionist organizations it considers political opponents. An emphasis on rhetoric can also obscure how the NPIC constrains organizations, limiting their actions and political imagination. The case of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is a telling example. While JVP hasn't rejected Zionism for most of its existence, today it presents itself like the official voice of anti-Zionist Jews in the US. But as we will see, JVP has much in common—both in political substance and materially—with the Zionist organizations it claims to oppose.

JVP was founded in 1996 by three Jewish students at the University of California, Berkeley. Critical of the Israeli government, the group aimed to create space for American Jews to reconnect with their Jewishness without having to uncritically embrace Israel as part of the package. But JVP explicitly chose not to reject Zionism. "One of the major decisions we had to make in JVP was whether we were Zionists or not," recalls Julia Caplan, one of the cofounders. "And in those early days we decided it was more important to follow principles than to have a label, so we didn't take a stand."<sup>21</sup> For over twenty years, JVP continued to avoid taking a stand against Zionism. But in 2019, the group declared itself "anti-Zionist." Rebecca Vilkomerson, JVP's executive director at the time, explained that this new take on Zionism "doesn't change anything about our focus or our political analysis."<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, JVP's political positions have remained squarely liberal Zionist despite the rhetorical shift. This issue is well-known in many Palestine solidarity movement spaces, but it hasn't received the attention it deserves, largely because of JVP's prominence and ability to co-opt radical discourses (more on this below). JVP maintains a false and colonial symmetry between Palestinians and Israelis, which is why some Palestinian activists have labeled it "a sinister extension of the Zionist occupation regime" that violates the "constants" (*Al-Thawabet*, الثوابت) of the Palestinian liberation struggle.<sup>23</sup> JVP's official position on what it calls the "Palestine / Israel conflict" was articulated as follows in 2007: "we support any solution that is consistent with the national rights of both Palestinians and Israeli Jews, whether one

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<sup>21</sup> Drew and Phillips, "The Story of JVP, a Divisively Jewish Voice for Peace."

<sup>22</sup> Omer-Man, "JVP Just Declared Itself Anti-Zionist and It's Already Shifting the Conversation."

<sup>23</sup> Al-Thawabet, "Jewish Voice for Peace—A Sinister Extension of the Zionist Occupation Regime." The "constants" are "the red lines of the struggle, those demands on which there can be no compromise and which have acquired a certain sanctity over the decades of struggle," including "the right of Palestinian refugees to return, restitution and compensation; the right to resistance in all of its forms; and the right to self-determination over the British Mandate territory of Palestine, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River." Jamjoum and al-Hassan, "Palestine's Red Lines of Struggle." See also Youssef and Mekleh, *Oslo Is Long Dead. Time to Revive the PLO*.

binational state, two states, or some other solution.” This position hasn’t fundamentally changed after JVP’s rebranding as “anti-Zionist.” JVP New York’s website, for example, says it aims to achieve “security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians.”<sup>24</sup> But what could “self-determination for Israelis,” who are the colonizers, mean if not legitimization of settler-colonialism? JVP upholds a framework in which Israelis and Palestinians (the “two sides”) will have to negotiate with each other, as equals, with guidance from the responsible adults in the US. JVP therefore carefully avoids committing to the language of decolonization and anticolonial struggle, since that would entail return of land, redistribution of settler wealth, and a potential future in which Israel doesn’t exist. In fact, the group’s official position is to never endorse anything but “nonviolence.”

This position is partly explained by JVP being a nonprofit organization, beholden to a board of directors who set clear political boundaries. For example, in 2020-2021 when online events featuring Palestinian activist and former PFLP militant Leila Khaled were cancelled by Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube—after pressure from Zionist groups—JVP refused to sign a petition by the events’ organizers calling on these corporations to stop the censorship. JVP’s executive director, Stefanie Fox, explained why at the time: “Our board has been very clear with me that we cannot promote anything that has to do with armed resistance, and an event with Leila Khaled would fall under that.”<sup>25</sup> While JVP did publicly condemn the corporate censorship on its own website, distancing from Khaled and armed resistance was deemed essential, as exchanges between Fox and the organizers of the events revealed. As Palestinian writer Rima Najjar asked then, “Is JVP National willing to help us liberate Palestine but only if we conduct our liberation struggle peacefully?”<sup>26</sup> JVP’s commitment to nonviolence means it could never fully support any anticolonial struggle, since no people have ever freed themselves “peacefully.” Predictably, JVP condemned Hamas following October 7, 2023, charging it with “war crimes.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jewish Voice for Peace - New York City, “Who We Are.”

<sup>25</sup> Najjar, “Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, Armed Resistance and Zoom.”

<sup>26</sup> Najjar, “Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace, Armed Resistance and Zoom.”

<sup>27</sup> Jewish Voice for Peace, “Jewish Voice for Peace Calls on All People of Conscience to Stop Imminent Genocide”; Jewish Voice for Peace, “FAQ - JVP.” JVP framed their condemnation of Al-Aqsa Flood as merely echoing what “leading Palestinian rights groups” have said, and here JVP is referencing a statement by Adalah, a nonprofit that operates in ’48 Palestine under extreme pressures (Adalah’s full name in Hebrew doesn’t even mention Palestine or Palestinians; the group calls itself “the legal center for the rights of the Arab minority in Israel”). JVP chose to center this group rather than Palestinian groups who expressed solidarity with the resistance, such as the US-based Palestinian group Al-Awda, see Al-Awda, “Al-Awda Stands with the Palestinian People and the Palestinian Resistance: Take Action for Liberation.” It is telling that JVP chose to amplify a ’48 Palestine group that focuses on the “minority” rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel, rather follow the lead of Palestinian diaspora groups in the US—which would have been a more natural choice given that JVP is based in the US. Yet Palestinian diaspora groups often emphasize return, of both people and land, which clashes with JVP’s ideological commitments to Israel.

We can certainly find exceptions to this official ideological line within JVP's sphere. Some JVP chapters and individual members have publicly supported the Palestinian resistance, while JVP has participated in events with groups that have an explicitly anticolonial position. Yet this proximity to radical perspectives, as Dylan Rodríguez argues in another context, is part of how nonprofits co-opt movements and do counterinsurgency.<sup>28</sup> JVP gains from the association with radical movements because it gives the nonprofit a grassroots appeal, drawing activists whose unpaid labor will advance JVP's name. But ultimately, JVP will make decisions based on a liberal framework in which anti-Zionism, as an anticolonial position, isn't viable.

The limitations of JVP's "anti-Zionism" cannot be fully understood without analyzing the organization's material existence within the NPIC. The group brings in millions in revenue and pays large salaries. JVP's executive director, Stefanie Fox—who had stated that JVP cannot support anything but "nonviolence"—received a salary of \$120,077, according to the organization's 2025 tax filing. Maintaining this expensive operation requires a level of institutional "respectability" that organizations truly committed to Palestinian liberation never attain. Following October 7, 2023, principled groups such as Samidoun or Palestine Action have been criminalized by Western governments as "terrorist organizations," while JVP's revenue has soared.

The numbers show just how much JVP gained from Israel's genocide in Gaza. JVP's revenue jumped from \$3.3 million in fiscal year 2023 to \$11 million in fiscal year 2024. Just as in the case of BLMGN, we should ask: Did this enormous sum benefit the people that JVP claims to fight for? The tax record reveals that JVP spent less than half (47%) of its \$11 million revenue, leaving over \$5.1 million unspent. Such surplus revenue becomes part of a nonprofit organization's "assets," which can be invested; JVP made \$34,630 from investments alone that year, ending with a total of \$8.9 million in assets. Thus, while many in Gaza were scrambling to raise money to buy even a bag of flour—made unaffordable by Israel's engineered starvation—JVP made tens of thousands of dollars by investing the millions it hadn't spent. What could JVP's \$11 million dollars in revenue have done for the people of Gaza who are trying to survive and resist a genocide? In the mindset of the NPIC, we're not supposed to ask that question. The supreme goal of most nonprofits, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues, is to "guarantee the organization's longevity"—even if that's not what the political moment calls for.<sup>29</sup> The idea of simply distributing JVP's

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<sup>28</sup> Rodríguez, "How the Stop Asian Hate Movement Became Entwined with Zionism, Policing, and Counterinsurgency."

<sup>29</sup> Gilmore, "In the Shadow of the Shadow State."

\$11 million revenue (or even a portion of it) to Gaza mutual aid funds—and potentially disbanding or downsizing JVP as a result—is off the table.

JVP did spend a lot of money, of course, but it often went toward maintaining the organization’s respectability (necessary for raising funds). Respectability is largely achieved by centering US electoral politics. This is why many of JVP’s campaigns and mass mailings often instruct people to call their congressional representatives and make various demands. JVP also has an “electoral wing”—a 501(c)4 organization called JVP Action—that directly campaigns for Democratic Party politicians such as Jamaal Bowman, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Rashida Tlaib. JVP Action reported raising over \$800,000 in its 2024 tax filing, from which \$500,000 were spent on electoral campaigns and lobbying. Directing resources and energies toward electoral politics is also another means by which nonprofits marginalize less “respectable” efforts, including direct action and prisoner solidarity work (as carried out by groups such as Palestine Action and Samidoun, for example).

JVP’s tactics, then, aren’t so different from those of major Zionist groups—and JVP’s funding network also reflects this similarity. The group is entangled with many Zionist organizations, including Friends of the IDF. There are 644 paths of length 3 or less connecting JVP and FIDF (Figure 5). One of the shortest paths is through Fidelity’s DAF, which funds both JVP and FIDF. Could JVP simply cut ties with organizations that fund groups like FIDF? As we have seen with BLMGN, this isn’t easy to do because of the interconnected nature of the funding network. JVP has many sponsors in common with FIDF, and some of these sponsors not only fund FIDF directly but also other organizations that in turn sponsor FIDF. For example, Schwab directly funds FIDF but also gives to the Jewish National Fund, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and other nonprofits who directly fund FIDF. There are similar funding patterns with other nonprofits that fund both JVP and FIDF, such as the DAFs run by Morgan Stanley, Vanguard, and Paypal.

FIDF, however, is merely one Zionist nonprofit. We can find even more paths connecting JVP and its purported Zionist archnemesis, the ADL. The two organizations routinely attack each other, and JVP was one of the many groups that signed onto the “#DropTheADL” campaign that called on schools and other organizations to stop working with the ADL because of its racist and colonial agenda.<sup>30</sup> And yet, there are 843 paths of length 3 or less connecting JVP to ADL, with the pair having several shared sponsors, such

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<sup>30</sup> #DropTheADL, “#DropTheADL – Communities Say No to the Anti-Defamation League in Our Schools, Coalitions, and Movements”; Barrows-Friedman, “Social Justice Groups Say Drop the ADL.”

as Fidelity's DAF (Figure 6).<sup>31</sup> JVP is clearly aware of the problems with DAFs. In 2021, it promoted the "Unmasking Fidelity" campaign which called on Fidelity to stop funneling money through its DAF to racist groups, including groups such as the Central Fund of Israel because it is "a leading supporter of Israeli organizations behind illegal settlements and the displacement and dispossession of Palestinian people."<sup>32</sup> Yet JVP's survival in the NPIC depends Fidelity and other big donors that sustain these settler-colonial groups.

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<sup>31</sup> This contradiction has been noted before by Palestinian activists: "It is highly interesting since Jewish Voice for Peace has been allegedly 'doxxed' and 'outed' as anti-israeli & anti-semitic by the ADL for almost a decade now. That undoubtedly stirred up a lot of commotion in the media and earned JVP its fair share of press and spotlight. However, that all is barely believable since the ADLF [ADL Foundation] (which provides funding and support to the ADL) garners a chunk of its finances from the same funder that's JVP's biggest donor. Not to mention the ADL also routinely publishes public profiles threatening the safety and privacy of Palestinian activists. Which begs the question, why are the ADL and JVP commonly funded by the same entity whereas they both claim to have polar opposite approaches/goals?" Al-Thawabet, "Jewish Voice for Peace—A Sinister Extension of the Zionist Occupation Regime."

<sup>32</sup> Unmasking Fidelity Coalition, *The People Disclose*.

25 / 644 paths of length 3 or less

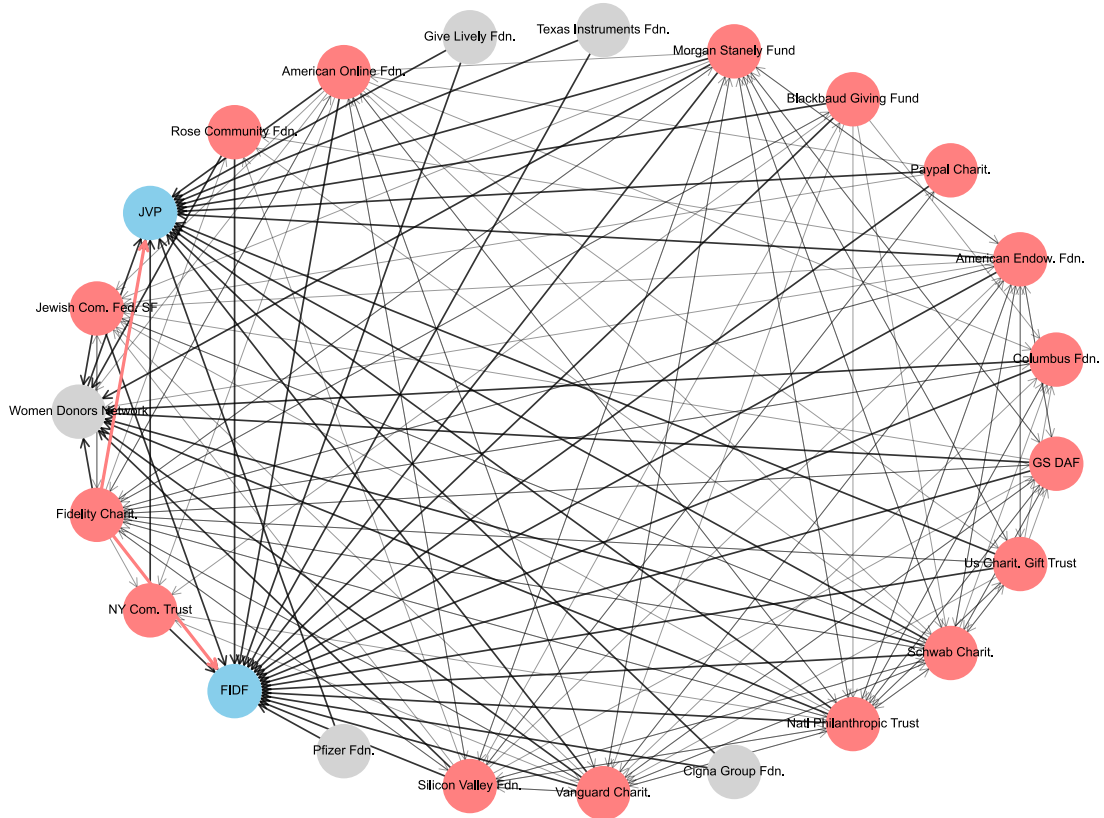


Figure 5: A subset of the shortest paths (under length three) connecting Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) to Friends of the IDF (FIDF), based on tax filings made in 2024. Edges belonging to one of the shortest paths (of length two) are shown in red. Edges that are part of any shortest paths (up to length three) are shown in black, and other edges (not part of shortest paths) are shown in grey.



### Contradictory (But Asymmetric) Funding Flows

The contradictions described above are common within the liberal Zionist nonprofit sphere. For example, the nonprofit magazine *Jewish Currents*, which is politically aligned with JVP, received money from Zionist groups that fight against the Palestine solidarity movement which the magazine claims to support. The magazine’s overtly Zionist donors include the Jewish Communal Fund (\$75,250), Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle (\$25,000), Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco (\$25,000), New Israel Fund (\$25,000), and Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles (\$5,100), based on 2024 tax filings. Together, these sponsors gave *Jewish Currents* a total of \$155,350. Yet in the same year, the Jewish Communal Fund and Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco alone gave a combined \$1.47 million to Friends of the IDF. These Zionist sponsors also gave millions to *Jewish Currents*’ other ostensible enemies, including the ADL and StandWithUs (see Table 2).

Funder	Recipient	Amount
Jewish Communal Fund	Jewish Currents	\$75,250
Jewish Communal Fund	Amer. Friends of Combatants for Peace	\$17,018
Jewish Communal Fund	Friends of the IDF	\$1,389,528
Jewish Communal Fund	Anti-Defamation League	\$1,340,610
Jewish Communal Fund	StandWithUs	\$315,791
Jewish Communal Fund	Central Fund of Israel	\$3,427,370
Jewish Fed. Greater Seattle	Jewish Currents	\$25,000
Jewish Fed. Greater Seattle	Anti-Defamation League	\$10,000
Jewish Fed. Greater Seattle	StandWithUs	\$36,360
Jewish Community Fund SF	Jewish Currents	\$25,000
Jewish Community Fund SF	Amer. Friends of Combatants for Peace	\$6,470
Jewish Community Fund SF	Friends of the IDF	\$88,750
Jewish Community Fund SF	Anti-Defamation League	\$154,268
Jewish Community Fund SF	StandWithUs	\$32,885
Jewish Community Fed. LA	Jewish Currents	\$5,100
Jewish Community Fed. LA	Anti-Defamation League	\$762,310
Jewish Community Fed. LA	StandWithUs	\$267,590
New Israel Fund	Jewish Currents	\$25,000
New Israel Fund	Amer. Friends of Combatants for Peace	\$34,220

Table 2: Donations given by Zionist nonprofits to *Jewish Currents* and American Friends of Combatants for Peace, as well as to several more overtly Zionist nonprofits (including Friends of the IDF), according to 2024 tax filings. *Jewish Currents* operates as a nonprofit called The Association for the Promotion of Jewish Secularism (EIN: 133100063). StandWithUs operates as a nonprofit called Israel Emergency Alliance (EIN: 010566033).

Meanwhile, *Jewish Currents* sponsor New Israel Fund (NIF) is known for promoting a “progressive” image of Israel while smearing the Palestine solidarity movement. In 2010, when JVP’s then-director Rebecca Vilkomerson explained why her organization supports BDS, NIF’s director of communications, Naomi Paiss, wrote a response defending NIF’s position: “We see global BDS as a tactic that embodies the message that Israel cannot and will not change itself, and for that reason, we think it is inflammatory and counter-productive.”<sup>33</sup> NIF maintains that position today, stating on its website that it “does not support the global (or general) BDS movement, views the use of these tactics as counterproductive, and is concerned that segments of this movement seek to undermine the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.”<sup>34</sup> So while *Jewish Currents* publishes pieces supportive of BDS, its Zionist funder NIF works to suppress it.

It is easy to find more contradictions of this kind in the funding webs of nonprofit organizations that claim to challenge Israel. For example, the American Friends of Combatants for Peace, which aims to stop home demolitions in occupied Palestine through “nonviolent civil disobedience,” received \$6,470 from the Jewish Community Fund of San Francisco, a donor that gave \$88,750 that year to Friends of the IDF, thereby boosting the very forces responsible for the demolition (Table 2). But although these funding flows are contradictory, they clearly aren’t symmetric; the overtly Zionist recipients always receive far more.

## Discussion

Critical discussions of the nonprofit industrial complex—and even the phrase itself—are often met with a defensive reaction. Aren’t nonprofits doing good things? Aren’t they better than, say, for-profit corporations? And is it realistic, or even desirable, to abandon nonprofits?

There are several ways to address these objections. First, it cannot be denied that some nonprofits have done some good things. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues, many US nonprofits play the role of “shadow state,” providing services and goods that the state fails to deliver (especially after decades of neoliberal policies and budget cuts).<sup>35</sup> We could similarly find some good things that the activist nonprofits discussed here have either done or participated in. But none of this changes the fact that the nonprofit structure itself is profoundly flawed, and that the NPIC plays a pivotal role in advancing colonial projects.

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<sup>33</sup> Vilkomerson, “Peace Process or Land Grab?”; Paiss, “Don’t Divest; Invest.”

<sup>34</sup> New Israel Fund, “FAQs - New Israel Fund.”

<sup>35</sup> Gilmore, “In the Shadow of the Shadow State.”

Second, the critical perspectives on the NPIC that this article builds on were never meant as a blanket condemnation of everything and everyone within the NPIC. Rather, the critiques were developed by people who have themselves worked at nonprofits but want to confront the contradictions of being committed to liberation while working in these institutions. The aim is to recenter the needs of real communities and struggles over survival within the NPIC, and to encourage people to build alternative structures.

And while it cannot be denied that some nonprofits do good things, the analysis presented here raises another question: At what cost? Do the positive things an organization does outweigh the fact that participating in the NPIC as a significant player means relying on—and thus helping to stabilize—the funding networks that drive the most colonial agendas? And should an organization’s participation in the capitalist schemes of the NPIC—where donations become investable assets that generate private wealth—be automatically excused, simply because the organization does some good things? When does participation in this system do more damage than whatever the organization could realistically achieve, given the NPIC’s constraints on political directions, the pressures of fundraising, and the constant threats of co-optation? These questions demand further discussion. The answers would have implications for ongoing efforts to disrupt US institutions that enable the genocide in Palestine.

The material links analyzed in this article also raise the question of what constitutes a Zionist nonprofit. DAFs such as those run by Fidelity and Schwab obviously aren’t ideologically Zionist in the same way that, say, the ADL is. They are capitalist organizations that pursue profit, but they still operate within the framework of US imperialism in which Zionism is part of the package. They funnel so much money to overtly Zionist groups that these DAFs are crucial to materially sustaining settler-colonialism in Palestine. This suggests that attacking the general capitalist structures that enable these flows could potentially be more effective at disrupting the colonization of Palestine than attacking narrower initiatives by overtly Zionist groups.

Finally, the findings here should make us ask again: Who gets listened to in the Palestine solidarity movement? Recall that some of the funding patterns explored systematically here have been exposed before by Palestinian activists; they weren’t secret. Yet there has been almost no reckoning with these perspectives in the movement at large. The nonprofits in question haven’t had to answer their critics, and they certainly haven’t been held accountable in any material sense. The fact that well-resourced nonprofits continually drown out critical voices from the grassroots (while painting themselves in a positive light) demands further collective discussion.

## **Methods**

Form 990s for nonprofits organizations were obtained as XML files from the IRS website ([irs.gov/charities-non-profits/form-990-series-downloads](https://irs.gov/charities-non-profits/form-990-series-downloads)). All data analysis was performed using custom-written Python software. XML files were parsed using the lxml library (version 5.3.0). Graph computations, such as finding shortest paths, were made using the graph\_tool library (version 2.77). Graphs were visualized using graph\_tool and the networkx library (version 3.1). The data used in this paper are available at [nonprofit-industrial-complex.org](https://nonprofit-industrial-complex.org).

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