Sephardic Heritage Update

***A collection of current Essays, Articles, Events and Information***
***Impacting our community and our culture***
***A Publication of the Center for Sephardic Heritage***

“Service is the rent we pay for living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time. Education is improving the lives of others and leaving your community and world better than you found it.” -Marian Wright Edelman

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**The Mess at Columbia University: The Zionist McCarthyites and an Orgy of Hate**

*Conference Review: The Middle East and Academic Integrity on the American Campus, Columbia University, March 6, 2005*

The legacy of Edward Said, a Palestinian academic who was perhaps the first Anglophone intellectual of any public standing who sought to articulate the hitherto silent voice of the Palestinian Arabs, has become more than a trifling matter among latter-day Zionists. The recent flap over Jewish student accusations of intimidation by MEALAC professors, MEALAC being the Middle Eastern Studies department at Columbia University, perhaps the most prestigious college in New York City, has caused an outbreak of hate and derision the likes of which we rarely see in the seemingly benign world of the modern academy. Columbia was host to the March 6th conference which was meant to address the issues arising from the MEALAC controversy.

The conference was sponsored by Jewish and pro-Israel groups on the Columbia Campus and largely by The David Project, a recently-formed advocacy project that has made a number of media splashes – most prominently through the work of Rachel Fish, a former Harvard Divinity School student, who created a furor over the donation of $2.5 million to the school by an Arab potentate from the United Arab Emirates – a check that was returned by Harvard in August 2004, a year and a half after Fish’s initial campaign.

Edward Said’s sadly truncated life was contested while he was still living. In 1999, Commentary magazine printed an article which attempted to prove that Said was not a Palestinian. The writer of the article, a hitherto unknown figure named Justus Weiner, had worked for quite a while seeking to expose Said as a hypocrite and fake. In the style of such exposes, Weiner cut and paste a good deal of sketchy material that was almost immediately discredited by most legitimate sources and nothing was heard from Weiner again – a promised book on Said never materialized.

But what is most important to note in the Weiner episode was the pressing need to find a way to discredit Said. Such an expose spoke to the power that, by 1999, Said had accrued in both the academic world and in the general media. With his seminal work *Orientalism* first published in 1978 by Random House, Said articulated a bold and controversial understanding of the Arab world at a time when that world had been subjected to a persistent demonization of its morality and character. It should be remembered that the Iranian Revolution was causing all sorts of paroxysms in the American mind and the recent 1973 War in Israel was fresh in the minds of Jews who saw a new vulnerability exposed. The trip by Anwar Sadat, the late Egyptian dictator, to Jerusalem was a startling moment in the history of the Middle East conflict.

*Orientalism* was a massive scholarly work that marked the ideology behind Western Imperialism. While the history of Western Imperialism had been examined in many popular and academic works, Said, a professor of Comparative Literature, went back to the flotsam and jetsam of the Western literary tradition and found a pattern that emerged: From the paintings of Eugene Delacroix to the political pronouncements of Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Cromer, Said traced a line of racism and stereotyping that permeated the Imperial project.

This ideological prejudice provided a rational footing to the conquest of what were then thought of as inferior peoples. The rationalization allowed the “civilized” Europeans to make sense of their enterprise. In hyper-Darwinian fashion, the 19th century Imperialists thought that they carried with them an entitlement to subjugate their inferiors. And this was one of the most startling developments in Said’s study: The mass of material that he presented showed that the creation of Modern civilization was predicated on the backs of the exploited and the dispossessed. While the Americans had begun to look inward at the role of slavery in their own culture, the Europeans – and the Americans – continued to practice a malignant form of racism when it came to Third World nations.

In *Orientalism* Said fixated on the relationship between Europe and the Middle East in the wake of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. He showed a pattern of abuse that was not merely physical in nature. The Western powers, especially Britain and France, loaded up their intellectual baggage with representations of the Orientals that showed them as indolent, lazy, morally suspect and intellectually deficient. (We should note that such representations were applied to Arab Jews as well.)

Said was hailed within the academic community for his breakthroughs. In a time of post-modern ferment, his ability to make use of literary matter normally considered marginal to political and historical study was a huge advance. The conservative forces were utterly startled by this work as they were by the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan a decade earlier. In fact, Said made extensive use of the ideas of Foucault and applied them to what was at the time one of the most pressing political issues of the day.

A year after the publication of *Orientalism* Said used his literary and academic capital to begin a series of works on Palestine and the perception of Arabs in the media. If *Orientalism* had scared the pants off the more timid, *The Question of Palestine* created a huge uproar among the Zionists and their supporters. For the first time in recent memory a capable intellectual wrote in the style and manner of a Western-trained academic. It must be remembered that from Chaim Weizmann to Abba Eban to Henry Kissinger, the Zionists had many able spokesmen for their cause; spokesmen who could articulate their ideas in proper English that was sensitive to the nuanced understanding of the Western intellectuals and political establishment. Since the publication of George Antonius’ *The Arab Awakening* in 1946, a book that got lost in the sands of time, and was wisely resurrected by Said himself, there was no voice to present the case of those dispossessed by Zionism and by the Imperialism of the West.

*The Question of Palestine* marked Edward Said as Public Enemy Number One of the Jewish people. Threats were made by the JDL against his life, his office at Columbia University was firebombed and his home was guarded by NYPD officers for years after.

It was clear that a movement was being formed to ensure that Arabs were not to open their mouths in the face of Western superiority. It must be remembered that Zionist HASBARAH had been a prominent feature in American life for decades. Leon Uris’ 1958 novel *Exodus* was turned into a major Hollywood film in 1960 thus cementing the standard Zionist version of the conflict and etching that version into the American and Western psyche with great force. It could be shown from the work of Edward Said that Uris and Otto Preminger, the director of the film of the book, were tapping into the hoary myths of Orientalism to construct a demonized portrait of the Arabs.

But the free market of ideas in the 1950s and 60s did not provide for any articulation of Arab voices. It must also be recalled that the work of the British-born Jewish Orientalist Bernard Lewis was being used by the political insiders in both Great Britain and the US. Lewis played a major role in the Cold War and the emerging analysis
of the Arab Question in the wake of Zionism and the suppression of freedom and democracy in the Arab world by a West that now saw its energy reserves linked to the promotion of autocratic regimes in the region; regimes that would ensure a free flow of the oil reserves to a West increasingly dependent on that form of energy to fuel its economic engine.

In essence, Leon Uris’ *Exodus* provided the standard template by which all understanding of the Jewish cause in Zion would be formed: The straggling refugees of Hitler’s barbarity limped their way to Palestine only to find themselves attacked by red-faced Arabs and suppressed by the British. The story of the American ship the St. Louis being sent back from its Palestinian destination back to Nazi Europe was seen as emblematic of the Zionist cause. Little known were the insights that Tom Segev, an Israeli historian, would provide decades later in his book *The Seventh Million: Israel and the Holocaust* and Idith Zertal’s book *From Catastrophe to Power:* *Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*, books that would have been impossible to imagine without the prior work of Edward Said.

In point of fact, the work of Edward Said spurred on a new cadre of professional Israeli historians who sought to rethink the ways in which Zionist history was written. With the publication of Simha Flapan’s *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* in 1987, followed by Benny Morris’ *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* in the same year and Avi Shlaim’s *Collusion Across the Jordan* in 1988, a new interpretation of Zionist history was offered to the interested reader. While Palestinian authors such as Walid Khalidi had been doing studies for some years on the subject, it was not until these Israeli historians published their books that the situation changed – a situation that was brought about because of the work of Edward Said – a body of work that was deeply influential for a whole generation of students in Europe and America.

Said’s reach even extended into the realm of Sephardic studies. With the publication of Maria Rosa Menocal’s *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* in 1987, the field of medieval study of Arabic culture was transformed in profound ways that highlighted the role of Sepharad/Andalus in the construction of Western modernity. The emergence of Sephardic Jewish scholars like Ella Shohat and Ammiel Alcalay with their incisive critiques of the way in which Sephardic Jews had too been affected by Orientalism, completely redrew the map of Sephardic self-perception. Shohat published an article called “Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims” that adapted a title of one of the chapters from Said’s *A Question of Palestine*. Shohat’s 1989 book *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* and Alcalay’s 1993 *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine Culture* were also works unimaginable without Edward Said’s insights.

Said’s influence both transformed and transcended the field of Middle Eastern studies. Hitherto a deeply conservative and even reactionary field of study that was linked to issues of national security and governmental policy, Middle Eastern studies was in the firm control of the Cold Warriors like Bernard Lewis who were welcome in the corridors of power. The view of scholars like Lewis and his acolytes was seen as determinative for foreign policy assessments of the executive branch of the US government. With the emergence of Said into the field – and it must be recalled that Said was not a Middle East scholar – he was a scholar of Western literature – there was a tremendous uproar.

The field went on the attack and tried to excise the Said factor. But many of the individual practitioners in the field were native Middle Easterners who found themselves freed from the old Imperialist paradigms and foci; free to look to native ways of understanding their own histories.

In a book like Timothy Mitchell’s masterpiece *Colonising Egypt* a new paradigm was brilliantly formulated: Texts by Arabs would be given as much weight as those by those colonialists who sought to enframe the Arabs within foreign paradigms and ways of seeing. The Arabs would retroactively be given voice to critique and reassess what was being done to them. Rather than remaining objectified, the Arabs in Mitchell’s study were given agency to tell us what they were actually thinking and how they were affected by what was happening to them. Focus was taken off of the standard racist ways of appropriating Arab history in the modern period and placed on the ways in which the East and West dealt with one another. In the penultimate portions of *Colonising Egypt* Mitchell presents a dazzling analysis on Husayn al-Marsafi’s book *Eight Words* which reflects the classical mode of Arabic literary interpretation that was common to the civilized culture that was shared by Jews, Muslims and Christians in the East.

When I first read *Colonising Egypt* I could not help thinking of the Jewish scholars Susan Handelman and Jose Faur and their attempts to reassert the classical Jewish glossolalia of the rabbinic traditions. And here I found a deep commonality in the Jewish and Islamic traditions that brought together the work of Said, Faur and Mitchell into a synthesis that had been articulated in Ammiel Alcalay’s *After Jews and Arabs*.

Further, Edward Said’s influence reached into the study of the very volatile issues that were retarding the growth and progress of Arab modernity. A number of vitally important books on the status of women in the Arab world were published in the wake of Said: Fedwa Malti-Douglas’ *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word: Gender and Discourse in Arab-Islamic Writing* (1991), Leila Ahmed’s brilliant *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), Beth Baron’s *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt* (1994) and Cynthia Nelson’s *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist* (1996) were all works that followed the model of *Orientalism* and affirmed the value and power of the humanist critique of religious and nationalist fundamentalisms that Said had pioneered.

I realize that I have spent a good deal of time to provide background on Edward Said and the school of scholarship that he developed, but I think it vital for the reader to understand completely what is at stake in what is going on at Columbia University. The recent flap over MEALAC is part of the ongoing attempt to attack Edward Said and the Saidian legacy. This attack has been fought by students and followers of Bernard Lewis, that old Said nemesis, and by groups such as Campus Watch which has focused on the Middle East scholars who are of the Said mold.

At the outset it must be clearly stated that the events at Columbia University have at their core the charges of a number of Jewish students that must be taken seriously. Whatever the particular ideology of the student or professor might be, the freedom to articulate ideas and opinions is a sacrosanct one that must never be violated by any person. This having been said, it is common knowledge that professors at universities present their scholarly work and their teachings in a very forceful manner. But we must accept that the acrimony over an interpretation of *Beowulf* or *The Federalist Papers* does not have the same volatility as does views of current political and military conflicts.

I can recall that as an NYU undergrad I was advised against taking any courses in Jewish Studies. One of the prominent teachers in the department, Baruch Levine, was (in)famous for ripping apart believing Jews in his Bible classes. A student articulating religious views of Biblical authorship, I was told on good authority, would be chastised and humiliated in front of the class.

Such tales are legion in the university.

I myself got into a great deal of trouble as a Cornell grad student for not paying obeisance to the aforementioned Bernard Lewis who was, I thought and continue to think, a sworn enemy of the Sephardim.

The idea that the university is a place where freedom reigns is something of a myth. Professors use bullying tactics on a regular basis in their teaching and in their use of grades and recommendation letters. In many ways the whole thing is a game of cat and mouse; the ability of a professor to abuse his or her position is in proportion to their own power and the power of their department.

In the case of MEALAC, the department has been buoyed by the legacy of the late Edward Said whose name now adorns a chair in the department. The link between Edward Said and MEALAC is determinative in what has been going on. A number of Jewish students, frustrated at the treatment they were receiving from professors in the department, found an avenue to vent their grievances – not through the university which they claim would not listen to them, even though not one filed a formal grievance with the university – but through the avenue of the aforementioned Rachel Fish and The David Project.

The David Project is a Zionist-oriented organization that presents itself as a human rights watchdog. One of their campaigns is called “The Forgotten Refugees”; a project to acknowledge “the ethnic cleansing of one million Jews from Arab civilization and Iran.” We have in our newsletter addressed this problem of nomenclature previously in the case of Iraq and have asserted categorically that there is not one single shred of evidence that formal expulsions of Jews took place in the Arab world. The matter has become an issue to match the Zionist treatment of the Palestinians against a similar treatment of Jews by the Arabs. The evidence of Zionist interference with the Jews of the Arab world – as in the case of The Lavon Affair in Egypt or the Mas’uda Shemtob Synagogue bombing in Iraq – is thus elided and ignored. In the spirit of Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, we as Sephardim find it completely unacceptable that non-Sephardim should be allowed to speak for us. I think of the famous scene in “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” – the “bring out yer dead” scene – where one of the ostensible dead on the cart shouts out “I’m not quite dead yet!”

Sephardim do not wish to have The David Project speaking in their names.

The David Project produced a filmed record of the accusations of the students against various MEALAC professors. Professors are accused of various forms of verbal abuse and psychological intimidation. As I have said previously, such intimidation is a regular feature of campus life. This does not make it acceptable or correct and I make no apologies for the professors named in the film. But problems arise in the course of the film: Only one of the students appears to have attended the classes of the professor under attack, Joseph Massad. The film carefully interweaves decontextualized accusations without any evidentiary procedures. “Columbia Unbecoming” is a classic work of political propaganda: There is no footage of the professors to confront their accusers according to the procedures of due process; there is a fixation on MEALAC with no mention of possible issues in other departments; and the predominant voice in the film is Hillel Director Emeritus Rabbi Charles Sheer who has never attended any of the classes or lectures in question. Rabbi Sheer seems to be a nice man, but he is presented as an expert witness in the “trial” constructed by the film, and yet his presence is rhetorically measured rather than providing real evidence that might “convict” these professors.

The accusations are very serious and the means to adjudicate them are also in dispute. The university has standard procedures for the filing of grievances which the students did not follow. The argument of the students was that the procedures were thought ineffective and useless so no one filled out a form. Instead, the students hooked-up with a partisan group that is fixated on Jewish and Israeli issues. This is fine for the group as an advocacy institution, but it serves to undermine the authority and the recognized procedures of the university which has a professional and public responsibility to deal with this matter with integrity. The David Project in this case, unlike the matter of Rachel Fish’s advocacy at Harvard, did not respect the boundaries of the university and provide the university with the opportunity to adjudicate the matter in the normal manner. Rather than attempting to determine whether these abuses were limited to MEALAC, the entry of The David Project and now a seemingly endless number of Jewish and non-Jewish advocacy groups from the ADL to the Zionist Organization of America to Nat Hentoff and Natan Sharansky, the New York City Council, the Israeli Knesset and US Congress have all served to turn this into a media circus.

It seems clear that there are a number of things going on here: There is the matter of the Said-ization of Middle Eastern studies and the takeover by Said disciples of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA), the professional organization of the field that was once in the hands of Bernard Lewis and his followers. Two professors at the March 6th event, Martin Kramer and Ephraim Karsh, from the Lewis school, bemoaned the nefarious influence of Edward Said and his students and followers, stating in very clear terms that MEALAC has been hijacked by the Saidians. Kramer’s essay on MEALAC “Bir Zeit on the Hudson” (distributed in the conference packet) typifies the arrogance and the prejudice that characterizes this school.

With the help of Daniel Pipes’ Campus Watch and David Horowitz’s Front Page Magazine, the views of these pro-Israel partisans have become a big deal. The Campus Watch website archives a dossier on each and every US academic (a sister website has just been created in Israel, where Said’s legacy in the country’s universities is perhaps even more pronounced than it is in the US) measuring them according to the strict standards of Pipes’ own Right Wing Zionism. Campus Watch has fed into the so-called S.H.I.T. list promulgated on the masada2000 website which targets Jewish figures critical of Israel. Campus Watch attempts not merely to “identify” Jewish “traitors” like Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, A.B. Yehoshua and Avraham Burg as masada2000’s list does, but to burrow into every nook and cranny of the US academic system and use reports from students that it solicits on its website to identify anti-Israel comments by professors.

If all this smacks of McCarthyism, perhaps we need to be reminded of what academic freedom actually means today.

While the sort of bullying that Massad and the others at Columbia are accused of goes on at every university in the world every day, the issue of targeting professors who Campus Watch judges to be “anti-Israel” is a manifestation, on more than ample display at the March 6th program, of the subterfuge known as HASBARAH.

While nearly every single speaker at the conference whined on and on about truth and academic integrity, there was little doubt that by truth the speakers – including civil libertarian hypocrites like Alan Dershowitz and Nat Hentoff – meant the truth as they Zionists understand it.

A quote from the handout provided by the organizers from the Zionist Organization of America, a reactionary fringe group that is at this point closer to the ideals of Meir Kahane than it is to the ideals of Stephen Wise (who was lambasted in this orgy of hate for his silence on the Holocaust) who was its founder, says it clearly: “That curricula, textbooks, and other educational materials be free of distortion and prejudice from one side, just as students may be required to read and study Mein Kampf and Edward Said as part of their class, they should be required to read Bernard Lewis and Bat Ye’or.”

This last statement sets the entire stage for the bloodfest that I felt obliged to sit through: Edward Said equated with Adolf Hitler. Such is the stuff of Bill O’Reilly and his equation of Mein Kampf and the Qur’an.

The program was an Arab bloodletting with Edward Said as its poster boy. Rather than debating the issues of what Joseph Massad and George Saliba actually did or did not do, each speaker presented a worldwide conspiracy designed to attack Jews at each and every turn.

From ex-liberals and progressives like Charles Jacobs of The David Project, the feminist pioneer Phyllis Chesler, Laurie Zoloth of Northwestern University and Mort Klein of the ZOA and the aforementioned Dershowitz and Hentoff who expressed their own internal angst over their radical past(s) and their current sense of alienation from the manner in which Anti-Semitism has come from the Radical Left, to true reactionary Conservatives like Martin Kramer, Ephraim Karsh and the crusading lawyer Debbie Schlussel who has specialized in her activism against Arabs and Muslims, the various speakers painted an ominously frightening picture of a world of new Nazis coming after the Jews – as if we were not sitting on Morningside Heights but were in the Warsaw Ghetto. And we were never too far from some mention of the Holocaust in many of the speeches.

The program fixated on the legal mechanisms that are in place to get at these Arab barbarians. There was no mention of the sort of intimidation that regularly takes place in and from the Jewish community against Arabs and those who seek justice for all people. In other words, academic integrity and fairness when it comes to the Middle East conflict is only seen as fairness for Zionists and their supporters. We were regaled with tale after tale of the horrors of Arabs and their civilization. This all came to a head in three speeches, one from Phyllis Chesler on the treatment of women in the Arab world; another from Brigitte Gabriel, a former Lebanese TV anchorwoman who moved to Israel and now lives in the US and has determined that she will tell the truth about Arab racism and hate; and finally the presentation of four African victims of Arab cruelty by Charles Jacobs of The David Project in a shameless display of exploitation – much in the manner that The David Project has sought to “use” the Arab Jewish issue to its advantage.

In each of these cases, the speakers began from a completely fair and unobjectionable premise: Ms. Chesler correctly identified the brutality towards women in the Arab world; Ms. Gabriel presented the hate that is taught in Arab schools; and Mr. Jacobs permitted the African men – all victims of Arab racist persecution – to tell their important stories. I would not even question the importance of raising these issues. What I do question however is the one-sided approach to the issue. A legal case was being made in a partisan manner against Arab civilization. There were no analogues presented from any other context – as if such abuses were unique to Arab culture and Arab culture alone.

I have previously mentioned the seminal studies of Leila Ahmed, Beth Baron, Fedwa Malti-Douglas and Cynthia Nelson on the issue of feminism in the Arab world. Such scholars depended on the critique of Orientalism that was formulated by Edward Said – the bete noire of the conference – and which has been continued in the work of MEALAC and the other entities being demonized by the Jewish partisans.

There is no question that since the redress of the imbalance of power in Middle Eastern studies that the scholars in the field like Joseph Massad and George Saliba and the many Arab and Palestinian advocacy groups that have sprung up in the wake of the 2000 Intifada which has led to so much misery for all concerned in the region, have committed excesses that have been correctly and properly identified by the many speakers at the Columbia conference. The problem is that the presentations were so filled with hate and bile any salient impact they might have had was blunted by the sheer violence that was inherent in the way in which the unashamed and completely unrestrained Zionist partisanship took place.

The day was replete with many thinly veiled and some not so thinly veiled threats against Arabs in and out of the academy. The speakers all made it manifestly clear to my ears that they were all filled with the sort of hatred and racism that they have identified on the other side and that they are ostensibly seeking to outlaw and punish. We were regaled to the Zionist myths, intimidations and hammers that led Edward Said to break out of his shell as a professor of literature and passionately articulate the voice of the silent. The sort of rhetorical violence from the various speakers often took on ominous tones; the edge of the speeches had a shrillness that served to reinforce the idea that these people were not much better than those they had come to criticize.

This became clear when three of the students from the “Columbia Unbecoming” film stepped forward to make some comments on the film and take a few questions. Ariel Beery stepped forward to say that he was unhappy with the tone of many of the speakers at the event and that he and the other students were fighting simply to be heard in a fair manner and not to suppress the right of Arab professors to their speech. Audience members were visibly upset that the very protagonists of the drama were not on board with the orgy of bloodletting that had been taking place in the auditorium that morning. One even rudely and with great intimidation demanded Beery to provide evidence of bias on the part of the speakers. When Beery provided that evidence you could see the visible anger on the part of the audience members. Beery was not following the script: His presentation of the themes of fairness and equity were not really what this conference was all about: The point of the event was to bash MEALAC and the Columbia administration into submission.

The underlying theme of nearly all of the speakers was that the Arabs were evil and that Jews would have to fight with bare knuckles to do what was needed to “protect” Jews from this virulent and primal Anti-Semitism.

Endless examples were given about how the Arabs have rained terror on the world and how that terror is deeply connected to the Arabs who teach in universities such as Columbia. The Title VI program – a program that funds academic programs that teach foreign cultures and histories – and various sources of funding were mentioned repeatedly among the not so thinly veiled threats that were marked by the presentation of Rachel Fish which laid out the manner in which lawyers, activists, journalists and politicians should deal with the transfer of money from the Arab world into the American university. We did not hear of any other attempt to look at sources of funding – other than the Arab. The basic idea is that if certain types of funding can be strangled that Arab studies can be reconfigured to a more Zionist-friendly variant. Again, the idea is not to hold all funding up to scrutiny, but to strangle Arab studies in its current variant which is perceived to be anti-Israel.

The straw man of fairness in academia that was the veneer at the conference is a mere bugaboo. What is behind all this is a massive dose of HASBARAH that means to advocate on behalf of the state of Israel. This, of course, is the same point that is being made to attack the Arab advocates. And I fully agree that any advocacy or suppression of free debate – on any side – is wrong and must be eliminated, swiftly and without prejudice. It is the height of hypocrisy to examine one side and not another. We should be able to freely discuss the issue of violence and injustice in the Arab world.

The following is a fair articulation of the point:

*Where is the vision, where are the values guiding the investment of this great national treasure of ours, which will not last forever? How many castles in England, how many Cadillacs, how many Lockheed jets need to be bought before we can turn to other things? For this Right Wing I have been describing is not finally interested in its own preservation so much as it is interested in having a good time; no ruling class in history is so unintelligent as this one. If it does not have faith in its people, it has no faith in any other values either. The universities languish. The student population increases – which is good – yet the curriculum is as antiquated as anything can be. We must face the fact that there are no achievements to speak of in modern Arab science or most intellectual effort, at least none that have come out of our universities… We are living through a period in the Arab world of unparalleled economic prosperity on the one hand, and of unparalleled political and social and intellectual poverty on the other hand. In what Arab capital is it possible to write and publish what one wishes, to say the truth, to stem the tide repressive state authority, intolerant of everything except its own fantasies and appetites? Most of our best writers and intellects have either been co-opted or jailed into silence.*

Bernard Lewis?

Daniel Pipes?

Martin Kramer?

No.

Edward Said from his 1979 essay “The Arab Right Wing.”

One can scour Said’s writings and find the same strident militancy against the forces of Arab anti-Semitism and anti-feminism and racism that we heard from many of the speakers at the Columbia anti-Said festa. And here is the value and the beauty of free speech – we can be political enemies and continue to discuss and dialogue with one another by finding common ground.

The idea that there is only one version of the truth is as spurious a concept on the Zionist side as it is on the Arab side. So when we hear from Mort Klein of the ZOA, a group that never met a peace it did not like, that we need to have truth – perhaps he needs to look within and find out the lies that he is telling. Perhaps The David Project should contact members of the Sephardic community who are active in preserving and protecting the rights of that community and not simply trying to adapt to the Ashkenazi model that has led to the tragedy of our people.

I am in complete agreement that the Arab world is corrupt and must be reformed so it will stop being a danger to itself and to others.

Edward Said was one of the lone voices in the American academy unafraid to speak of such things.

But he would not stop with a critique of the corrupt Arab regimes – he was defiant in the face of Zionist intimidation and HASBARAH which saw a need to eliminate his voice from the debate. If it is completely clear that professors at Columbia University’s MEALAC department committed violations of the academic code, they all need to be disciplined according to the rules of the university. We must also call for a full and complete investigation of all such threats of intimidation and presentations of spurious scholarship – like calling the end of Arab Jewish life in their host countries “ethnic cleansing” while turning a blind eye to Meron Benvenisiti’s presenting a dossier of evidence on what happened to the Palestinians at Jewish hands by the same name. If there are orders to expel Jews from the Arab world please let us have them or do not use such a charged phrase.

History is a contested thing. There are arguments among historians over nearly everything. This does not mean that we should simply sit here and languish while injustice takes place. In the 1960s Columbia University was the site of many rallies and sit-ins – and even a university shut-down by a Jewish-dominated group called The Weathermen – that protested against US intervention in Vietnam and on behalf of minorities. Today we see many of those same radical activists taking the side of the establishment against those who, like them when they were students, are taking to the campus with their banners and placards protesting oppression and racism. As in the 60s’ protests there is some excess and unacceptable behavior that needs to be addressed. But such excess must not be permitted to turn into a McCarthyite witch-hunt of administrators and professors who are doing what they can to balance the need for free academic expression with the need for scholarly accuracy and rigor.

We need to have a greater tolerance for complexity and diversity of opinion. Imbalances are frequently redressed by certain extreme measures to bring the minority up to speed with the majority. The current attempt to turn back the clock on Middle Eastern studies to a pre-Edward Said era – a time when Arabs had no voice in the discourse and no way to redress the matter of their own suppressed existence – in the name of academic freedom is a chilling statement of the intent of Jewish and Zionist groups in this country.

Neither Jews nor Arabs should have a monopoly on anything; all groups must have their right to speech.

The fears that were raised at the Columbia conference were whether one monolithic “truth” would be able to force out any other forms of advocacy. It is unacceptable that Jewish advocates of Israel are made to feel unsafe and at risk by Arab students and professors just as it is wrong for Jewish groups to target professors for their beliefs and opinions. So much of scholarship is interpretive that there is no single way to see anything and it is often not possible to present all the various viewpoints on a number of matters in a single forum. As uncomfortable as I felt sitting at the conference, it was necessary to have the conference take place. What was maddening and unacceptable to me were the repeated threats – veiled or not – to decimate a school of thought and its practitioners.

Two wrongs, as they say, do not make a right.

I will give the last words to Edward Said himself, from his final book *Humanism and Democratic Practice* which lends to this discussion a precise formulation and may serve as a proper credo for the real job of the university:

*There can be no true humanism whose scope is limited to extolling patriotically the virtues of our culture, our language, our monuments. Humanism is the exertion of one’s faculties in language in order to understand, reinterpret, and grapple with the products of language in history, other languages, and other histories. In my understanding of its relevance today, humanism is not a way of consolidating and affirming what “we” have always known and felt, but rather a means of questioning, upsetting, and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritically codified certainties, including those contained in the masterpieces herded under the rubric of “the classics.” Our intellectual and cultural world is now scarcely a simple, self-evident collection of expert discourses: it is rather a seething discordance of unresolved notations, to use Raymond Williams’ fine word for the endlessly ramifying and elaborated articulations of culture.*

David Shasha

*From SHU 149, March 23, 2005*

**A Double Disservice: the David Project Fails in its Mission**

By: Zac Frank

After months of controversy, I finally saw the David Project's film "Columbia Unbecoming" a little over a week ago. The film offers a stinging critique of certain members of Columbia's Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures department for intimidating dissenting students. Unfortunately, however, it goes beyond that to become of piece of agitprop, blurring charges of intimidation with criticism of the Israeli government and charges of anti-Semitism.

The film does a disservice to students who have valid complaints about the treatment they received from MEALAC professors. "Columbia Unbecoming" conflates professors' inappropriate behavior in class with their conduct outside of the classroom, their writing, and their political views. Amid several valid complaints about in-class conduct, for instance, there are anecdotes of interaction between professors and students who were never enrolled in any of their classes. In these instances, the film is dishonest in that it does not make clear which events happen in the context of a teacher-student relationship, in which a professor has an obvious power advantage over the student, and which happen off-campus and outside of a classroom relationship.

In addition, the movie draws upon the writing of certain MEALAC professors who have criticized the state of Israel and the policies of its government. While their behavior may at times not be productive in creating an academic dialogue about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has nothing to do with how students are treated in the classroom. Additionally, toward the end, the film cites the appearance of swastikas in bathrooms of Butler and Lerner as instances of anti-Semitism on campus. What that has to do with students being intimidated by professors, I don't know.

The swastika example reveals the greatest failing of "Columbia Unbecoming." Rather than simply documenting instances of student intimidation and inappropriate classroom behavior, the film confuses intimidation with political views of professors and unrelated acts of vandalism to point to what it claims is pervasive anti-Semitism at Columbia. It artfully transforms a political criticism of Israel's security fence into an anti-Semitic remark.

Valid complaints of intimidation have been voiced at Columbia, both with respect to and independently of the film. I have spoken to some students who want nothing to do with the David Project, but who have described very detailed instances of what can only be described as inappropriate classroom behavior by a professor. Unfortunately, "Columbia Unbecoming" makes it very difficult for the administration to redress valid complaints because of the film's approach. Whether or not any professor is guilty of intimidation, he or she can point to the film as an attempt at censorship and seize the mantle of academic freedom in defense.

But the disservice done to the students and to the University was not just propagated by the David Project. The administration also has a significant burden to bear in its response to the situation. Before seeing the film I was angry at the students involved. I thought they had not even attempted to utilize grievance procedures already in place at Columbia. Watching the film, however, changed that. I heard one woman speak of how she went to one office which told her to go to another, that office to a different one, and so on until she had come full circle. That, if anything, rings true of the Columbia experience. This is a problem of bureaucracy and a lack of communication between the various appendages of the University that needs to be addressed on a large scale. President Bollinger, however, has done nothing to even begin to cut through Columbia's red tape.

Furthermore, though the response by Bollinger, on its surface, seemed balanced, it revealed a total lack of action and initiative on the part of his administration to address the problem. The accusations against the department had surfaced long before the film came out. The investigation of those complaints, however, seems to have been cursory at best. Only until this became (unfairly) a public relations nightmare did the administration take any more steps to address it.

The appointment of the ad-hoc committee investigating intimidation, however, was incredibly misguided. While I do have confidence in the ability of the committee to be impartial and fair, it is not surprising that students making accusations would have a problem with its composition of Columbia faculty and administrators, some with ties to the professors involved. When there was a controversy surrounding the English department, a committee was convened with members from outside the University. If Bollinger were serious about this investigation and had any sense, he would have done the same in this situation, if for nothing else than to avoid even the appearance of conflict.

The David Project and the administration have failed both Columbia and its students.

*Zac Frank is a Columbia College senior majoring in history. The Lowdown runs on alternate Mondays.*

*From The Columbia Spectator, February 14, 2005*

**Fundraising Letter from The David Project**

By: David Bernstein

*While we are on the subject of letters, this one from the HASBARAH group The David Project is very interesting in the way that it clothes its appeal in the rhetoric of rabbinic Judaism.*

*In keeping with the theme of the Passover Haggadah, the letter argues that its pro-Israel advocacy is part of a Jewish tradition of education.*

*What it neglects to mention is that the rabbinic tradition values education as a means to inculcate not Zionism in our children, but the values of the Torah.*

*What we have here is yet another canny replacement of Torah with Zionism. The slight-of-hand is meant to bring the reader to accept that Zionism is Torah. The two are the same thing. Even though the state of Israel is not at all based on the same values as the Torah, the argument insists otherwise.*

*It is not “Torah 24/7,” it is “Israel 24/7.” After all, the rhetoric being used tells us as much!*

*DS*

Dear Friend,                                                 Passover 5771

Passover is the quintessential Jewish educational experience. It is the time when we Jews tell our story to ourselves and to our next generation. One of the most powerful moments of the Seder is the “four sons” or “four children.” The Haggadah teaches us how to respond to the unique needs of four different types of children. The wise child requires a different answer than the simple or wicked child.

It’s truly amazing that 1,700 or so years ago a group of Rabbis imparted their wisdom on a very modern, segmented approach to educating the next generation of Jews! What a great roadmap.

We at The David Project are engaged in a similar endeavor to educate young Jews – the four children – about Israel 24/7.

We are now facing an unprecedented effort to de-legitimize Israel. This campaign has surfaced in the government arena, the media, within international NGOs and, perhaps most of all, on campus. If anti-Israel forces can succeed in de-legitimizing Israel on campus, they reason, they can move that much closer to the center of American society. If they can create a campus environment poisonous to Israel, then the next generation of American leaders will be much less sympathetic than they are today. Their goal is to undermine the special relationship between the U.S. and Israel. We at The David Project are doing our part to ensure this does not happen.

However, as we remind ourselves during Passover, it all starts with education. We educate young Jews in middle school, high school and college about Israel and provide them with the tools they need to shift the debate on campus. Below are some very impressive examples of what we have accomplished lately.

In the past few months, we have:

* Led intensive regional advocacy seminars in Northern California, Southern California, and Pittsburgh that provided students with the essential skills and fundamental knowledge to be strong, effective campus leaders.
* Trained students to better utilize new technologies and social media with video advocacy seminars in New York and Israel.
* Strengthened our partnerships with key campus professionals and Israel Fellows to build a larger network of committed/dedicated activists.
* Worked with and supported a student at Hampshire College that faced physical intimidation and other forms of harassment for being pro-Israel.
* Played a leading role in combating “Israel Apartheid Week” by offering support, training, resources and grants to help students counter the slanderous attacks.

As the Rabbis understood from the very beginning, our ability to survive and thrive as a people depends on Jewish education. As we at The David Project understand, our strength in shielding Israel from the onslaught of de-legitimization depends on our ability to educate the next generation of Israel’s leaders and supporters.

Our task is to transform the simple child into the wise child. **But we can’t** **do it alone**. **This Passover, kindly partner with us to help ensure that we are successful by** [making a generous gift](http://tracking.etapestry.com/t/16542122/661333959/54087346/0/) **to The David Project.**

Please accept my warm wishes for a wonderful Passover holiday!

Sincerely,

David Bernstein

Executive Director

*From The David Project, April 12, 2011, re-posted to SHU 481, June 15, 2011*

**Moving Beyond the Israel Education and Advocacy Dichotomy**

By: David Bernstein

*Before I begin my comments to this article, I would like to provide some background for those who may not be familiar with the HASBARAH organization The David Project:*

<http://www.wikicu.com/Columbia_Unbecoming>

<http://www.thedavidproject.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=18&Itemid=37>

<http://electronicintifada.net/content/columbia-unbecoming-clear-light-day/5299>

*The David Project has been for a number of years one of the most forceful and extreme of the HASBARAH organizations and their attacks on Columbia University’s Middle Eastern Studies department and their use of the issue of Arab Jews have shown the way in which they see their pro-Israel advocacy.*

*So when I came across this article I was interested to hear how the leader of The David Project would present the idea of Israel education and advocacy.*

*What the article shows – as those of us inside the Jewish community have known for a long time – is that Israel and Zionism have supplanted Judaism as a means of Jewish identity. There is not much thought given in the article towards how being Jewish might impact being a Zionist. The key question is how best to defend Israel. The answer provided addresses the important issue of education.*

*But it is not a form of education that would be familiar to the average educator. It is rather education as indoctrination. Similar to the way in which Judaism is taught in Orthodox schools, the idea is to begin with firm and unquestioned principles and use “facts” to support ideological positions that are a priori accepted as truth and dogma.*

*The question the article addresses is not meant to address the inviolable truth of Zionism, but of how best to indoctrinate Jewish students to act as loyal partisans for Israel once they have internalized that truth.*

*Amazingly, the article gives us an intimate behind-the-scenes picture of how HASBARAH advocates see the many difficulties now facing Zionism at the present time. They are quite aware of critiques of Zionism and a loosening of the previously iron-clad ties between young American Jews and Israel.*

*The idea is to ensure that American Jewish students are first provided with a firm sense of identification with Israel when they are very young so that when they reach an age when criticism of Israel become a factor in their lives that they are already girded for the battle.*

*The idea that there is any open discussion about Israel in Jewish circles is belied by the two-tiered pedagogical strategy outlined in the article: It is critical that American Jewish students first be indoctrinated with Zionist partisanship and then they can ask questions.*

*In pure PILPUL style, the idea is to deny any sense of critical thinking in the students while then pretending after the indoctrination has taken place that there is in fact an open discussion taking place. The Jewish students must always know that Israel comes first and that any questions relating to Israel are secondary matters that need to be addressed from the already-built fortress of Zionist identification which has been inculcated in the students from an early age.*

*What is most important here is that the indoctrination is not at all related to the actual Jewish tradition, but to the contemporary Zionist phenomenon. Rather than formulating Jewish identity on the Jewish religious-cultural tradition, groups like The David Project have transformed Jewish values into strictly Zionist values.*

*The religious aspects of this transformation serve to confuse the directives of rabbinic Judaism with that of Zionism and pro-Israel advocacy. And that is how it now stands in a Jewish community that sees absolutely no daylight between Zionism and Judaism, in spite of the fact that an actual examination of the two systems presents us with profound divergences and conflicts. It is such a conflicted system that is now being played out in the emergence of a hostile Ultra-Orthodoxy and the many battles currently being waged over what Jewish identity actually is. The proponents of HASBARAH have not anticipated this dilemma and we see the confusion that has resulted.*

*DS*

There is a debate escalating in American Jewish circles between those who favor Israel advocacy and those who favor Israel education for high school and college age Jewish students.

For many years, the establishment favored Israel advocacy. It armed young Jews with the basic skills of communication and argumentation, and gave them “the facts.” It sent them back to places like the college campus in the hopes that their new-found confidence and knowledge would sway opinion in Israel’s favor. Many who favor this approach believe that Israel education that embraces critical views of the Jewish state can undermine communal unity on Israel.

Proponents of Israel education argue that the advocacy paradigm has created a “with us or against us” discourse that alienates many young Jews. They promote a more open, critical discourse that encourages young Jews to come to their own opinions about Israel’s policies, arguing that such an approach is more likely to create buy-in into the Zionist narrative. Many who favor Israel education believe that traditional advocacy is alienating and ineffective.

While the debate between these views is often portrayed as a clash of polar opposites, the two, at their best, can be mutually supportive.

Israel education, in nearly every Jewish context, is not value neutral. While Jewish educators seek to encourage critical thinking about Israel, as they would on any topic, they generally do so within a Zionist framework. They want students to believe in the justness of Zionism and encourage a strong connection with Israel. A headmaster at one Jewish day school said that Jewish educators seek to balance critical thinking with the need to instill a strong Jewish identity. In other words, Israel education involves a measure of advocacy on the part of the educators to the students.

Indeed, in the elementary school years, the objective of Israel education ought not to be comprehension of diverse perspective on Israel but instilling a strong sense of identity and commitment. Only later, in middle school and high school, should critical views be introduced.

The need to balance critical thinking and national pride is not limited to Israel education. The notion of American civic education is premised on such a balance. Paul Houston, former executive director of American Association of School Administrators, has said, “If you look back in history, you will find that the core mission of public education in America was to create places of civic virtue for our children and for our society.”

Lines between education and advocacy are further blurred by the emergence of a more nuanced form of Israel advocacy. Many Israel advocates have come to realize that they cannot mandate a simplistic approach to Israel and must allow young activists to debate hot topics, lest they risk an all-out revolt. Our experience is that when, in the context of advocacy training, students are allowed and even encouraged to think through controversial issues, from settlements to the rights of Israeli Arabs, they will usually emerge more, not less, loyal to the cause. Such findings are in keeping with longstanding theories about adolescent intellectual development. Educational researcher Sheldon Berman cites numerous studies demonstrating how teaching multiple perspectives enhances youth participation in society.

Good Israel advocacy also requires a measure of critical thinking. Young Jews exposed to varied interpretations about Israel’s policies are not only more loyal but far better at speaking with external audiences. This view is buttressed by a recent survey of college campuses conducted by the American Israel Cooperative Enterprise and The Israel Project that showed that no one talking point has wide resonance on college campuses. The once oft-cited peace message – “Israel wants peace but has no partner” – no longer holds sway among broad swaths of elites on and off campus. What does seem to work is presenting Israel as a basically just but highly complex democratic society facing unique challenges.

This is not to say that Israel education and advocacy are one and the same. The primary purpose of education is to teach students how to think. The primary purpose of advocacy is to persuade external audiences.

But neither are they mutually exclusive. The Jewish community must ensure that every child receives a first-rate Israel education in the course of their Jewish education. And it should present Israel advocacy as a viable, but not exclusive, way to express one’s commitment to Israel.

There’s plenty of room at the table for both approaches.

David Bernstein is Executive Director of[*The David Project*](http://davidproject.org/).

*From eJewish Philanthropy, February 16, 2012, re-posted to SHU 526, April 25, 2012*

**An Open Letter to Jewish Campus Professionals and Educators: Time to Step Up to the Plate on Israel**
By: David Bernstein

This is how the Jewish institutional world conducts its internal discussion on Israel advocacy.

The matter is seen – as the article indicates – as a kind-of sporting event where “we” have “our” team and “they” have “their” team. We must support “our” team as success is the only option.

But more important than this facile and reductive way of seeing the massive human complexity involved in Israel’s violent ethos is Zionism’s cooptation of Jewish identity, and the way in which the latter has become completely determinative for Jews the world over.

We are not fighting for the religious values of Judaism, all of which have been subsumed in the sporting metaphor. It is a reductionism that seeks to replace traditional values – those values often deployed in criticizing Israel and Zionism – with other values. These values, critically, are not to be questioned – particularly in times of perceived “crisis.”

This latter point is vital because Israel is seen to be in a state of perpetual crisis.

Israel advocates must rubber stamp the country’s policies with the understanding that Jewish survival is intimately connected to its existence. Israel controls the Jewish destiny.

This existential fatalism has effectively barred discussion of the Jewish tradition as the primary means to process our identity. New values, alien values predicated on a very different existential ethos, are to supplant what we once understood as Jewish and it is this set of values that need to be affirmed in order to “protect” Israel and its interests.

It is a conceptual slight-of-hand that creates the illusion that Jewish survival depends solely on what Israel does and does not do. This transposition of a new value system sets Torah Judaism into a subservient position and stigmatizes those who deploy traditional values as outsiders.

The Ultra-Orthodox have gone through a complex process of rejection and assimilation to the Zionist norms; having at the current moment created a monstrous religious-nationalist hybrid that has had a strong influence on current Israeli decision-making and conceptual thinking.

What is less apparent is the older tradition of Religious Humanism, central to the Sephardic heritage. The rich values of Sephardic-Andalusian Judaism have been overrun by Zionist fatalism. Even articulating these values is seen as threatening to the ideological construct whose dogmas permeate this article.

DS

Dear Jewish Campus Professional and Educator,

With Israel on the front lines and the front pages, these are challenging times to be a Jewish educator. In times like these, we need to engage young people in thoughtful conversations about Israel, guide them through the controversies, and encourage them to get involved. Unfortunately, such conversations are not happening frequently enough, or in ways that help young Jews understand and connect to Israel. Based on my conversations with various professionals, there are three reasons for this:

First, Israel is complicated and many professionals don’t feel up to the task. Before leading young people in the discussion, you must be confident in your views and able to articulate your [own connection to Israel](http://bryfy.net/?p=1011). Read lots of articles and opinion pieces. Talk to your colleagues in the field. Hold a series of lunch- and-learns. Spend time developing your own relationship with Israel.

Second, Jewish students today are complicated. For the first time, more young Jews have been to Israel than their parents. But travel to Israel is only the beginning of their journey. Many have unanswered questions. Your approach in helping them think through the issues makes all the difference. Anyone who has worked even a minute in Jewish education knows that this is not a generation that takes well to being told what to think about any issue, Israel included. Spend time understanding where your students are coming from on Israel so you can guide them along the way.

Third, the Jewish community is complicated. Many Jewish educators are intimidated by what they perceive as the rancorous and alienating conversation taking place outside the walls of school and campus among Jews of different ideological stripes. Spend time [understanding and learning](http://www.thejewishweek.com/features/iengage/point-counter-point-yossi-klein-halevi-4) to navigate these rough waters.

While I’ve witnessed a number of meaningful and inspiring discussions in various Jewish settings, I’ve also noticed two troubling trends: one is to avoid the discussion altogether, [fearful of making a misstep](http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/jewish-education-caught-in-the-crossfire-of-a-most-uncivil-war/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter) that can land them in hot water; and the other is to facilitate dialogues or conversations, absent any clear point of view or values.

While an open-ended discussion is preferable to no discussion at all, both take the easy way out and deprive young Jews of what they need to make sense of the world. Instead, we should help students show their love and support for Israel and, at the same time, struggle with the complexities of the conflict.

Feeling the need to be even-handed, some Jewish educators overlook the instilling love part. We don’t teach or discuss Jewish life as if it’s just another pastime; neither should we teach or discuss Israel as just another subject on the syllabus, another country on the globe, or another public issue. A former colleague of mine suggested that when we teach our kids to cheer for the local sports team, we first take them to a game and buy them a jersey. Only later do we slam the coach.

When leading discussions on Israel, we should frame the issues in a way that cultivates concern, commitment and care. When discussing the recent conflict in Gaza, we shouldn’t hesitate to give the context of the ongoing rocket fire targeting Israeli civilians. The vast majority of Jews from left to right on the political spectrum agree that Israelis were unjustly targeted and justly defended themselves. Such framing leaves plenty of room for difficult discussions about individual acts or specific policies.

In short, we should be clear about our guiding values. My list would include:

* Israel not only has a right to exist as a Jewish state, it plays a critical role in the creative sustenance of the Jewish people. Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, is central to who we are as Jews.
* We all have a responsibility to spend time in Israel and develop our own unique connection.
* Israel has the right to defend itself.  “We simply have to do what we have to do. What any nation not merely has the right to, but the obligation to do,” says Rabbi Donniel Hartman of the Shalom Hartman Institute.
* No single perceived shortcoming in Israeli society is a commentary on the entire nation.
* Criticizing policies of the Israeli government is not the same as condemning the entire nation. In the words of Yossi Klein Halevi, “most American Jews – and most Israelis, too, I sense – no longer believe that love for Israel means uncritical support.”
* While that small minority of young Jews who deny Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state or otherwise de-legitimize the nation should receive no official sanction from the organized community, they should be welcomed, as individuals, to our Shabbat tables. They are still our children.
* In the words of Israel’s Ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, “Israel is both a work in progress and a work of progress.”

Such a framework of values and views leaves plenty of room for students to contemplate and discuss the complexities of Israeli society and its quest for peace and security, but it doesn’t forfeit our obligation to transmit the crucial place of Israel in the identity and destiny of the Jewish people or the fundamental rightness of its cause. Spend some time figuring out your guiding values for your discussions with students.

Here are some practical guidelines for conducting such challenging discussions:

* In opening the discussion, provide clear context, letting the participants know that the discussion can include varying opinions. Participate openly in the conversation by sharing your values and views while leaving space for participants to disagree.
* Before getting into the discussion on what participants think about the conflict or controversy, spend time exploring why each of us cares about Israel in the first place. What’s our personal connection?
* Provide readings from thoughtful, nuanced thinkers on Israel that wrestle with complex issues.
* Ask tough questions, such as “In a time of war, what do you think Israel’s obligation is to Palestinian civilians?” but give them a glimpse into views of prominent thinkers such as Michael Walzer, who argues that “When Palestinian militants launch rocket attacks from civilian areas, they are themselves responsible – and no one else is – for the civilian deaths caused by Israeli counter fire. But … Israeli soldiers are required to aim as precisely as they can at the militants, to take risks in order to do that, and to call off counterattacks that would kill large numbers of civilians  … Still, minimizing does not mean avoiding entirely: Civilians will suffer.”

It’s time to step up to the plate on Israel. The next generation depends on it.

David Bernstein is Executive Director of[*The David Project*](http://davidproject.org/).

*From eJewish Philanthropy, December 4, 2012, re-posted to SHU 562, January 2, 2013*

**Bari Weiss: It Was The David Project Before It Was The Tikvah Fund**

I was not really intending to get into all the Linda Sarsour Women’s March mess, but it has been a pretty big Bari Weiss week, so I could not resist the following article from The Algemiener:

<https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/09/16/linda-sarsour-its-you-and-not-bari-weiss-who-is-on-the-wrong-side-of-history/?utm_content=blog1&utm_medium=daily_email&utm_campaign=email&utm_source=internal/>

To repeat, I do not want to get into the toxic food fight; I will leave that to the fanatics on both sides of the HASBARAH divide.

None of them has any concern for Sephardim anyway.

But I happened to skim Bari Weiss’ new book on Anti-Semitism while at the Strand and thought I should comment:

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/616727/how-to-fight-anti-semitism-by-bari-weiss/9780593136058/>

She appeared on last week’s Bill Maher program, confirming the host’s vicious Neo-Con Zionism, an outgrowth of his vicious New Atheism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9d27LLmm720>

It is a problem for the Democratic Party, as I have written:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/Davidshasha/maher/davidshasha/OAiKDUEMRUQ/uf6bnWH0DQAJ>

Looking at the many people she thanks in the acknowledgements section at the end of the book, it was a veritable who’s who of Tikvah Fund Right Wing White Jewish Supremacists, led by notables like Bret Stephens and Alana Newhouse.

It got me thinking about her past, before Tikvah made her a big White Jewish star.

We should recall that her HASBARAH career began when she was just an undergraduate at Columbia University with The David Project, a far Right Wing Zionist group devoted to campus advocacy – and intimidation:

<http://www.browndailyherald.com/2005/04/07/columbia-report-addresses-antisemitism-charges/>

I discussed the degenerate group and its nefarious methods in a 2005 article on a McCarthyite conference at Columbia University, organized around the group’s rottweiler attack documentary “Columbia Unbecoming”; one of the great HASBARAH freakouts of recent memory.

That article follows this note.

We should note that The David Project also produced a documentary on the Arab Jewish Refugee issue:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_David_Project#Documentaries>

It is naturally a Lyn Julius favorite!

<https://jewishrefugees.blogspot.com/2008/12/forgotten-refugees-film-to-be-shown-in.html>

I recalled the 2005 “Columbia Unbecoming” event as I was writing the first draft of this note and soon made the connection with the list of friends that Ms. Weiss presents at the conclusion of her new book. She continues to cherish her relationships with many of the people who are named in my article.

It should give us moment to pause as we consider how far up the media food chain Weiss has climbed.

So, in spite of the fact that there are Neo-Con Never-Trumpers, we should not forget their vicious racism and their unalloyed, murderous Zionism and the PILPUL lengths they will go to pass it off on the public.

We must not be fooled by the current Trump realignment and how Neo-Con extremists like Weiss have been elevated by institutions like The New York Times.

David Project alumni should still be seen as a danger to society.

The Neo-Con Never Trumpers might not really be your friend.

I am not sure that politics should always make strange bedfellows.

In the case of Bari Weiss and her David Project Tikvah Fund pals the price is simply too high.

David Shasha

*From SHU 920, November 13. 2019*

**Tikvah SAPIR Straussian Bret Stephens Triumphant: “Liberal” Jews Against Liberal Values!**

It seems that Bret Stephens is making a very serious play for a prominent place in the White Jewish Supremacy hierarchy.

He has written stirringly against the New Racial Consciousness:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/gPteGeyFAsA>

And he has taken the helm of a Tikvah-fueled project called the SAPIR Journal, which reinforces his hatred of the New Racial Consciousness:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/9sNvRGoAK4E>

SAPIR Intersectionality was immediate, with both Tikvah Mosaic and Rabbi Gil Student re-posting its articles to their Neo-Con reactionary websites:

<https://mosaicmagazine.com/picks/israel-zionism/2021/05/how-to-tell-accounts-of-israels-reality-from-fables-about-jews/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TheReyd/posts/1502599060071537>

The first item in the following eJewish Philanthropy e-mail newsletter alerted me to another Stephens-led Neo-Con project, the very inaptly-named Jewish Institute for Liberal Values:

<https://mailchi.mp/8cb7e745d85e/your-daily-phil-4918198?e=400f0fcddb>

It is another Cancel Cancel Culture SHANDA:

<https://jilv.org/>

In their words:

**We are a new organization that supports the free expression of ideas and helps Jewish organizations that care about true social justice prevent the encroachment of the Critical Social Justice (CSJ) approach in the Jewish world.**

The description, as with SAPIR, is quite Orwellian, because the primary aim of the group is to **stifle** Free Speech, and ensure that only **one** point of view – that of the Straussian Neo-Con Jews – is heard.

The website description makes it pretty clear:

**Currently, the response to Critical Social Justice has been mixed in the Jewish world. There are Jewish groups that firmly oppose or ignore CSJ. There are groups that enthusiastically endorse it. And there are many mainstream Jewish organizations—national and local—that have yet to develop a clearly defined position. The Jewish Institute for Liberal Values will help Jewish organizations and individuals hold constructive conversations about CSJ and insure a balanced approaches.**

Their goals are laudable, if blatantly untrue from the Stephens-SAPIR-Straussian perspective:

* **Enable, empower and equip Jews who support liberalism and oppose the imposition of CSJ to come forward**
* **Raise awareness in mainstream Jewish organizations on the complexities of social justice and encourage deliberation**
* **Ensure that Jewish civic culture does not become dominated by a single ideology**
* **Educate the larger Jewish community on the dangers of imposing CSJ and build a strong counter-movement**

As we will shortly see, the group is closely tied to SAPIR and its Tikvah grounding:

<https://jilv.org/about/>

Their Blog section leads off with an anti-1619 Project primer!

<https://jilv.org/blog/>

Here is the White Jew-approved “Alternative Reading Guide”:

<https://jilv.org/the-alternative-reading-guide-for-the-1619-project-essays/>

The usual disingenuous misdirection is given:

**The danger in using only the 1619 Project as a guide to race relations and black American history is that it drowns out some of the voices of black resilience, strength and true heroism. Much of the 1619 Project focuses on oppression and grievance as the collective voice of the black American experience. The**[**Alternative Reading Guide for The 1619 Project Essays**](https://medium.com/truth-in-between/supplemental-reading-guide-for-the-1619-project-essays-74d8265cfcad)**offers supplemental essays to be read in tandem with each 1619 Project essay for a more complete picture of the black American experience and contribution to American society.**

The idea is to negate the 1619 Project and replace it with something less “oppressive” and less focused on “grievance.”

Because Jews **never** complain about oppression in the form of grievance politics!

Only African-Americans do.

A number of the Blog’s articles come from our dear friend David Bernstein, founder of The David Project, and founder of JILV as well:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_David_Project>

He is a man who knows a great deal about stifling Free Speech.

The David Project was a radical Right Wing HASBARAH Cancel Culture organization, whose claim to fame was the famous “Columbia Unbecoming” debacle that introduced us to Bari Weiss:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/15yQlqUlCeKPfaqW2Ty3KyjA2lEIZAYLMe9r5ChQAK_0/edit>

I have indeed pointed out the irony of Weiss becoming a proud champion of Free Speech, when in fact her career has been rooted in Cancel Culture:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/18-zkXjSsQdIRJoNUFeV4MOf6dr3lmzlalBOeGliWg_k/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs>

Destroy MEALAC!

<http://volokh.com/2005/03/31/columbia-report-on-mealac/>

There was also the DP production and promotion of “The Forgotten Refugees” documentary, which is a virulently anti-Arab piece of HASBARAH propaganda dealing with Middle Eastern Jews:

<https://www.jimena.org/resources/forgotten-refugees/>

Yehouda Shenhav has responded to the matter in bracing detail:

<https://www.972mag.com/spineless-bookkeeping-the-use-of-mizrahi-jews-as-pawns-against-palestinian-refugees/>

I was quite impressed with Bernstein’s impassioned article “Who Decides What’s Racist?”:

<https://jilv.org/when-diversity-eats-diversity/>

Indeed, it is **Bernstein** who decides what’s racist!

The Blog section also includes an article by Tikvah SAPIR contributor and JILV board chair Pamela Paresky attacking Gavin Newsom and the California Ethnic Studies Curriculum:

<https://jilv.org/critical-ethnic-studies-curriculum/>

Because the Neo-Con Jews **hate** the California Ethnic Studies Curriculum!

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SBkVBFplCWMowuOs6V_0aJ1ZDh6JQd8vtwz22A_xdvA/edit>

We will notice that the JILV Resources section is led by Self-Hating Sephardi David Suissa and his Jewish Journal of Los Angeles:

<https://jilv.org/resources/>

Here is the link to his world-renowned podcast:

<https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/the-david-suissa-podcast-david-suissa-TkqB9rzt4jX/>

It affirms Suissa’s desperate desire to be an Ashkenazi, as he defiantly turns his back on the Sephardic heritage and our cosmopolitan Jewish Humanism:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c1l0_eK349whup0o6s-Gy_dtWeVCZVQOZC3Q-UFwSQM/edit>

Of course, we can see here the Intersectional HASBARAH linkage between The David Project, SAPIR, David Suissa, and the Ashkenazi-run JIMENA under the rubric of Cancel Cancel Culture.

Critical to the JILV project, unsurprisingly, is the work of the deplorable Jonathan Haidt:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wRa-UjQrGtOZOcPTN75mjGsA_dlpzoCxMulxk4Xvo-c/edit>

Their website provides a convenient link to purchase his vile book *The Coddling of the American Mind*:

[https://www.amazon.com/Coddling-American-Mind-Intentions-Generation-ebook/dp/B076NVFT5P/ref=tmm\_kin\_swatch\_0?\_encoding=UTF8&qid=1615654103&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Coddling-American-Mind-Intentions-Generation-ebook/dp/B076NVFT5P/ref%3Dtmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1615654103&sr=1-1)

Then we have University of Illinois Sociology Professor Ilana Redstone:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uIRdJchnOmtjo7u35e_gtO6Gctbz3WZJ/view>

I had never heard of her before, but she is apparently a critical Neo-Con Jewish point person on the Cancel Cancel Culture.

She is Tikvah Tablet:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/contributors/ilana-redstone>

And Buckleyite National Review:

<https://www.nationalreview.com/author/ilana-redstone-akresh/>

She runs a McCarthyite “snitch” organization Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, where “victims” of the PC mob can go to “report” Racial Crimes:

<https://www.thefire.org/in-unassailable-ideas-professors-examine-corrosive-effects-of-converging-trends-on-academic-freedom/>

The following interview with Chris Martin for the very aptly-named Heterodox Academy helps illuminate things:

<https://heterodoxacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/073_IlanaRedstone_transcript.pdf>

The conversation addresses Police Brutality in a very revealing way:

**Chris Martin: Right. I think it might be different in public and private universities because there was that famous incident at Brown University where there was a small riot of sorts when a Police Chief of the New York Police Department gave a talk.**

**Ilana Redstone: Right.**

**Chris Martin: That was 8 or 9 years ago now I think.**

**Ilana Redstone: Right. No, I do. I remember reading about that. Yeah.**

**Chris Martin: Yeah. That’s interesting.**

**Ilana Redstone: I mean again, this was sort of –but again, this was something that they asked for and this is someone local.**

**Chris Martin: Right.**

**Ilana Redstone: And they did ask her. Like there was a student who said –who basically said, not rudely but she just said, “Why should we ...” and she was saying we, members of minority communities, “Why should we trust you?” meaning you, the law enforcement. And so, she just asked that question and then the woman had an answer and they just –I mean I don’t know that they necessarily came to an agreement but there was at least a conversation.**

**Chris Martin: Right. Did the police officer talk about the need to shoot in self-defense if you are a police officer?**

**Ilana Redstone: She –no, that specific case of shooting in self-defense didn’t come up. But there were questions about –someone did ask at the end of the time that she was there, they asked something about what is your advice or something to be safe? And she said –or what is your advice in terms of improving these relationships between the communities and some of these communities and law enforcement? And her answer was I thought reasonable but certainly something that some people might find offensive. Her answer was mutual respect. There has to be mutual respect. If you are stopped, again, I’m sort of channeling her, “If you are stopped by the police, you should not be questioning what they are saying. You should be doing what they are telling you to do, not talking about, and they will in all likelihood respond in kind.” Again, a controversial position but that was –but it was a useful conversation. And it led to a lot of other conversation.**

She runs something called Diverse Perspectives Consulting, which sounds an awful lot like a Right Wing response to the Robin DiAngelo and Ibram X, Kendi’s Corporate Anti-Racism training cash machine:

<https://www.diverseperspectivesconsulting.com/who-we-are>

Indeed, it is always about the money!

It has become quite apparent that the New Racial Consciousness movement seeks to wipe out the old Buckley/Reagan Jim Crow consensus, and that the members of that consensus are **very** worried.

As evidence of that fear, we would do well to read Stephens’ vitriolic New York Times column “Biden’s Plan Promises Permanent Decline,” which seeks to put the Blacks back in their proper place:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/03/opinion/biden-spending-economy.html>

It begins, in true Reagan fashion, with an attack on government-run Single-Payer Healthcare:

**Years ago, Alexis Tsipras, the party leader of Greece’s Coalition of the Radical Left, surprised me with a question. “Here in the United States,” the soon-to-be prime minister asked me over breakfast in New York, “why do you not have this phenomenon of passing money under the table?”**

**The subject was health care. Greece has a public health care system that, in theory, guarantees its citizens access to necessary medical care.**

**Practice, however, is another matter. Patients in Greek public hospitals, Tsipras explained, would first have to slip a doctor “an envelope with a certain amount of money” before they could expect to get treatment. The government, he added, underpaid its doctors and then looked the other way as they topped up their income with bribes.**

And makes the point emphatically clear with a direct assault on the efficacy of government and the need for a social safety net, which would protect underserved and oppressed minorities, such as the African-Americans:

**Take a close look at any country or locality in which the government offers allegedly free or highly subsidized goods and you’ll usually discover that there’s a catch.**

“Free Stuff” – where have we heard that one before?

<https://www.foxnews.com/transcript/bill-oreilly-americans-who-want-free-stuff-from-the-government>

Oh yeah, that’s right!

<https://variety.com/2017/tv/news/bill-oreilly-fired-sexual-harassment-fox-news-timeline-1202372546/>

Stephens then continues to discredit European social largesse:

**France’s subsidized day care is, by all accounts, fantastic for working parents who get their children into it. Except there’s a** [**perpetual shortage of slots**](https://theconversation.com/politique-educative-demmanuel-macron-ce-que-peut-en-dire-la-recherche-77379)**. In Sweden, a raft of laws protects tenants from excessively high rent. Except wait times for apartments can** [**be as long as 20 years**](https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20160517-this-is-one-city-where-youll-never-find-a-home)**. In Britain, the National Health Service is a source of pride. Except that, even before the pandemic, one in six patients faced wait times of more than 18 weeks for routine treatment.**

Before he attacks LBJ and the New Society programs:

**These examples are worth bearing in mind as President Biden charts a course toward the largest expansion of government since Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. After signing a $1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill in March and proposing a $1.5 trillion discretionary budget in April (a 16 percent increase from this year, on top of what’s likely to be at least $3 trillion in mandatory spending on programs like Medicare and Medicaid), the president wants $2.3 trillion more for infrastructure and $1.8 trillion for new social programs.**

He then appeals to Republican ally Joe “Keep the Filibuster” Manchin:

**Maybe those bets will pay off. And conservatives would be foolish to dismiss the sheer political appeal of the progressive pitch. But before the U.S. takes this leap into a full-blown American social-welfare state, moderates in Congress like Senator Joe Manchin or Representative Jim Costa ought to ask: What’s the catch?**

The column closes with a defiantly Reaganite flourish, accusing Biden and the Democrats of creating a “Permanent” American Decline in the wake of Progressive policy initiatives designed to help the poor and needy, rather than maintaining Corporate Welfare and the permanent regime of Tax cuts for the wealthy, as the Gipper did:

**But investments like these, once made, are almost never reversed. The spending will become permanent. Beyond the gargantuan cost, Congress should think very hard about the real catch: transforming America into a kinder, gentler place of permanent decline.**

This is Stephens’ hate-filled story and he is emphatically sticking to it.

In this vein, JILV has published a letter to “Our Fellow Jews” on “Equality and Liberal Values”:

<https://jilv.org/be-heard/>

It is an extraordinary text written in the cleverly coded language of the Neo-Con Straussians, which seeks to provide cover for the current Jewish Racism in the face of Progressive values.

Here is the offensive statement, unexpurgated:

**A letter to our fellow Jews on equality and liberal values**

**The American Jewish community is facing a challenge to the liberal principles that have long defined Jewish civic life and America’s democratic tradition.**

**Among our country’s blessings is an unparalleled protection of freedom of expression. This freedom is among the essential tools by which American minorities––including Jews––have made progress in advancing the causes of equality and justice.**

**Today this freedom is being threatened. An ideology is taking hold across the country that insists there is only one way to look at the problems we face, and those who disagree must be silenced.**

**This suppression of dissent violates the core Jewish value of open discourse. Jewish tradition cherishes debate, respects disagreement, and values questions as well as answers. In ancient times, the Beit Midrash––the House of Study––encouraged
passionate argument “for the sake of heaven.”**

**Jewish tradition has also long insisted that we only judge and be judged by our own deeds. “A son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and a father shall not bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself,
and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezekiel 18:20). The dominant social justice ideology, however, holds that individuals bear collective moral guilt or innocence based on the current conception of group identity.**

**Because this dominant narrative creates a worldview in which groups are only oppressors or oppressed, it encourages pernicious notions of “Jewish privilege,” even implicating Jews in “white supremacy.” This presents many Jews with an impossible set of political choices.**

**On issues of racial justice, powerful groups in the Jewish world have foreclosed the usual deliberative process. Rarely do Jewish organizations encourage discussions that include differing perspectives, even from within the Black community. In some cases, Jewish leaders have even denounced Jews for expressing unpopular opinions.**

**America was born with what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. termed a “birth defect,” continuing the institution of slavery decades after the nation’s founding. Through Reconstruction and Jim Crow, America continually failed to live up to its ideals, engaging in rampant discrimination and the disenfranchisement of Black Americans. Despite substantial progress since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, much remains to be done to right the profound injustices of America’s legacy of racism.**

**In the wake of George Floyd’s killing, many Americans, including American Jews, redoubled efforts to create a more just society. But the way to fight racism is not to do away with essential tools. The way to fight racism isn’t to cease discussion and debate.**

**To do so is antithetical to American ideals and antithetical to Judaism. The way to fight racism is to insist on our common humanity––and to engage in dialogue, including with those who dissent. That is what Judaism demands.**

**We members of the Jewish community add our voices to the growing chorus supporting our liberal principles, opposing the imposition of ideology, encouraging open discussions of challenging topics, and committing to achieving a more just America.**

The following is a list of signatories to the letter; many of whom will already be familiar to SHU readers:

**Original Signatories**

**Bion Bartning | Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR)
Emily Barton | Des Moines
David L. Bernstein | Founder, Jewish Institute for Liberal Values
David E. Bernstein | University Professor, Antonin Scalia Law School, George Mason University
Daniel Bouskila | Rabbi, Sephardic Educational Center
D. Malcolm Carson | Pacifica, California
Mona Charen | Policy Editor, The Bulwark
Eliot Cohen | Dean, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies
(for identification purposes only)
Mark Dratch | Executive Vice President, Rabbinical Council of America, New York, NY
Joel Finkelstein | Director Network Contagion Research Institute
Blake Flayton | Co-founder, New Zionist Congress
Daniel Gordis | Shalem College; Jerusalem, Israel
Jonathan Greenberg | Jack Miller Family Foundation
Jonathan Haidt | New York University - Stern School of Business
Samantha Harris | Samantha K. Harris, Esq., Philadelphia, Pa.
Moshe Hauer | Executive Vice President, Orthodox Union
David Ingber | Founder and Senior Rabbi, Romemu
Lee Jussim | Distinguished Professor of Psychology
David Kaufman | Rabbi, Des Moines, Iowa
James Kirchick | Writer
Ben Kramer | Rabbi, Moriah Congregation, Deerfield, Illinois
Josh Kraushaar | Annandale, VA
Liel Leibovitz | Editor at Large, Tablet Magazine, New York, NY
Yuval Levin | American Enterprise Institute
Holli Levitsky | Los Angeles, CA
Nicole Levitt | Domestic Violence Attorney Philadelphia, PA
Bethany Mandel | Editor, Ricochet and Columnist, Forward; Silver Spring, MD
Seth Mandel | Executive Editor, Washington Examiner magazine
Daniel Newman | Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, Columbus, OH
Monica Osborne | Writer and Scholar of Jewish Studies
Pamela Paresky | Psychologist
Steven Pinker | Johnstone Professor of Psychology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Scott Roland | Rabbi, Scott B. Roland, Beachwood, Ohio
Thane Rosenbaum | Distinguished University Professor, Touro College, New York, NY
Dave Rubin | The Rubin Report
Jeffrey Salkin | Rabbi, Temple Israel, West Palm Beach, FL
Hal Schevitz | Rabbi, Congregation Or Atid, Henrico, VA
Ira Sheskin | Hollywood, FL
Maxim D. Shrayer | Brookline & South Chatham, MA
Abigail Shrier | Independent Journalist
Joshua Snitzer | Student Leader
Christina Hoff Sommers | Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute
Bret Stephens | Op-ed columnist, The New York Times
Nadine Strossen | John Marshall Harlan II Professor of Law Emerita, New York Law School - New York, NY
Izabella Tabarovsky | Scholar, writer/journalist
Gil Troy | Distinguished Scholar of North American History, McGill University
Aaron Weil | Executive director and CEO Central Florida Hillel, Orlando Fla
Eric Weinstein Ph.D. | Host of The Portal Podcast / Managing Director, Thiel Capital
Bari Weiss | Los Angeles
David Wolpe | Sinai Temple, Los Angeles
Cathy Young | Arc Digital**

**Concerned Friends of The American Jewish Community (Signatories)**

**Adv. Michal Cotler-Wunsh, Former Member of Knesset
Michael Oren | Former ambassador, MK, Deputy Minister, Jewish Journalist/Writer
Natan Sharansky | Former Head of the Jewish Agency**

The whole thing serves to confirm my current obsession with the Cancel Cancel Culture and its well-remunerated Jewish institutional proponents.

Rather than seeing the ongoing implosion of their Republican Party under its Fascist leader and the possible destruction of the American democracy in the wake of the January 6th Insurrection as the primary problem, this despicable group of Right Wing Jewish ditto-heads has chosen to parrot the Trump-Miller-Bannon talking points on Race, and ignore the actual perils that now face us as a civilization.

It is a testament to the clever way in which Neo-Con Jews have made the pivot to a new post-Reagan, post-Trump world that they see as deeply threatening to their reactionary ethnocentric interests.

There is certainly nothing “Liberal” about them.

And let us never think otherwise.

David Shasha

*From SHU 1007, July 14, 2021*

**What California Tells Us About the New Wave of Antisemitism on the Left**

By: David Bernstein

What happens in California never stays in California. If you want to see what large swaths of the country, for better or worse, might look like in a year or two, look at what’s happening in California today. On the positive side of the ledger California was one of the first states that legalized same sex marriage, thereby legitimizing it for the rest of the nation. On the negative, it is among the first states to be drastically impacted by climate change with raging wildfires making large parts of the state unlivable. It is also one of the first states to fully embrace a far leftwing ideological curriculum for its K-12  public school system.

A version of this radical educational curriculum may be coming to your state too. And if and when it does, expect an increase in antisemitic attitudes and incidents.

The California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) was unanimously adopted in March of this year by the California Board of Education. The underlying ideology of the curriculum presents the world in binary terms of oppressed versus oppressor––largely along racial lines.

Now, with the ESMC ideological underpinnings in place, the very people who authored and promoted earlier versions of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) that held Israel and Jewish Americans in contempt are now [pushing](https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/339751/a-new-israel-hating-curriculum-is-coming-to-california-school-districts/) a “Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum” that’s even more extreme than the original. The goal, they explain on their website, is for teachers “to be part of a larger movement.” Fourteen California school districts have already passed resolutions indicating their receptivity.

Similar Ethnic Studies curricula with a decided ideological bent are being introduced in state legislatures across the country. No doubt some local Jewish groups will embrace these bills with open arms, hoping to influence the content and ensure that they don’t turn antisemitic. And while I understand this line of thinking–I [held it myself](https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/340160/an-ideology-many-jews-bought-into-fuels-antisemitism/) not too long ago–it will only enable more antisemitism and anti-Israelism.

The reason why Jewish groups cannot ultimately control the antisemitic outputs of such a curriculum is that they are not discrete cases that emerge out of nowhere. They are products of a highly illiberal ideology pushed by ideologically-driven activists that characterizes America as systemically racist and oppressive. This ideology’s more extreme tenets virtually guarantee the generation of further anti-Jewish sentiment.

My organization, the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values (JILV), cited seven ways that the imposition of this ideology–which is [often referred](https://counterweightsupport.com/2021/02/17/what-do-we-mean-by-critical-social-justice/) to as Critical Social Justice (CSJ)–fuels antisemitism in a recently released [White Paper](https://jilv.org/whitepaper/).

First, CSJ fuels the canard of Jewish privilege. Antisemites have always promoted the canard that Jews secretly control the levers of power. CSJ invites such antisemitic imagery by positing a fixed hierarchy of privilege, which legitimizes notions of “Jewish privilege.”  This portrayal of Jews represents Jews as a self-contained cabal or lobby and doesn’t take into account the innumerable differences within the Jewish community.

Second, CSJ promotes the erasure of Jewish identity. Daphna Kaufman of Reut popularized the term erasive antisemitism for the designation of Ashkenazi Jews from Europe as “white.” This racialization of Jewish identity erases Jewish identity in favor of the CSJ binary of oppressed “person of color” versus “white” oppressor. In this ideological framework, Jews are not afforded the status of a distinct people worthy of self-determination. The erasure of Jewish identity also denies antisemitism its unique quality and historicity by falsely equating it with other forms of bigotry.

Third, CSJ, in the concept of intersectionality, can multiple antisemitic ideas.  Intersectionality is the theory that various forms of discrimination interact in ways that create specific and compound problems, constituting an intersecting system of oppression. In other words, groups with “critical consciousness” have a strong incentive to agree with each other on whom to designate oppressor and oppressed in every system. This ideological framework serves to multiply a false view of “Jewish power” in the US and popularizes a perverse, binary perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fourth, CSJ propagates an anti-Israel binary. The binary nature of CSJ ideology seeks to neatly divide human beings into either the oppressor or the oppressed while permitting and even encouraging violence against perceived oppressors. This binary extends to Israel, treating Palestinians as the perennial victims and Israel the perennial victimizer. It props up the most simplistic and crude notions of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Fifth, CSJ may marginalize Jews in politics. While not explicitly antisemitic, CSJ has rendered and may further render many Jews politically homeless. Large majorities of Jews have historically voted for Democrats, yet the growing number of party officials, platforms, and policies supporting critical race ideologies stands to alienate a significant segment of American Jewry, especially as the connections between the ideology and antisemitism become more apparent.

Sixth, CSJ’s revamped concept of “equity” marginalizes Jews. CSJ ideology insists that the only reason there is disparity among racial and ethnic groups is white supremacy. If white supremacy is responsible for some people being held down, then it is also responsible for others being propped up. In this framework, Jews and other economically successful minorities are deemed complicit in or adjacent to white supremacy.

Seventh, CSJ undermines enlightenment principles. Jews have long thrived in societies undergirded by Enlightenment principles of rationalism, reason, logic and debate. CSJ is inherently anti-Enlightenment. It serves to delegitimize these principles as manifestations of “white supremacy,” stifle debate, and curtail academic freedom. Unmoored from its enlightenment values, society will become more totalitarian and hostile to Jews.

The [White Paper](https://jilv.org/whitepaper/) goes on to recommend a set of strategies for countering CSJ inspired antisemitism. Because countering antisemitism is difficult if not impossible in the current ideological environment, we believe we must change the environment itself.

*David Bernstein is the founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values and is a former CEO of Jewish advocacy organizations.*

*From The Times of Israel, September 13, 2021*

**On Teaching ‘Opposing’ Views of the Holocaust and Systemic Racism**

By: David Bernstein

This past week, a school administrator in Texas was heard on tape saying that a new law forces teachers to provide “opposing” views on the Holocaust. The [Texas law](https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/pdf/HB03979I.pdf) mandates that controversial issues be taught from “diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective.”

I immediately received messages asking whether the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values’ [(JILV)](https://jilv.org/) efforts to open up the conversation on sensitive topics encourages Holocaust denial:

Don’t arguments that there is more than one side on systemic racism in America facilitate arguments that there is more than one side to the Holocaust?

It should go without saying that it is absurd and outrageous to teach opposing opinions about whether the Holocaust, or slavery for that matter, happened. They are historical facts. There are, however, completely valid differences of opinion about how and why these monstrous evils were perpetrated, just as there are valid differences of opinion about the extent and impact of systemic racism in America today. “The dispute about the interpretation of events is completely legitimate, but the dispute about the existence of events is either dangerous or stupid or both,” [stated](https://www.jta.org/2021/10/15/united-states/jewish-skeptics-of-critical-race-theory-say-texas-holocaust-education-incident-does-not-deter-them) Rabbi David Wolpe.

A [JTA article](https://www.jta.org/2021/10/15/united-states/jewish-skeptics-of-critical-race-theory-say-texas-holocaust-education-incident-does-not-deter-them) on the Texas Holocaust education controversy quoted Russel Neiss, a St. Louis-based Jewish educator:

“The way that Holocaust education is taught in America is, it talks about systems of oppression, it talks about dehumanization….I don’t even know what it means to just teach facts. Facts don’t mean anything unless they’re contextualized in a way of understanding that particular era…when you begin to ban all these approaches to understanding history, you are banning the way we teach Holocaust education in America today.”

We should indeed “contextualize the facts” of the Holocaust or the facts surrounding any significant historical event for that matter. But we should contextualize them in ways that allow students to wrestle with alternative perspectives on why these events occurred. There are, in fact, major [disagreements](https://www.amazon.com/s?k=holocaust+education+contemporary+challenges&ref=nb_sb_noss)  among both scholars and educators about Holocaust pedagogy as well as a wide [range](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1310010) of teaching practices.

In the mid-1980s, I had the honor of studying with the Philosopher and Holocaust survivor Emil Fackenheim at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who argued until his death in 2003 that the Holocaust was a unique and unprecedented event in human history. That notion of uniqueness has always been hotly contested by other philosophers and historians. It’s a debate I had on numerous occasions during and after college. Having that discussion elevated, not demeaned, the importance of the Holocaust in our consciousness.

In 1996, Daniel Goldhagen wrote the explosive book Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, wherein he argues that most ordinary Germans were “willing executioners.” He advanced the notion of “eliminationist antisemitism” in German political culture through the centuries leading up to NAZI Germany. A year later, the German historian Hans Mommsen argued that Goldhagen failed to appreciate the varied forms of German antisemitism and rejected Goldhagen’s “unilinear continuity of German antisemitism from the medieval period.”

It would be perfectly appropriate for a teacher in a high school Holocaust studies class to expose his or her students to both Goldhagen’s and Mommsen’s arguments about the role of ordinary Germans and allow students to discuss and reach their own conclusions. I would not want my kids’ teacher to impart the Goldhagen thesis as the only acceptable interpretation.

Similarly, in the historical discussion over slavery, there are numerous disagreements over, for instance, the primary reason Abraham Lincoln initiated the Civil War. Was it to end slavery, as some assert? Or was it to save the Union, as others argue? How do we weigh the evidence? A good [history teacher](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/11/still-dont-know-much-about-history/) would help students understand the debate, not provide them a single answer.

On the recent row over the Texas Holocaust education pronouncement, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, a prominent progressive voice, [stated](https://www.jta.org/2021/10/15/united-states/jewish-skeptics-of-critical-race-theory-say-texas-holocaust-education-incident-does-not-deter-them) “Just like there is no historical debate about the historicity of the Holocaust, “there are also no ‘both sides’ to American chattel slavery, to systemic racism, to lynchings and land theft and Indigenous genocide.”

If Rabbi Ruttenberg is referring to systemic racism as manifested in Jim Crow laws, there’s no argument there. But if she’s speaking about systemic racism as a singular explanation for disparities among groups in contemporary America, that should be regarded as a completely legitimate topic for debate and disagreement.

Obviously, pre-civil rights America was replete with systemic racism. It was written into the laws of the land and brutally enforced. But in the wake of the passage of the civil rights laws, the role of systemic racism becomes murkier. I [believe](https://www.facebook.com/696815868/videos/1059467374860346/) that there is systemic racism in specific institutions, but I do not agree it is embedded in every nook and cranny of contemporary American life. Those who assert the ubiquity of systemic racism often demonize any other explanation for why there are differences in group outcomes and generally seek to shut down the conversation. It’s as settled in their minds as the occurrence of slavery itself. But it’s not settled in the minds of many other people.

There can be and often is more than one cause for disparity among groups. Why should kids – and society – have to settle with one favored explanation? If we can’t diagnose a problem in all its complexity, we won’t be able to solve it.

Just as we debate whether ordinary Germans were willing executioners and why Lincoln initiated the Civil War, we can and must debate the prevalence and meaning of systemic racism in America today. In the meantime, the historicity of the Holocaust will withstand a few idiots in Texas who can’t tell the difference between fact and opinion.

*From The Times of Israel, October 17, 2021*

**Cancel Culture, Jewish Educators Style**

By: David Bernstein

Two weeks ago, I co-wrote an [Open Letter](https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/an-open-letter-to-the-charles-e-smith-jewish-day-school/) to the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in the Washington, D.C. area raising concerns about the school’s “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice” (DEIJ) program. Like so many others, the school’s diversity program does not provide alternative perspectives to the typical “anti-racist” point of view. My co-author and I, both of whom had children graduate from the school, regard this “pedagogy” as a form of indoctrination.

I decided to post this Open Letter on [JEDLAB](https://www.facebook.com/groups/119600664905706), a Jewish educators Facebook group with 12,000 members. I was active in the early days of JEDLAB, a space where innovative educators shared and discussed cutting edge ideas and approaches often at odds with the Jewish educational establishment. I loved it so much I even [interviewed](https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/the-i-and-thou-of-social-media-a-conversation-about-jedlab-and-organizational-change/) the founder in eJewish Philanthropy.

It seemed a perfect forum for generating interesting and important discussion about emerging diversity programs in Jewish educational settings.

<https://jewishjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bernstein-facebook-395x858.jpg>

Apparently, however, DEIJ initiatives in Jewish schools are not open for discussion.

Almost immediately, a member of the Facebook group pronounced the post “racist.” The member said I had no business posting my views there. Several others piled on, also calling the post “racist” and urging its immediate removal. Not a single person took exception or came to my defense  (except, of course, in private messages). The comment from the member accusing me of promulgating racism had numerous “likes,” including one from a mainstream Jewish professional who is a self-proclaimed moderate on the subject. His vote of support for this vitriol suggests otherwise.

<https://jewishjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bernstein-facebook-response.jpg>

About an hour after posting, the post was removed without explanation by the administrators of the group. There are two possible explanations:

<https://jewishjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bernstein-removal.jpg>

The first is that the administrators agreed that raising concerns about the “anti-racist” perspective being taught to kids is inherently racist. Ibrahim X. Kendi has [spoken](https://www.amazon.com/How-Be-Antiracist-Ibram-Kendi-ebook/dp/B07D2364N5/ref%3Dsr_1_2?dchild=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwwsmLBhACEiwANq-tXHsQnwSkpCylZigUKvkAaiwotfJQtHRur5020U9Py2wt7MP3bMJjeBoCMBIQAvD_BwE&hvadid=482053414079&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=9007795&hvnetw=g&hvqmt=e&hvrand=5239640292453688075&hvtargid=kwd-1055993964459&hydadcr=22565_10346486&keywords=how+to+be+an+anti-+racist&qid=1634902814&qsid=131-6386315-6028426&sr=8-2&sres=0525509283%2C1952663326%2CB08M2BKBR5%2CB08HGTJG6P%2CB08VLVZ4W9%2CB08GFVLDZZ%2CB09CRQFNPQ%2CB08BDRJ5J4%2CB086V1NJSF%2C9124030953%2CB09GCPMQBQ%2C1689012056%2CB08B2V6Y3N%2CB08BF2V52P%2CB08CZWY695%2C1687724814&srpt=ABIS_BOOK), and we must all fall in line.

If that’s the case, I despair over the future of Jewish education.

A second possibility is that the administrators received complaints that my ideas make the space “unsafe” for participants. This, of course, meant that the administrators had to silence someone with a different point of view. This is the “heckler’s veto”: a few shrill voices who protest a particular viewpoint get spineless institutions to stifle debate.

If that’s the case, I again despair over the future of Jewish education.

Our kids must be educated in a culture and sensibility that values Makhloket Leshem Shamayim—arguments for the sake of heaven. This sensibility welcomes—even encourages—debate among people with different points of view. The Jewish tendency to question and engage in intellectual discourse is one of the great qualities of the Jewish tradition. Why would anyone, least of all Jewish educators, try to blot this out? Don’t we want our kids to be critical thinkers and challenge the status quo?

<https://jewishjournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/bernstein-support.jpg>

Of course, there are many Jewish educators and parents who do value discussion among people with different viewpoints. A headmaster of a pluralistic Jewish school direct messaged me on Facebook and thanked me for raising the topic. One prominent professor called to say “I wanted to kiss you.” Numerous Jewish day school teachers reached out to me and my co-author of the Open Letter, thanking us for giving a voice to their concerns. These teachers cannot speak publicly themselves because, well, they fear they will be cancelled, just like my Facebook post.

How is that good for the Jews?

*David Bernstein is the Founder of Jewish Institute for Liberal Value (JILV.org). Follow him on Twitter @DavidLBernstein*

*From The Jewish Journal of Los Angeles, October 22, 2021, re-posted to SHU 1028, December 8, 2021*

**An Open Letter to the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School**

By: Dr. Brandy Shufutinsky and David Bernstein

We are writing out of concern for the recently introduced CESJDS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) Learning Framework. Both of us have had children who attended and graduated from CESJDS. Both of us are thankful for the in-depth secular and Jewish education our children received while at the school. Both of us appreciate the school’s commitment to critical thinking and Jewish values, which our children have taken with them into college and beyond.

Yet both of us were taken aback at the lack of critical thinking and intellectual openness evident in the CESJDS DEIJ Framework. The school has laudably embraced a commitment to racial justice and to ensuring that its students are committed to related Jewish values, such as “K’dushah (Holiness), V’ahavta L’rei-akha (Loving your Neighbor), Kehillah (Community), and pluralism.” We support the school’s dedication to empowering students to overcome our nation’s legacy of racism and to make the school community fully inclusive.

But we believe that the DEIJ Framework as currently written sacrifices critical thinking and rigorous debate at the altar of “anti-racism,” a specific set of explanations for racial disparities. The underlying ideology holds that there is only one acceptable explanation for racial disparities — systemic or structural racism — and crowds out any alternative explanation. In addition to being intellectually stifling and inimical to critical thinking, the ideology fuels antisemitism on the left, which we saw on full display during the conflict in Gaza this past May. By insisting on an oppressed versus oppressor binary, the ideology sets up Jews and Israel to be portrayed as oppressors and generally erases the Jewish narrative. While Jewish organizations that embrace such a framework don’t intend to reinforce such a binary that harms Jews, the insistence on linking privilege to identity does just that.

In the long term, our country can only lift up marginalized populations and make strides on overcoming racism by living up to our liberal principles, which encourage free inquiry, argument, dissent and critical thinking in education.

The DEIJ Framework starts off by acknowledging the importance of critical thinking and open discourse: “Students will learn to respect divergent thinking to engage people of diverse backgrounds and beliefs in thoughtful discussion.” But then the Framework contradicts the very possibility of open discourse by stating that “Students will recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics while identifying figures, groups, events, and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.”

This second statement cited above dictates that teachers impart and students embrace a belief system about power and privilege. There is no mention in the Framework of any other factor that might also explain contemporary social dynamics and disparities. We want to be clear that we are not arguing that the school shouldn’t teach about slavery, reconstruction and Jim Crow in historical context. We wholeheartedly endorse such a curriculum. Rather, we are concerned that the DEIJ Framework embraces a set of hotly contested theories of our current social problems. In other words, the Framework presents opinion as fact. These explanations for disparity should be debated by students, not handed to them as doctrine.

We’d be inclined to give the school the benefit of the doubt that it will, in fact, encourage such open discourse but for the “Student Resource” list that follows on the DEIJ webpage. Every article, every website and every video in the Student Resource reinforces the same basic ideological contention about power and privilege.

The author of one recommended article states, “I strongly feel that de-assimilation and the dismantling of whiteness is critical to both the eradication of racism and the survival of the Jewish people.” While we do not have a problem with students reading an article calling for the “dismantling of whiteness,” where is the counterpoint? By neglecting to provide such an alternative perspective, the school is leaving students with a single, highly contentious view on the matter. Indeed, there is no mention in the Student Resource of a single Black heterodox thinker, such as Glenn Loury, John McWhorter or Coleman Hughes, offering an alternative perspective on race and racism. How can students possibly “respect divergent thinking to engage people of diverse backgrounds” if they are presented with a single ideological frame of reference rather than a range of opinions and views? Where is the school’s hallmark commitment to viewpoint diversity?

CESJDS and, indeed, all our educational institutions have a choice: they can expose students to a variety of perspectives about what diversity means for society, or they can prescribe a particular set of theories and explanations for why our society is the way it is. They can teach students how to think or they can teach students what to think. But they can’t do both. We fear that in embracing this particular DEIJ curriculum, CESJDS has signed up for the latter. There are alternatives.

David Bernstein is the Founder of Jewish Institute for Liberal Values (JILV).
Dr. Brandy Shufutinsky is a social worker, writer, researcher and advocate. She is a JILV board member.

*From The Washington Jewish Week, October 13, 2021, reposted to SHU 1028, December 8, 2021*

**The Iraqi Jewish Shame of Tikvah Neo-Con White Jewish Supremacist David Bernstein**

It is very rare for one of the objects of my ire to respond directly to me.

On the evening of my latest attack on David Project Bernstein – and there have been many of them over the years – I received this very short e-mail from him:

**Hey bro, thanks for the profile (though it’s mostly inaccurate). You should at least know about my own Sephardic heritage:**

[**https://quillette.com/2021/09/02/maternal-lessons-in-politics-from-a-jewish-iraqi-american-ping-pong-champion/**](https://quillette.com/2021/09/02/maternal-lessons-in-politics-from-a-jewish-iraqi-american-ping-pong-champion/)

As I will show in this note, the Quillette article will further confirm just what a lying hypocrite he is, and how he continues to abuse the Sephardic heritage and support the Ashkenazi racists intent on erasing us.

In my defense, I have never **once** seen any information presented by Bernstein in his many institutional bios that included **any** mention of his mother and where she was born.

Please feel free to read each one with great care:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_L._Bernstein>

<https://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org/david-bernstein-jewish-council-for-public-affairs-jcpa/>

<https://jilv.org/about/>

You can once again review his David Project Cancel Culture history – which I attacked when discussing his current CHUTZPAH-dik attacks on the current New Racial Consciousness and its own form of Cancel Culture – and his anti-Sephardic HASBARAH advocacy with the JIMENA-linked “Forgotten Refugees” documentary:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Forgotten_Refugees>

<https://www.jimena.org/resources/forgotten-refugees/>

Once again, I point to Yehouda Shenhav’s classic article “Spineless Bookkeeping” which shows how the Arab Refugee issue is being used to undermine the Palestinians and not for any other reason:

<https://www.972mag.com/spineless-bookkeeping-the-use-of-mizrahi-jews-as-pawns-against-palestinian-refugees/>

We are just Pawns in their Game.

It is also worthwhile to note here that JIMENA Director Sarah Levin and Tikvah Tablet Editor Alana Newhouse, like Bernstein, have Sephardic mothers.

I only know this by direct communication with all three of them, as they are reticent to “sully” their Ashkenazi surnames with **any** taint of the lowly Oriental:

<https://www.jimena.org/staff/sarah-levin/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alana_Newhouse>

Newhouse’s Tikvah Tablet bio is even less informative:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/contributors/alana-newhouse>

When I spoke privately to Newhouse, she kvetched endlessly about have to attend two separate Synagogue services on Yom Kippur, one Ashkenazi, the other Sephardi, and expressed absolutely no concern or affection for her Sephardic lineage.

Without trying to make this too personal, I must say that she chose to reject all the articles I submitted to her for publication, and soon brought on Esther Levy-Chehebar to present Sephardim in a superficial and often humiliating light:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/contributors/esther-levychehebar>

Again, if you still do not believe me, please compare and contrast her idiotic articles with those of “serious” Yiddishist Rokhl Kafrissen and her devoted brand of White Jewish Supremacy:

<https://www.tabletmag.com/contributors/rokhl-kafrissen>

Sarah Levin has continued to try and engage with me after my attacks on her and JIMENA, but her work and public profile remain completely consistent with the HASBARAH White Jewish Supremacy that Tom Pessah presented in his seminal article on her group and its Neo-Con racist machinations:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tXd9HrTpRUm3oOkegJtKAw3MMuD-jt-mume90yyTvMg/edit>

It has been repeatedly confirmed by White Jewish institutions like eJewish Philanthropy:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xzRZtYI1amnNyGM47ny41p_A32xToEQJPZyUUimzrbI/edit#heading=h.gjdgxs>

Levin knows nothing about the Sephardic heritage, and JIMENA remains a strictly HASBARAH racist group, as we saw in their Neo-Con attacks on California’s Ethnic Studies Curriculum:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SBkVBFplCWMowuOs6V_0aJ1ZDh6JQd8vtwz22A_xdvA/edit>

That one was yet another brick in the endless FOX News Alt-Right Culture War, as the network once again branded the New Racial Consciousness as “Hate for America”:

<https://www.foxnews.com/us/los-alamitos-ethnic-studies-program-criticized-letter>

So there is that!

We can contrast this trio of Sephardic shame with the case of the great graphic novelist Joann Sfar, whose mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi parentage has led to many interesting cultural productions:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pH_hEwUcvmOEy5tdJ5brNibZYwn60hWvypYGTZFZC_o/edit>

In my additional notes to the article, I mention my interview with him at The Center for Jewish History, though it has unfortunately been scrubbed from their website:

http://www.cjh.org/event/1097

The interview directly engaged this dual identity, which can be seen in a comparative reading of his books *The Rabbi’s Cat* and *Klezmer*:

<https://www.amazon.com/Rabbis-Cat-Pantheon-Graphic-Novels/dp/0375714642>

<https://www.amazon.com/Klezmer-Tales-Wild-Joann-2006-09-05/dp/B01FGLF5BQ>

The Sephardi book is a philosophical-cultural meditation on Judaism, Post-Colonialism, and Convivencia, while the Ashkenazi book is from the very get-go a portrayal of Ashkenazi divisiveness, dysfunction, and religious violence.

Sfar himself engaged the matter in a Freudian manner when I interviewed him, and noted how other interviewers and reviewers never picked up on that part of his story.

But Sfar and other Sephardi cultural theorists and activists are simply not part of the Straussian Neo-Con world, as has become clear from the deplorable Newhouse and her Tikvah Tablet Trumpism.

I do not think it necessary to review all the Tikvah Tablet racism at this late date. If you do not get it by now, then you will never get it. Maybe you should just sign up with Ruth Wisse and Meir Soloveichik, and go visit Zalman Bernstein’s grave!

As far as David Bernstein is concerned, his e-mail did not choose to mention the shameful “Columbia Unbecoming” bloodletting, and his deep devotion to Cancel Culture of the HASBARAH kind over many materially productive decades now:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GQ1T91xG72SCnuUwl7WQwGYGZk95Dg65zRphnSZxPWg/edit>

His e-mail did not choose to mention his superior Bret Stephens’ racist column on “Jewish Genius”:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m94er1fxTBO2L3jClvnNgWaS2OFZcxWvRFthT0nUOkc/edit>

For the record, here is the NYT cleaned-up version of the racist article, based on White Supremacy Eugenics, with their pathetic disclaimer:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/27/opinion/jewish-culture-genius-iq.html>

What is fascinating about Bernstein’s Quillette article – and of course it would have to be in [Quillette](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/11/intellectual-dark-web-quillette-claire-lehmann-221917/)! – is that it refutes many of the HASBARAH positions he and his Neo-Con allies have taken.

First, we must address the issue of the FARHUD:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/152mzNuyZzR5UWpohF6vmWWheMnoQefygNHp4-8CK-_8/edit>

The article confirms that the horrible murderous event was a time of confusion when different Iraqi Muslims did different things, as Nissim Rejwan’s eyewitness testimony affirms.

In Bernstein’s own words about his mother and her memories:

**It was a subject she knew something about. She was just four months old when about 200 of her fellow Iraqi Jews were** [**slaughtered**](https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-the-mob-came-for-the-jews-of-baghdad-11622237901?st=lro2izdxpym3urx&reflink=article_email_share)**, while scores of others were beaten and raped, in a 1941 Baghdad pogrom (known as the Farhud) whose 80th anniversary was marked earlier this year. She and her family members remained safe because they’d been sheltered by Muslim neighbors, who traded houses with them during what became the most deadly anti-Semitic riot in Middle East history. As guests in a Muslim household, she explained to me, their protection became a matter of family honor for their hosts.**

Rather than referring to Rejwan, Bernstein links to – naturally – a Wall Street Journal Op-Ed by someone named Joseph Samuels – yet another ambiguous surname:

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/when-the-mob-came-for-the-jews-of-baghdad-11622237901?st=lro2izdxpym3urx&reflink=article_email_share>

I googled Mr. Samuels and found that he has been adopted by the Holocaust lecture circuit, even though the FARHUD was not part of the Nazi Holocaust:

<https://vanderbilthustler.com/39394/featured/farhud-massacre-survivor-joseph-samuels-speaks-at-latest-installation-of-the-holocaust-lecture-series/>

Just to make it HASBARAH official, the FARHUD has been included in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia*:

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-farhud>

Like Bernstein’s mother, Samuels was a child during the terror-filled events, so he would not be as accurate a chronicler of the time as Rejwan.

But this does not stop Bernstein from doing his best Lyn Julius impression:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/REB00Id_UXw/m/IbAHOCBf7CsJ>

Julius of course is a rabid Islamophobe who denies in toto the positive cultural interchange between Jewish and Muslim culture in the Iberian and Arab world, helping to erase a Sephardic culture she knows nothing about – other than HENNA:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WXmmPlo2S1YQ7zpKkW8pbTqssJKkbEA7B78aRITmY1o/edit>

Edwin Black has written a HASBARAH book on the matter that shows us how it is being used by the racist Zionist Ashkenazim:

<https://www.amazon.com/Farhud-Roots-Arab-Nazi-Alliance-Holocaust/dp/0914153145>

Here is my response to all the distortions:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/estFwLUHJZM/m/4fqDUN-dAQAJ>

There **were** some Iraqi Muslims who responded to the British provocation with Anti-Jewish violence, as there were many more who chose to “save” Jews, putting their own lives in peril.

Though many Iraqi Jews abandoned the country in the wake of the Anti-British sentiment and the establishment of the State of Israel, Bernstein’s mother’s family remained.

We all know the tumultuous history of the country and its anti-democratic governments, though many might not be aware of the still-unsolved mystery of the Mas’ouda Shemtob Synagogue bombing and the other Zionist-related Anti-Jewish violence that helped push the Jews out:

 <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/wp-content/files_mf/1391450188d7shawaf.pdf>

Indeed, the 2007 article by Rayyan Al-Shawaf published in Dissent magazine shows us just how complicated the series of terrorist actions aimed at the Iraqi Jewish community remains. And it is in the interests of Israel’s Secret Services to keep it that way.

After all, who cares about Iraqi Jews anyway!

Perhaps the best discussion of the matter, with all the possible confusion based on the conflicted sources both written and oral, is still Abbas Shiblak’s 1986 book *The Lure of Zion*:

<https://www.amazon.com/Lure-Zion-Case-Iraqi-Jews/dp/0863560334>

Even more incendiary is Iraqi-born Naiem Giladi’s *Ben-Gurion’s Scandals: How the Mossad and Haganah Eliminated Jews*:

<https://www.amazon.com/Ben-Gurions-Scandals-Haganah-Mossad-Eliminated/dp/1893302407>

Bernstein does not refer to these sources because they do not support his HASBARAH narrative.

And this, of course, is why he is such a complete hypocrite:

<https://groups.google.com/g/Davidshasha/c/9vrg0jCRe5g>

In SHU 1028 I presented the following two articles which display Bernstein’s autocratic hubris, as he duplicitously demands “Free Thought” in Jewish schools, while at the same time denying it to others:

<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/341665/cancel-culture-jewish-educators-style/>

<https://www.washingtonjewishweek.com/an-open-letter-to-the-charles-e-smith-jewish-day-school/>

He followed this SHANDA up with yet another duplicitous attack on the lack of “Debate” in America:

<https://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/342887/has-america-stopped-debating/>

Tell it to the Columbia Middle Eastern Studies department and to those who Bernstein has sought to Cancel over the years!

In the Tikvah Straussian world that Bernstein inhabits there is only **one** point of view, and those who do not espouse that point of view are locked out of the discourse and ultimately demonized.

It is something we saw when Bernstein was asked to participate in what I have called the “Jazz Against Democracy” conference held by the Tikvah ASF’s Aryeh Tepper and his Straussian ways:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lHRy4s8XIPfPnDPNRLPOI2t1-YTdOc3vtMVgN90lFVY/edit>

I also presented a set of articles on the matter in a special newsletter, providing more context and background to understand it, and the damage it has done to both Sephardim and the African-American Civil Rights Movement:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KcrIEAbb8bTSUFlrl2ftRMolPzxaLz5jaX7bGecAdYo/edit>

David Bernstein’s entire career has been lived insight the racist Ashkenazi Neo-Con Jewish bubble that today has been gathered under The Tikvah Fund umbrella. He has until the very recent Quillette article **never** presented himself as an Arab Jew, and for good reason: The Neo-Con Jewish world is fully White Jewish Supremacy, and when Arab Jews are mentioned – as is the case with the ubiquitous FARHUD – it is always in terms of the “Lachrymose” version of Jewish history as presented by both Bernard Lewis and his devoted disciple Norman Stillman:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nSdrjtm-qKwYxEkewoX5ZNQpx28lJZs1no8hOmZrVKY/edit>

<https://rl.talis.com/3/ucl/items/5255E0D2-0862-9BD2-9B5B-29E34DB6AD25.html>

Stillman’s 1991 Tikkun article “Myth, Countermyth, and Distortion” has apparently vanished from on-line viewing, but you can glean its basic thesis from Mark Cohen’s exchange with him in the same issue of the magazine:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VXSLMHVKbOp3H39xbbLEmaC7V65DGgz4/view?ths=true>

Stillman and Lewis remain the basic template for the Tikvah Neo-Con understanding of Arab Jews:

<https://jewishreviewofbooks.com/articles/211/reorientation/>

In my article for Critical Muslim’s special issue *Reclaiming Al-Andalus*, I present an alternative view of the Sephardic heritage from the professional Ashkenazi Orientalists Stillman and Cohen:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KNT3cG91CHYNf6ibRwp_gSQbcaDV1Irj/view?ths=true>

Here is the complete issue:

<https://criticalmuslim.com/issues/06-reclaiming-al-andalus>

As we have seen – and will certainly continue to see – the Tikvah Neo-Con world is certainly not a pluralistic inclusive one, where different ideas **compete**. It is a monolingual and monocultural universe, where only those who heed the Neo-Con dogma are allowed to speak.

Sephardim are not permitted in this world, and when we look closely at each one of these Jewish institutions, we find that there is a consistent Ashkenazi bias. When Sephardim are mentioned – and even included, though this is more of a Marrano-like deflection as we have seen in Bernstein, Newhouse, and Levin who continue to hide their maternal lineages – it is always in order to demonize the Arab-Muslim world in strict HASBARAH fashion.

Moreover, the Sephardim themselves consistently lack actual agency, as their history and culture are being demeaned and often erased by a White Jewish Supremacy, led by Cancel Culture machers like David Bernstein, who zealously do the work of the Neo-Con racists and their FOX News Trumpist allies.

Ping Pong indeed!

Zei Gezunt to all the White Jewish Supremacists and their Sephardi lackeys.

Yasher Koach.

David Shasha

*From SHU 1036, February 2, 2022*

**David Bernstein REALLY Wants You to Know that His Mother is Iraqi and that He is Very Anti-WOKE!**

I once again apologize in advance for the overkill, but as a Sephardi my obligation, unlike what we see from the racist Ashkenazim, is to tell the truth as best as I can and provide SHU readers with the greatest possible transparency as I can.

I posted my response to David Bernstein’s one line e-mail to me:

<https://groups.google.com/g/Davidshasha/c/4XXWvb997WM>

Then I received another one, with even fewer words!

**What?? I write about it a lot!**

[**https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/334702/my-cheshbon-hanefesh-for-cowardice-in-the-face-of-wokeness/**](https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/334702/my-cheshbon-hanefesh-for-cowardice-in-the-face-of-wokeness/)

“A lot” apparently means two articles from 2021, after a long career in the White Jewish institutional world, where he has said nothing about the Sephardic heritage or addressed the issue of Ashkenazi racism. He has remained absolutely devoted to HASBARAH White Jewish Supremacy, in spite of his vain protestations regarding his family background.

Like so many of his Neo-Con Tikvah allies, he appears to know precious little about Jewish History and the intellectual-literary tradition of that past, which never seems to show up in either his writings or in his public institutional work. It is all just more Right Wing extremist agitprop.

Indeed, even after being exposed to a sliver of Jewish History and intellectualism as it applies to his own work, he chose to blithely ignore my response to him; showing how little actual concern or curiosity such people have for the richness and depth of our Jewish heritage and the complexities of the Sephardic/Ashkenazi binary.

Such knowledge is apparently not a prerequisite for employment in the White Jewish institutional world!

More than this, his two insulting e-mails, to which, Sephardi idiot that I am, I am devoting reams of words and intricate arguments, do not at all address the basic issues of my critique: His resolute promotion of Cancel Culture, his Jewish WOKENESS, his deployment of HASBARAH racism to distort Sephardic History in the service of Islamophobia and a deep-seated hatred of Arabs, and his duplicitous use of Open Debate and Free Speech, as he emphatically denies it to others.

It is all presented in the form of an abject hypocrisy laid out as a Projection; accusing others in classic Troll the Libs fashion of the very thing he has been doing since “Columbia Unbecoming.”

And I notice that he does not like to mention “Columbia Unbecoming.”

After reading his contemptuous e-mails to me, I now assume that with the single exception of my unintentional oversight about his mother’s family, a product of his own ambivalence over his identity, he otherwise completely agrees with all the things I said about him, and that I will not have to address his anxious responses ever again.

But back to the task at hand, as it will be the final time I respond to his direct provocations.

As far as his second article, to be quite honest, I was not really expecting an Iraqi Jewish spiel in an attack on WOKE. But that is of course my own naivete, as it does in hindsight make perfect sense that a hardcore Straussian Neo-Con like Bernstein would use his mother’s identity as a shield to deflect from his obvious racism as a member of the larger Tikvah Neo-Con world. It is a common trick of all Uncle Toms.

But in this case, I cannot even call Bernstein an Uncle Tom because he does not present any real sense of being a Sephardi, as is the case with a **real** Uncle Tom like his Jewish Journal publisher David Suissa:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1c1l0_eK349whup0o6s-Gy_dtWeVCZVQOZC3Q-UFwSQM/edit>

Bernstein’s Ashkenazi ethos has not at all absorbed any substantive aspect of the traditional Sephardic mentality, as it is full of PILPUL twists and turns.

<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-is-pilpul-and-why-on_b_507522>

In my response to Bernstein’s first e-mail, I made it clear that I had not at all been aware that his mother was born in Baghdad. It was important for me to correct this, while at the same time make note of the fact that Bernstein, whose surname provides no indication of this maternal lineage, has been extremely careful in his biographical information for Jewish institutional websites **not** to provide the information.

It continues to strike me that Bernstein is loath to accept who he **really** is, pathetically presenting his family history as exculpatory, as if that can make the difference when it comes to dealing with Sephardi exclusion and White Jewish Supremacy. He refuses to come to terms with the Jewish complexities of the two sides of his family history.

He has not understood what I have called the “Broken Frame” that now plagues Jewish identity:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TjFku-0Z8bD2BD4QuDxv6OWK5Lubd8Uj/view?ths=true>

Rabbi Marc Angel fully understands!

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZZLhopNWNnqMb0GW2OQGcripP8SnZojsmxamctBLDzU/edit>

I was especially taken by this *echt* “Bourekas and Haminados” passage from the Jewish Journal article:

**I grew up in Columbus, Ohio, to an Iraqi Jewish mother who came directly to the United States in 1963 and to a U.S.-born, third-generation Ashkenazi father. When I was three, my grandmother came from Baghdad and moved in with us. Three years later my grandmother’s sister and her 14-year-old son moved in with us from Iraq and took my brother’s bedroom for three years. The house was bustling with high-pitched laughter and arguments laced in colorful Arabic swear words and a screeching parrot named Bibi. My father, who spoke no Arabic, often took refuge in the bedroom. I spoke to my grandmother and great aunt in a Jewish dialect of Arabic. It always struck me as odd and not a little exclusionary that American Jews thought all Judaism was Ashkenazic. Why was corned beef a “Jewish food,” I wondered, but not Kubbah, the farina dough dumplings filled with meat eaten by Iraqi Jews? Every Sunday morning, the smell of searing cumin woke me up as my grandmother made kitchry, the Jewish rice and red lentil delicacy. I appreciate the dish now more than I did then.**

Indeed, if it has “always struck” him “as odd and not a little exclusionary that American Jews thought all Judaism was Ashkenazic,” why is it that he has chosen to ignore the Tikvah Fund racism, led by Bret Stephens and Alana Newhouse, that surrounds him?

Maybe he hid in the bedroom with his father!

In my previous post, I referred to perhaps the best-known and most egregious example of this racism – Bret Stephens’ infamous “Jewish Genius” article:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m94er1fxTBO2L3jClvnNgWaS2OFZcxWvRFthT0nUOkc/edit>

I would insert here two relevant examples of where the Tikvah Neo-Cons are at the moment.

The first is the usual Anti-Vaccine Lysol propaganda that has become the specialty of Alana Newhouse and her Tikvah Tablet cabal:

<https://mailchi.mp/20df06be4fb1/what-happened-today-june-16-810125?e=4b6f9b46a8>

Indeed, it is one more attack on the outgoing New York City Mayor, who has long been the whipping boy of the Tikvah extremists:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/uFhuGVvR9Ko/m/qGoRJZBGAwAJ>

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/i8ZF-UUVpUg/m/EMmGrAQwAwAJ>

Perhaps even more troubling is the UnHerd article from Tikvah Tablet senior writer Jacob Siegel, the very giddy Insurrectionist MAGA tribute “The Rise of Rittenhouse Republicans”:

<https://unherd.com/2021/12/the-rise-of-rittenhouse-republicans/>

As the Tikvah crowd continues to obsess over Cancel Culture, WOKE, and BLM, we are seeing a slow-motion destruction of American Democracy. It is not a wonder that the Tikvah machers have made their choice, given Leo Strauss’ contempt for Democracy, but it is a truly sad moment in American Jewish History, as we see a debased lack of concern for the actual dangers we face as a culture and as a society. It is a very devious way of conforming to the Trump model and its subversion of the Liberal idea.

You see, Bernstein read my article, and in classic PILPUL fashion, he continued to fixate on the Born-in-Iraq issue to the exclusion of all else. His priorities are quite clear, as we can see when we read his articles and look at his institutional work.

The Sephardic tradition does uphold these values, as can be seen in the history of Religious Humanism and its pluralistic tolerance for the larger world.

By adopting the Ashkenazi Straussian model, Bernstein has sought to effectively undermine the Sephardic heritage, and has suppressed his dual family history from his public website biographies. I attribute that to the fact of White Jewish Supremacy in the Neo-Con Jewish world he lives in.

It thus remains – regardless of whatever else he might be able to pull out of his hat that I might have missed – a fact that he lives inside a world where Sephardim are not wanted and where Sephardic intellectual-literary culture does not exist. The public record is clear, and he knows it well.

Moreover, we all understand that it is career suicide for anyone to actually criticize the Neo-Con Jews for their Anti-Sephardi racism and live to tell the tale. Even if he was inclined to do so, he would never dare risk his career in that way.

I was thus struck by the following passage on Inclusion:

**When I first heard about the identity category of Jews of Color that included Mizrahi Jews like me, I was puzzled. It never occurred to me to see myself as a Jew of Color. One Black Jew told me, much to my horror, about her experience in synagogue when an older lady presumed she was “the help.” It was not the first and only time it happened. Certainly nothing like that ever happened to me. We do have a responsibility to be a more inclusive and welcoming community.**

There is much wrong with this paragraph, not the least of which is the fact that the “Jews of Color” construct hides the fact that the African-American converts to Judaism are nearly all Ashkenazim in their Jewish identification. I have yet to encounter a single Jew of Color who identifies with the Sephardic tradition.

The problem Bernstein is talking about is a more general White Supremacy, rather than a specifically White Jewish Supremacy.

It is thus clear – and could be a result of the fact that he grew up in Columbus, Ohio and not New York or Los Angeles where the Jewish institutional system, particularly the school system, is indeed quite racist and exclusionary – that he is oblivious to the primacy of such racism in the world he operates in.

He then emphatically defends WOKE White Jewish Supremacy against the New Racial Consciousness in the most vociferous terms:

**Today, much of the established Jewish community has been swept up by the woke tsunami. Jewish organizations have short circuited the usual deliberations, a hallmark of Jewish civic life. Seemingly overnight they have changed the language they use in describing the power dynamics of American society. Advantages became “privilege.” Equality became “equity.” Dominant culture became “supremacy.” Emotional hurt became “harm.” Each of these terms carries ideological connotations beyond their literal meanings.**

It is a classic Troll the Libs move.

Again, I am not sure what planet Bernstein is living on, but Ashkenazi racist discrimination in the Jewish institutional world is clear, as I presented it in the following Ynet article included in SHU 335:

[https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3594809,00.html](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0%2C7340%2CL-3594809%2C00.html)

The strange thing in these “Sephardim Want to Be Haredim” stories is that the very “inclusion” process leads to a complete loss of the Sephardic heritage in the student. These Haredi schools are not going to change their curricula to reflect the Sephardic Jewish religious tradition, but it still seems that the SHAS-addled self-hating Mizrahim want in to that corrupt system.

It shows the absurd lengths that Sephardim will go in order to become Ashkenazim, and lose their unique Jewish heritage.

Even more to the point is my recent article on Rabbi David Eliach and the racist Yeshivah of Flatbush High School:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fvgd94a2OB84vBnKwa8M8ams-vhm1x2vaXoMl8f3jA0/edit>

Though I do not have the exact dates in his bio, I assume that it has been some time since Bernstein left Ohio for the more densely-populated Jewish urban centers of the Northeast.

At the very least, by 2021 he should be aware of them, as he canvasses the Jewish institutional world in which he works.

His anti-WOKE article is fully in line with his close ally, and David Project protégé, Bari Weiss and the rest of the Neo-Con Jewish mafia.

It has become very big business, as we can see in Weiss’ Substack page goldmine:

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/17/media/bari-weiss-newsletter/index.html>

Indeed, we have seen many Self-Hating Sephardim do the same Neo-Con dance, as continues to be the case with Dr. Mijal Bitton:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11Rp2kwRQcny_KeF1X24JQav3-an2edAl7lySF8nwv6w/edit>

Indeed, Dr. Bitton has long been on the anti-WOKE bandwagon – looking to get herself a solid foothold in that Neo-Con Tikvah world – which she has! – with her attack on Julia Salazar and Identity Politics, published by The Forward in 2018:

<https://groups.google.com/g/davidshasha/c/L267qR8lPqE/m/tztAITSGBAAJ>

It is certainly no coincidence that Bernstein has amped up his anti-WOKE attacks just in time for him to transition into a new White Jewish institutional gig at the Illiberal Jewish Institute for Liberal Values (JILV), which I discussed in the following article:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1U5AbVQpUOkMZyhzuNMoLrSUPdO8Q7vTmsfQuLjKqqpY/edit>

A flurry of activity was set into motion by Weiss’ resignation from The New York Times:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SxkLo73G_WmdoQeRsZbS0ZCKOOSDPUl5yl6BxOaxObQ/edit>

And then with the coronation of Bret SAPIR Stephens as the New King of the Jews:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aTALXUv5we9c8vzIejU8Xm32i5OnKky_jVwGMlMpdNg/edit>

Quite conveniently, Bernstein was making his own career moves, as we have seen in his Wikipedia page:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_L._Bernstein>

After The David Project and its utility to the White Jewish Supremacy institutional world, he moved from the AJC to the JCPA, and now he was fully in to begin JILV as the context was ripe for a Neo-Con Jewish resurgence on the heels of the great success of Trump in the Right Wing world.

In the end, Bernstein has not sought to refute any of my charges of WOKE hypocrisy or of being in the pay of the White Jewish Supremacy cabal as a loyal foot-soldier.

Lord knows what other PILPUL tricks he still might have up his sleeve, but it will be clear to all that his mother’s Iraqi identity has no practical relevance to the larger project that her son has long been involved with.

For many decades he has sought to Cancel those who do not agree with his Neo-Con values, and more than this he has sought to elide the Sephardic heritage in favor of the White Jewish Supremacy that has, as I have shown, turned into a deeply disturbing McCarthyite snitch culture where Owning the Libs means more than adhering to the enlightened Torah values of Sephardic Jewish Humanism.

Bernstein has hidden from his Arab Jewish identity in order to make his way in a world of White Jewish racism which fits him like a glove. It is a world of narrow-mindedness, ignorance, and bullying which exposes the zealotry and cruelty of the Tikvah Neo-Con Straussians.

It is a world where, as I have repeatedly said, lying and prevarication becomes a way of life and where those who are not of the Platonically chosen elite have no say and no role to play in what is in effect a closed world.

David Shasha

*From SHU 1036, February 2, 2022*

**Should the Jewish Community Challenge Progressive Ideology or Just its Portrayal of Jews?**

By: David Bernstein and Eran Shayshan

Eran,

In 2010, REUT came out with a groundbreaking report arguing that the Jewish community must build a robust network to oppose the delegitimization of Israel on the left. One of your main recommendations was for Jewish and pro-Israel groups to engage progressive “fence-sitters” who have not made up their minds on the legitimacy of the Jewish state. Like many in the Jewish advocacy arena, I agreed with your analysis and approach and put it into practice. I still think it was the right approach for the time.

In recent years, however, I’ve started to think that the engage progressives strategy should take back seat to a [rebuild-the-center strategy](https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/a-strategic-reset-for-jewish-community-relations-and-advocacy/), emphasizing building a center-left to center-right coalition of allies in the fight for liberalism and liberal democracy. The reasons for this shift in strategic focus are threefold:

First, progressive politics are more ideologically charged today than they were a decade ago. Most progressives have become so attached to critical race ideologies that many are no longer reachable on Jews and Israel. They have bought into a binary that holds that Israel and Jews are the oppressors and Palestinians are the victims. As the ideological environment has worsened, the influence of the pro-Israel community on the left has precipitously declined.

Second, the price of engaging progressives has gone way up. In order to have any chance of incurring the loyalty of many progressive interlocutors, we often must express support for their ideological predilections and, in doing so, undermine our own values. Moreover, progressive pieties on privilege and power fuel antisemitism. Indeed, REUT very early on named the phenomena of “erasive antisemitism,” which refers to a de facto undermining of Jewish narratives of self-determination in the binary oppressed v. oppressor paradigm. This erasure negates the rights of Jews, who may not wish to identify as part of the “white” dominant class, to define their own identity, experience, and vulnerability.

While identifying erasive antisemitism was a vital insight, it’s not the only form of antisemitism rising from this ideology. We cannot and should not give succor to an ideology that in multiple ways clearly harms us.

Third, engaging progressives carries opportunity costs. We could be using that same time, money and energy building a new coalition spanning the center-left to center-right of the Jewish community that shares our values and will support us in fighting antisemitism on the left as well as the right. That, in my view, is a better expenditure of resources than the progressive engagement approach.

What’s your view on the strategy and approach American Jewish organizations should adopt in light of these ideological challenges?

David,

I agree with your recommended priority of rebuilding-the-center. I’ll add that the fact that Jews are between a rock (antisemitism from the right) and a hard place (antisemitism from the left), also positions Jews uniquely to lead efforts aimed at rebuilding-the-center. A populist resurgence makes the historic role of the Jewish community ever-more crucial. This task, by definition, requires strengthening Jewish communal cohesion, which means that Jewish organizations must proceed carefully in what they say and do in relation to the left so as not to break down the possibility of consensus inside the Jewish community.

What’s more, the current political polarization largely ‘erased’ safe spaces and diminished the ability of diverse Jewish voices to engage in constructive discussions on contested issues and disagreements. A rebuild-the-center movement could provide a safe haven for discussions crucial for a vibrant Jewish community.

Rebuilding-the-center could also serve as a new platform for Jewish renewal among young Jews, whose participation in this conversation is essential. Today, Israel-related antisemitism prevents young Jews from engaging with Israel-related issues. This effort may “smoke out” many within the less engaged, silent Jewish majority.

Where we may differ, if I understand you correctly, is on the emphasis you place on a broad critique of woke ideology. In my view, Jewish organizations and leaders should limit their criticisms and focus on articulating the problems with “Israel and Jewish erasure.” They should avoid broad condemnations of the progressive movement, which would risk turning Jewish erasure from a moral to a political issue. An emphasis on issuing a broad critique of wokeness, however warranted, would prevent numerous Jewish communal organizations from joining into a broader effort to oppose erasive antisemitism. The goal must be to create a large Jewish coalition with the proper framing and language around the challenge.

I also maintain there is still important work to be done in progressive circles that tend to downplay the importance of Jewish erasure, which they see as an attempt to avoid the conversation about Israeli policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians. If Jewish organizations play their cards right, organizations that erase Jewish identity may pay a social and political price within progressive movements for their refusal to condemn antisemitism. The task of engaging on this issue for Jewish organizations on the left is particularly complex, but the potential return on investment is high: progressive and liberal voices who criticize erasure of Jews may carry much more weight and influence in preventing the discourse from becoming hostile to Jewish interests.

Eran,

I appreciate your expanding on the potential and importance of the rebuild-the-center strategy. I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to ensure that the concept gets the needed attention in the Jewish world.

Just to be clear, I am not suggesting that the entire Jewish community join me in calling out woke ideology. It would be nice if they did but that’s not remotely realistic. I do think, however, more Jewish leaders should push back against the spread of the ideology in their own organizations and, where possible, raise concerns publicly about its effects. Here a division of labor among organizations is in order, not to mention a little courage among community leaders. Some Jewish organizations on the center and center-left should escalate their concerns about critical race ideologies and others should limit their critique to the dangers of erasive antisemitism. A “diversified portfolio” mitigates risks in Jewish advocacy as well as in financial planning.

I think you underestimate both the dangers of this ideological challenge and the dilemmas inherent to it. The most lethal aspect of critical race ideology for the Jewish community is not, in my opinion, erasive antisemitism, but the attack on enlightenment values. That attack, especially combined with the assault from the extreme right against liberal democracy, portends a grim future for Jews on the American political scene. We can ill-afford to define the challenge too narrowly and just fend for ourselves. The stakes are very high. Even if we are successful in containing erasive antisemitism in the near term, American Jews may yet find ourselves fundamentally alienated from an increasingly illiberal Democratic party and, hence, more generally disenfranchised from American politics.

Moreover, Jewish advocates already face agonizing dilemmas that simply do not allow us to remain neutral on illiberal ideologies. In California, for example, mainstream Jewish groups were divided over whether to try to amend or oppose the state’s “Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” which, in its early forms, was both highly ideological and erasive of the Jewish experience. Some Jewish groups fought, somewhat successfully, to include Jewish narratives in the model curriculum, and others opposed the curriculum altogether. I would have once sided with those trying to amend the curriculum but now join with those who oppose it. The Jewish groups that pushed for changes to the curriculum’s portrayal of Jews conceded to and, in effect, validated a highly ideological framework borne in critical race ideology that names the oppressed and oppressors and undercuts critical thinking and debate. That ideological framework itself inflames antisemitism. I thus do not regard the improvement of the way Jews are depicted in the curriculum as a victory but rather as a dangerous precedent and acquiescence. This case shows that there’s simply no ducking the excruciating dichotomy of either supporting or opposing such ideology.

Lastly, the coalition fighting against the imposition of ideology and for liberal, democratic values is gaining ground by the day. There are just too many people who do not want to live in either a leftwing or rightwing dystopia. If the Jewish community focuses exclusively on how illiberalism affects Jews in the narrowest sense, I am afraid that we will be sidelined in the pursuit to safeguard the liberal project. My recommended strategic approach, which I think should become the majoritarian stance of the mainstream Jewish community, is thus not to attack woke ideology per se, but to position ourselves squarely on the side of liberal forces and to shape those forces as much as possible. And that, I am afraid to say, will sometimes require us to explicitly oppose the ideology.

David,

I very much appreciate your response, and I think this discourse is important as it touches upon several points crucial to Jewish life in America today and Israel’s status in the U.S. I am too looking forward to working together to Rebuild-the-center and join forces, at least on those parts of your work that challenge Israel and Jewish erasure.

I am NOT going to refute the points you have raised, and NOT ONLY because I find myself in agreement with most of them. I guess we differ in our thinking about the most effective strategy against the challenge, which we may also articulate in different ways.

Naturally, there is a link between progressive discourse as a whole and the Jewish-Israeli erasure in progressive discourse. But the differences in defining the challenge have significant consequences on the chances of success and of our capacity to harness the energies of the Jewish community as a whole. Whether we like it or not, taking on the progressive movement is politically fraught and bitterly divisive in the Jewish community.

While the struggle you articulate may be morally worthy, I don’t see how you can build a Jewish center around it or how Jewish communal organizations will be able to join forces if they perceive it as intrinsically political.

I suggest instead adopting a Jewish agenda to confront the challenge, and not a ‘collaterally-Jewish agenda,’ because this is the most effective way to fight the disturbing aspect of erasure in progressive discourse. Such an agenda will allow the Jewish establishment to break the political quagmire and act. Moreover, focusing on Jewish-Israeli erasure “speaks” the language of identity politics and can be an issue around which broad coalitions are built that include liberal and maybe even progressive Jewish organizations.

Like you, I believe the Jewish struggle against the challenges emanating from progressive groups requires rebooting Jewish politics and focusing on rebuilding a center. However, in my eyes, building a Jewish center is not necessarily a political act, but more of a societal act that allows Jews to regain the ability to engage in civil discourse inclusive of politically diverse Jewish voices. This will increase the prospects for collaboration and pursuing collective Jewish action on various issues, including on Israel-Jewish erasure. Rebuilding such a center is also an opportunity to promote a reexamination of collective Jewish identity and to strengthen the perception that Jews in Israel and the US constitute a single people. Focusing only on the ‘erasure’ threat is much better aligned with the scope of such an agenda.

Finally, the current political discourse around “woke” culture in the US is part of an ideologically-charged political, social and economic paradigm clash. The nature of these debates is such that it could take generations to play out and is unlikely to end in a definite victory for either side. Entering the paradigm clash on one side will only accelerate the erosion of both Jewish identity and communal cohesion. It would be a Jewish Vietnam-style quagmire. On the other hand, effectively and systematically challenging Israel-Jewish erasure will require the mobilization of only several dozen organizations with a shared understanding of the threat. This constitutes an ambitious but achievable goal.

David Bernstein is founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values. Eran Shayshon is CEO of the REUT Group, an Israeli think tank. Follow David on Twitter @DavidLBernstein and Eran @EranShayshon

*From eJewish Philanthropy, December 9, 2021, re-posted to SHU 1036, February 2, 2022*

**In Search of Systemic Racism: Distinguishing and Evaluating Seven Different Senses of the Term**

By: David L. Bernstein

In today’s charged ideological environment, “systemic racism” is often asserted as nonchalantly as the day’s weather. The school system tells us that students must be taught to recognize and resist it. The corporate diversity trainer assures us it's in every nook and cranny of the workplace. Public health officials declare that we must eradicate it in the provision of vaccines. The college insists that the student admits his or her complicity in it. When asserted, the reader or listener is supposed to nod in agreement, having heard an incontrovertible fact, as well established as the historicity of chattel slavery in 19th century America or Jim Crow in the 20th. Because it was pervasive in the past, we are told, it must exist in equal measure in the present. Very often, the purveyor of the systemic racism claim provides a single titular example of phenomenon in the present and expects others to assume that if it exists in, say, the criminal justice system, it must exist everywhere else in society. Specific examples of systemic racism are also supposed to be taken at face value. Who would dare question the presence of systemic racism in the criminal justice system? Some claim that there is systemic racism in America and others claim that America itself is systemically racist. Rarely is it clear which of these two claims we are hearing.

Notice how New York Times columnist David Brooks, whose nuanced writing I generally admire, [commits](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/22/opinion/how-racist-is-america.html) what is called “the over-generalization fallacy”: “When, in 2004, researchers sent equally qualified white and black applicants to job interviews in New York City…[black applicants got half as many callbacks or job offers](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2915472/) as whites.” He goes on to say that “Racism is not something we are gently moving past; it’s pervasive. It seems obvious that this reality should be taught in every school.” What, precisely, would Brooks like schools to teach about systemic racism? That systemic racism exists in some general sense in America today? That it explains all or most disparity, as many proponents of the underlying ideology assert?

It’s not that I dispute the existence of systemic racism—I don’t—but rather that I am often left wondering what the user means by the term, how prevalent this form of racism is today, and what the term does and doesn’t explain. Can gun violence in inner city Chicago be explained by systemic racism alone? For that matter, can systemic racism alone explain disparate rates of callbacks and job offers? Or are there other compelling explanations? In other words, systemic racism needs to be, to borrow a term from postmodern theory, interrogated. For America has a sorrowful history and legacy of racism. Racism surely exists in the present. In order to eradicate such racism, however, we must be precise in our analysis and avoid hyperbole.

I’ve come up with seven distinct ways the term is used in today’s discourse—a typology of systemic racism claims. I use the term “systemic racism” to denote any form of racism that’s not reducible to the explicit attitudes of individuals, i.e., old-fashioned racism or bigotry, but is said instead to exist in social settings or structures. In describing the various forms, I examine the strength and plausibility of each. I hope that this framework encourages more nuanced discussions of the concept in the future.

**ONE: The Whiteness Paradigm.** Systemic racism is often used to describe the dominant culture in America, one that supposedly favors “white” cultural practices. [According](https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/whiteness) to the National Museum of African American History and Culture:

**Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.**

**This white-dominant culture also operates as a social mechanism that grants advantages to white people, since they can navigate society both by feeling normal and being viewed as normal. Persons who identify as white rarely have to think about their racial identity because they live within a culture where whiteness has been normalized.**

The problem with The Whiteness Paradigm is that it treats the very idea of a dominant culture as oppressive. Every country—and every institution for that matter—has a dominant cultural discourse and a set of accepted cultural practices. The Whiteness Paradigm is a denial of the obvious fact that all institutions prefer some behaviors over others. They cannot all be oppressive in nature, lest we render the concept of oppression—not to mention culture—completely meaningless. Moreover, cultures, by their very nature, must demand a measure of compliance. Prohibitions against walking around the streets naked or picking one's nose in public may force some members of society, especially those from other cultures, who were not raised under the same norms, to conform. Such accepted cultural practices should not be viewed as oppressive. Every society has them.

The Whiteness Paradigm also speciously deems certain cultural traits, such a “perfectionism” and “sense of urgency,” as expressions of white supremacy. Education schools and others routinely [train](https://www.slowboring.com/p/tema-okun?s=w) teachers and professionals in Tema Okun’s “White Supremacy Culture” framework, which instructs trainees that white supremacy culture “[sacrific[es] interests of communities of color in order to win victories for white people](https://www.cwsworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html).” There is nothing inherently supremacist about valuing perfectionism or a sense of urgency or anything particularly egalitarian or enlightened about valuing their opposites—inattentiveness and laxity. What’s more, these are by no means “white” cultural traits. Many whites have a very low sense of urgency and many non-whites a high sense of urgency, for example. Non-white, economically vibrant Asian countries embrace many of the same cultural practices around work that Western countries do (for an [excellent discussion](https://remnant.thedispatch.com/p/quelle-surprise-agreable#details) about this listen to Thomas Chatterton Williams in conversation with Jonah Goldberg on the Remnant podcast). There is plenty of urgency in the South Korean business community as there is in myriad black-owned and -run enterprises.

To be sure, some dominant cultures are more or less inclusive of alternative cultural practices than others, and we should aim to create more inclusive and fluid dominant cultures. A highly exclusionary dominant culture that demeans alternative cultural expression can indeed be oppressive. A talented black professional with dreadlocks who doesn't wear the standard-issue Brooks Brothers suit should be able to rise in a corporate hierarchy regardless of his preferences in attire, within reason.

In that light, creating more inclusive cultures doesn’t require “dismantling whiteness” but rather ensuring that the dominant culture is tolerant and that all people have access to opportunities provided by the dominant framework. On that score, America fares comparatively well, integrating immigrants of all races, ethnicities and religions better than just about any other country on earth. Of course, one can legitimately critique specific subcultures in America that aren’t tolerant and do exclude varied cultural expressions. In such instances, systemic racism may be a fair and accurate charge.

**TWO: The Disparity Paradigm.** Another systemic racism claim is Ibram X. Kendi’s [“anti-racism”](https://www.amazon.com/How-Be-Antiracist-Ibram-Kendi/dp/0525509283/ref%3Dasc_df_0525509283/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=380078040892&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=1789439640267560935&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007795&hvtargid=pla-805748721586&psc=1&tag=&ref=&adgrpid=79069991898&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvadid=380078040892&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=1789439640267560935&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007795&hvtargid=pla-805748721586), in which disparities are prima facie evidence of racism. (Kendi does not use the term “systemic racism” because he views all racism as systemic). Kendi states matter-of-factly, “When I see racial disparities, I see racism.” In Kendi’s view, racial inequity “is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing.”

Kendi’s formula is highly reductive in that it insists that racism is the only possible explanation for disparity. He states that “one either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an anti-racist.” Some groups, however, are better represented than other groups in certain fields for a whole host of reasons. There are more men in coal mining than women. There are far more Asians represented in the sciences per capita than either blacks or whites. Would Kendi suggest that there’s an insidious effort afoot to elevate Asian Americans in science? If anything, the opposite is true. Nevertheless, Kendi’s disparity paradigm has been undeniably influential in professional and civic life. Mainstream media often [ascribe](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/health/racial-disparities-health-care.html) any differences in group achievement or representation to racism. Disparities in health outcomes, for example, are almost automatically attributed to systemic racism even though a number of studies controlling for income [show](https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/9178-healthdisparitiesmyth) that such differences are often driven by class, not race. This is not to suggest that disparities cannot reflect systemic racism—they may—or that we should not try to reduce consequential disparities among groups of people—we should—only that those disparities in and of themselves are a poor proxy for systemic racism.

**THREE: The Legacy Paradigm.** A third way that systemic racism is used is to describe the lingering effects of historical systemic racism, such as the impact of “redlining” on black communities that still live in impoverished, formerly redlined areas. The [wealth gap](https://newrepublic.com/article/158059/racial-wealth-gap-vs-racial-income-gap-modern-economic-inequality) between blacks and whites is another example. The term redlining comes from government maps used first in the early 1930s that demarcated areas where black and other “high risk” residents lived and were therefore deemed risky investments. According to the Michigan Commission on Civil Rights, which issued a [report](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdcr/mcrc/reports/2017/flint-crisis-report-edited.pdf?rev=db527d0e6c404254892c84c907988934) on the Flint Water crisis that affected the largely African American area of Flint Michigan, the legacy of past racism is a major factor in Flint’s recent water problems:

**We are not suggesting that those making decisions related to this crisis were racists, or meant to treat Flint any differently because it is a community primarily made up by people of color. Rather, the disparate response is the result of systemic racism that was built into the foundation and growth of Flint, its industry and the suburban area surrounding it. This is revealed through the story of housing, employment, tax base and regionalization which are interconnected in creating the legacy of Flint.**

There is explanatory power in The Legacy of Racism Paradigm. If a community had been living under oppression for decades and the oppression suddenly subsided, one would expect that the members of the community would have trouble immediately accessing resources, education, political power, etc. When property values are kept artificially high in nearby areas (more often in politically progressive than in politically conservative areas), it can make it even harder for people to break out of a neighborhood with serious gang, crime and drug problems.

The Legacy of Oppression Paradigm, in the near term, explains a lot. But the explanatory power wanes over time. Nearly two-thirds of black people now live in [middle class](https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-black-middle-class-needs-political-attention-too/#:~:text=MEASURING%20THE%20BLACK%20MIDDLE%20CLASS&text=By%20that%20measurement%2C%20middle%2Dclass,of%20which%20are%20middle%20class.) conditions and above. They no longer live under the shadow of redlining. Many blacks—and whites and immigrants, as well—have moved from their formerly redlined districts. Indeed, the [majority](https://www.nber.org/digest-202102/searching-origins-redlining-black-neighborhoods) of people who lived in redline districts—about 85 percent—were white, and today only [28 percent](https://quillette.com/2021/07/17/historical-racism-is-not-the-singular-cause-of-racial-disparity/) of residents of formerly redlined districts are black.

Those stuck in highly dysfunctional communities may be facing cultural hurdles (as well as racism) borne of traumas that developed under decades of oppressive conditions. Indeed, as Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson has [brought to light](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We3hLvOLjl4), the oppressive conditions of American society through the 1960s may have engendered cultural norms in certain sectors of the inner city that make it more difficult for some people to rise out of poverty. The same is likely the case in white majority areas in, for example, former manufacturing areas. While such cultural traits may often have been forged under the pressure of systemic racism, they shouldn’t be conflated with systemic racism; they represent an outgrowth of oppression that has taken on a life of its own. In short, while The Legacy of Oppression Paradigm tells part of the story, it must be balanced against other possible explanatory factors.

**FOUR: The Institutional Paradigm.** Another way that systemic racism is used is to impute a culture of racism to institutions: this concept is often distinguished as “institutional racism.” This can be a useful application of the systemic racism concept. Derek Chauvin, the police officer who murdered George Floyd, served in the notorious Third Precinct of the Minneapolis police force. Many of the ongoing complaints of harassment and abuse were lodged against officers of the Third Precinct, and it’s quite possible and even likely that the Third Precinct maintained a [culture](https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-12-08/torrance-police-traded-racist-homophobic-texts-it-could-jeopardize-hundreds-of-cases) that encouraged abuse and harassment.

While Derek Chauvin pressed his knee onto George Floyd’s neck for over nine minutes, three other Minneapolis police officers stood guard and made only [half-hearted attempts](https://abcnews.go.com/US/officer-testifies-george-floyd-stopped/story?id=83025873) to stop their fellow officer from committing murder. Either these officers supported the brutality on full display by their fellow officer against a subdued and handcuffed black man (another officer reportedly contributed to his death by putting his knee into his spine) or they felt they couldn’t intervene without experiencing retribution or scorn. Either way the behavior of the other officers exposes an egregious cultural bias in the Precinct that was already widely seen to deviate from the department’s norms. What’s more, the Third Precinct, backed by a recalcitrant police union, [reportedly](https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-minneapolis-police-chief-promised-change-george-floyds-death-shows-hurdles-11590971860) resisted reform efforts embraced elsewhere in the department. Other plausible examples abound of systemic racism confined to particular institutions.

Like other claims of systemic racism, claims of systemic racism in particular institutions should be interrogated. Undoubtedly, institutional racism exists in some institutions and can explain disparate outcomes in hiring, mobility and treatment of minorities in those institutions.

**FIVE: The Implicit Bias Paradigm**. Another paradigm holds that an underlying culture of racism persists in the larger society that generates discriminatory outcomes. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission, already referred to above, [defines](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdcr/mcrc/reports/2017/flint-crisis-report-edited.pdf) “implicit bias” as “stereotypes or attitudes that operate without a person’s conscious awareness.” The Commission then appeals to the unconscious operation of implicit bias to explain the Flint water crisis:

**This brings us to the question: Would the Flint water crisis have been allowed to happen in Birmingham, Ann Arbor or East Grand Rapids? We believe the answer is no, and that the vestiges of segregation and discrimination found in Flint made it a unique target. The lack of political clout left the residents with nowhere to turn, no way to have their voices heard…This suggests that race played a role in the Flint Water Crisis precisely because it was never considered. That it is so deeply entrenched in the very fiber of society that we have normalized what occurs in communities that are “primarily of color” and poor. (Emphasis added.)**

The question, however, is not just whether the crisis would have happened in Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids—very likely it would not have—but rather would it have happened in a poor white area such as Beattyville, Kentucky? Poor black and white areas likely have less political clout because they lack the financial resources, knowledge of the system, and political connections to effectively petition the government. This itself might be a reflection of bias in the system: is there any place on the planet where poorer people have as much clout as wealthier people? Given what we know about the lack of political power in poor white areas, it’s not clear if any implicit bias at work in ignoring the water crisis and similar problems is primarily racist or classist in nature. Progressive activists will often argue that class and race operate “intersectionally”—that is, the two factors exacerbate each other. But this is a cop out—it may well be that by studying the phenomena and controlling for income, we would find little trace of racism, or little evidence of classism.

The Implicit Bias Paradigm has also been applied to disparities in hiring. Research teams from University of California, Berkeley, and University of Chicago [conducted a study](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-29/job-applicants-with-black-names-still-less-likely-to-get-the-interview) in 2021 in which they sent 83,000 fictitious applications for job postings to 108 Fortune 500 employers, with randomly assigned and racially distinctive names. They found that distinctively black names on applications reduced the likelihood of hearing back from an employer by 2.1 percentage points compared to distinctively white names. This research is not, however, the slam dunk proof of society-wide bias that some claim. First off, the 2.1 percent difference in outcome is low: it could easily be a statistical error, and really be zero, or for that matter five percent. Moreover, the differences in contact rates varied: about 20% of the companies were responsible for half of the discriminatory behavior. Rather than uncovering society-wide racial bias, the study may have revealed specific institutions where one or more hiring manager held racial biases—in other words, it may have exposed institutional or even personal racism, not widespread implicit bias. Finally, the data revealed in the study are often susceptible to rather different [interpretations](https://medium.com/%40melissasmith_50058/a-study-found-job-applicants-with-black-sounding-names-receive-fewer-callbacks-29b026e036ee).

Harvard economist Roland Fryer [argued](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/fryer/files/racial_inequality_in_the_21st_century_the_declining_significance_of_discrimination.pdf) in 2010 that “the significance of discrimination as an explanation for racial inequality across economic and social indicators has declined. Racial differences in social and economic outcomes are greatly reduced when one accounts for educational achievement.” This is not to suggest that there aren’t remaining society-wide biases (Fryer believes that discrimination likely accounts for a 7 percent discrepancy in workplace outcomes). It means, rather, that we should look at claims of implicit bias carefully and be wary of exaggerated claims and imprecise explanations.

**SIX: The Discriminatory Policies Paradigm.** A sixth claim is that certain public policies negatively impact blacks, such as discriminatory applications of drug laws. The Asbury Park Press and the USA Today Network [looked at](https://www.app.com/in-depth/news/local/emergencies/2019/12/02/crack-vs-heroin-what-take-end-inequity/4302737002/) thousands of arrest records and drug convictions nationwide over the past three decades, and found that black people were arrested more frequently and punished more severely than whites for drug crimes, even though drug use among whites and blacks is roughly the same. Of course, it is possible that certain public policies, such as drug laws, either intentionally target black people and can properly be regarded as examples of systemic racism, or unintentionally affect black people disproportionately.

Unless the intent of the policy is racist, however, disparate outcomes by race should not be attributed to systemic racism. Many public policies do not work as intended, and some of those policies disproportionately impact specific groups in ways that were not foreseeable. For example, government rezoning of an area might force several white-owned businesses to go belly up, but one wouldn’t normally attribute such a policy impact to systemic racism. There is a strong [argument](https://www.heritage.org/poverty-and-inequality/commentary/assessing-the-great-society) that the Great Society reforms of the 1960s designed to help poor people actually generated a destructive dependency on government that [disproportionately hurt](https://www.encounterbooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PleaseStopPressKitLM.pdf) black communities and families. Whatever one’s view on the matter, these were well intentioned efforts; they cannot plausibly be ascribed to systemic racism, no matter the outcome. Similarly, efforts to desegregate public schools also may have had [deleterious effects](https://www.colorlines.com/articles/did-integration-hurt-black-neighborhoods) on black communities; they, too, are not examples of systemic racism.

Of course, if the intent of drug laws with draconian sentences for crack cocaine was to imprison black people, the charge of systemic racism would hold up. But even here the picture is more [complicated](https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674743991) than many criminal justice reform advocates acknowledge. Brown University economist Glenn Loury [argues](https://glennloury.substack.com/p/were-cocaine-sentencing-disparities) that “there were plenty of reasons these laws came into existence, not the least of which were complaints from black leaders representing communities devastated by the crack epidemic and the violence that came with it. You can’t attribute that to racism.” Loury goes on to argue, however, that “neither can you ignore the willingness of American society at large to accept a set of laws that incarcerated a staggering number of black men.” Put in terms of this typology of systemic racism, Loury’s argument would be that unabated mass incarceration is better explained by The Implicit Bias Paradigm (the public’s lack of empathy for black people) than The Discriminatory Policy Paradigm (drug policies that intentionally put black people behind bars).

**SEVEN: The Exclusive Network Paradigm**. A seventh and final form of systemic racism is one in which a dominant class of whites hoards professional opportunities in a closely knit professional or social network. This form of systemic racism surely existed in the past and just as surely exists in the [present](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Glenn_Loury/louryhomepage/cvandbio/Relations%20Before%20Transactions%20Loury.pdf) to some degree. What’s less clear is if today such exclusive networks are primarily a function of race or class. More than twenty years ago, I was involved in a project to recruit young blacks into the commercial real estate industry, where they had long been under-represented. It was a highly successful endeavor, ultimately changing the face of the industry in several major metropolitan areas. One wonders, however, especially in light of more recent [upward mobility](https://hbr.org/2021/07/closing-the-job-mobility-gap-between-black-and-white-americans) of blacks in various professions, if the scarcity of black talent in a given field is still a function of class, race or both. To what degree are even middle-class whites deprived of the myriad opportunities that wealthy people with connections—white or black—extend to their friends and family members? Such a phenomenon can be studied, controlling for wealth and income.

A more rigorous approach to discussing and analyzing systemic racism will not answer every question about how much systemic racism exists, where it exists, and what it explains and doesn’t explain. Such questions may not be entirely answerable. However, a more exacting approach to questions of systemic racism will certainly provide for richer discussions and clearer insights into why disparities stubbornly persist and aid society in designing better solutions to these age-old problems.

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**How Radical Social Justice Ideology Undermines Jewish Values, Identity, and Pride**

By: David Bernstein

### ****Internalizing Whiteness****

Whenever I have to fill out a form that asks me to designate my race and ethnicity, I always experience a momentary identity crisis. I am less than 50 percent European—23andMe has me at 50.4 percent Western Asian, owing to my Iraqi Jewish heritage—but the Asian designation doesn’t feel right either. The limited options of a government questionnaire can’t sum me up, yet woke ideology insists that I check the proverbial “White” box because, it claims, my white passing skin color entitles me to the benefits of a white supremacist society. Woke ideology insists that Jews not only benefit from white domination but also are complicit in it. If you think this sounds like an extreme interpretation, consider that the largest Jewish denomination in the US, the Reform movement, describes its diversity training for Rabbis thusly: “This space is for white clergy and will serve as a white antiracist affinity space. A white antiracist affinity space is one where white people can process their emotions and deepen their understanding around race and racism, without burdening or causing additional harm to People of Color (POC).” The URJ education program was designed to help rabbis “better understand our own identities as white Jews,” “learn how to recognize the invisibility of ‘whiteness’ (including patriarchal, heteronormative, Puritan/Christian values) that have become normalized,” and “understand how to disrupt our daily acts of ‘whiteness’ (behaviors and actions we may perpetuate unknowingly as they have been adapted overtime and deemed ‘the standard’ but may or may not be useful to our efforts towards creating communities of belonging).”

This understanding of white privilege demands that Jews declare ourselves white because the power structure thinks of us that way: we took advantage of the privileges and opportunity whiteness afforded us, so now we must acknowledge and disavow those attendant privileges. By accepting the notion that Jews are white, Jews not only downplay antisemitism (“white people cannot really be victims”), they allow others to define them and impose upon them a pseudo-consciousness, and they denigrate and erase the unique qualities endowed by our heritage and the Jewish condition through the ages. It should be obvious that this self-conception of Jewish whiteness is no way to imbue fealty to Judaism and to the Jewish people in the next generation. It doesn’t take a major feat of imagination to see how this ideological trend will run roughshod over Jewish identity and pride in the future. Few young Jews are likely to feel compelled to sustain a tradition mired in the moral taint of whiteness. The former Israeli politician and writer Einat Wilf called this phenomenon—whereby society, or a specific segment of society, cajoles Jews into giving up some key aspect of their identities in order to be part of “the Community of the Good”—paying “a pound of flesh.”

### ****Teaching Jews to Despise Israel****

The Whiteness label is not the only way that wokeness saps Jewish pride. A May 2022 poll conducted by the American Jewish Committee found that 23 percent of Jewish millennials reported that the anti-Israel climate on their campuses had forced them to hide their Jewish identity, 46 percent said it had not, and 11 percent claimed there was no anti-Israel climate in the US. Additionally, 28 percent said the anti-Israel climate on campus and elsewhere made them rethink their own commitment to Israel, while 54 percent say it did not.

The simplistic oppression narrative has already badly battered the connection many younger Jews feel toward the Jewish state. Imagine installing that same ideological software not just in certain elite colleges, as it is now, but in K–12 education, as proponents of the current anti-Racism pedagogy demand. My children’s public school system in Montgomery County, Maryland is now teaching students to “recognize and resist systems of oppression.” Under such an ideological regime, it will no longer be enough to worry just about how Israel is being portrayed in schools. The school won’t even need to mention Israel for the students to see the country through the binary lens—they will have been conditioned to see everything that way and most assuredly Jews and Israel will not be spared. Unless we put a stop to this damaging pedagogy in schools, it will inevitably take a grim toll on how young American Jews perceive Israel and themselves as Jews.

### ****Dissing the Argumentative Jew****

Another way woke ideology hurts Jews is it distorts our culture. Woke ideology aims to end debate on social issues, particularly the argument over why different groups…differ. In the woke world view, systemic oppression is the only acceptable explanation for group differences. I simply cannot fathom why so many progressive Jews are drawn to a political sensibility that is so flagrantly at odds with the large slice of Jewish culture that questions and debates ideas, the one in which many of them surely were raised. Judaism’s entire religious tradition is structured around Makloket: arguments about ethical living.

In “The Eclipse of Jewish Cultural Power,” Touro University professor Thane Rosenbaum addresses woke ideology’s specific impact of the creative Jewish persona: “It isn’t that Jews no longer occupy important positions in American culture, to say nothing of other fields. What’s disappearing from the cultural scene is the Jewish sensibility: its essential broad-mindedness, impish irreverence, openness to difference, and its skill in the art of disagreement…. Today, culture-makers fear being charged with plundering the stories of others, instead of being inspired to tell them. The new woke ground rules are ‘Stay in your lane. Do not fictionalize the experiences of people who are not you. Do not write (or speak) dialogue in their voices. Stop imagining the lives of others.” So when woke ideology silences the creative person or the gadfly, it doesn’t only undercut the free expression of ideas, it is an affront to an important dimension of Jewish identity: our essential character as a people who argue with each other and even, sometimes, with God, as the Biblical name of the Jewish people, “yisra-el,” literally denotes.

### ****Invalidating Immigrant Jewish Narratives****

In centering politically progressive narratives, some Jewish groups devalue the narratives of Jews who have come to this country from totalitarian systems such as the Former Soviet Union, the Middle East, Iran, and parts of Latin America. Woke ideology enforced in Jewish settings denigrates the lived experience of these once-oppressed populations. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion trainings undertaken Reform Jewish movement’s trainings in “white affinity” spaces cited above, would strike many immigrant Jews as bizarre and politically extreme, reminiscent, for some, of what they experienced in totalitarian nations of their birth. Ironically, efforts at “inclusion” in the Jewish community offer the most traumatized Jews the least amount of succor. They represent, it seems, the wrong kind of diversity.

### ****Repelling Jewish Conservatives****

Jewish political conservatives who participate in mainstream Jewish life have long had to shrug off their politics, at least publicly. But woke hyper-politicization of Jewish life has made such compromises for many increasingly difficult. Jewish spaces can feel like hostile environments for Jews on the center-right, as woke ideology not only politicizes Jewish organizations, but adds a layer of judgment and moral rebuke if they don’t play nice. It has gotten so bad that even political moderates, like myself, feel alienated. A politically progressive nonprofit executive, Jared Feuer recounts the politicization of his beloved Reconstructionist synagogue when a new Rabbi, a known social justice warrior, ascended to the Bima: “The congregation must always be on the side of whomever progressive sentiment declares the oppressed. If a congregant admits they voted for a Republican, voices a divergent perspective, or speaks to concerns about this political orientation, they will be called out as an oppressor. This happened to me when I expressed disappointment about the direction of the rabbi’s d’vars and he tweeted in response: “It’s amazing how much attention the complaint of a single, straight, cis, white man can command.”

In a strangely controversial opinion piece, “Why I Keep Politics Off the Pulpit,” prominent L.A.-based Rabbi, David Wolpe laments, “[A]ll we hear all day long is politics. Can we not come to shul for something different, something deeper? I want to know what my rabbi thinks of Jacob and Rachel, not of Pence and Pelosi.” Rabbi Shai Held responded, “Demanding that politics be kept out of shul is like demanding that Torah be kept out of shul.” And therein lies the problem: some Progressive rabbis—religiously liberal but ideologically orthodox—seem to believe that their political views have been handed down to them directly from Mt. Sinai with the authority of the divine word. As Jewish life—particularly the liberal movements (Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist)—has become increasingly ideological, the 25 percent of the Jewish community who vote Republican will become increasingly alienated and grow in numbers.

### ****Shutting Down Discussion of Jewish Continuity****

Jews have always debated ways of surviving both the external threat of antisemitism and the internal threat of assimilation.  Of course, we have legitimate differences of opinion among ourselves about how best to strengthen and perpetuate the Jewish people. But now even the idea of Jewish survival and continuity is under attack: a woke wing of the Jewish studies professoriate and community activists want to shut down the whole Jewish continuity enterprise that, they insist, was born in patriarchal sin. In the Journal of American Jewish History, Lila Corwin Berman, Kate Rosenblatt, and Ronit Y. Stahl argued that “a Jewish continuity paradigm…treated women and their bodies as data points in service of a particular vision of Jewish communal survival,” and that “American Jewish continuity discourse was embedded within patriarchal and misogynistic structures.” The authors asserted that “telling women who they can and should marry and when and how often they should have children is what we mean by the patriarchal and misogynistic foundations of the continuity paradigm and its apparatus.”

The supposedly ominous “apparatus” that the authors indict is not, however, a totalitarian government forcing people to adhere to some state dogma, or a coercive clergy in a ghettoized community forcing people into submission; rather, it is a set of communal and educational programs such as Birthright Israel, which takes young Jews to Israel in hopes that they’ll fall in love with the Jewish state and each other. The doyens of Brandeis and the American Jewish Committee who advance Jewish continuity never enacted forced fertility programs or put into effect mandated match-making services. In fact, the “continuity experts” that Berman, Rosenblatt, and Stahl rail against have never enjoyed unparalleled hegemony; multiple points of view have always been entertained at Jewish conferences and meetings and expressed in research by a vast range of scholars representing varied perspectives.

I wonder whether these scholars who argued for Jewish continuity programs are right to be alarmed that integration brings about “an enfeebled Jewish future”; or whether such integration might strengthen the Jewish community and expand its ranks; or whether the Jewish community should use scarce resources to invest in the “core” of Jewish life, or the “periphery,” or all levels equally? One would think these are important questions about which reasonable people might disagree.

These scholars and activists are making it harder for Jewish organizations to identify the policies and strategies that strengthen Jewish life—a prime example of how woke ideology makes it impossible to address real world problems and harms the very people it’s supposedly designed to help—in this case, Jews. If this trend keeps up, we won’t be able to speak openly about how best to build a Jewish future. A ban on all talk of Jewish continuity could be the next ideological straitjacket for Jewish organizations, subverting Jewishness and undermining Jewish pride.

Unchecked over time, woke ideology will impoverish Jewish life by draining it of its most compelling qualities. We may not know the full implications of this for years. I’m not suggesting every woke Jew will become a raging self-hater. Obviously, there are deeply committed Progressive Jews—rabbis and Jewish educators among them. Rather, I’m arguing that, left to its own devices, woke ideology is likely to sap Jewish pride and commitment by demanding that Jews think and behave in ways at odds with authentic and longstanding Jewish sensibilities. Ben M. Freeman put it like this: “The question ultimately is: how can we feel pride in our internal identities when society impulses an external identity upon us that does not relate to the truth of who we are?” We don’t have to go along. As Pamela Paresky put it, “We are not required to play the parts that others have written.”

*Adapted, with permission, Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews.*

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