KAVANAUGH AND THE ASSAULT ON MEN

BY CHRISTINE ROSEN

THE SHAME OF THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

SETH MANDEL

Commentary

NOVEMBER 2018

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Jewish Culture. Cover to Cover.
FOR DECADES NOW, we have been told by liberals that criticism of Israel should not prima facie be considered anti-Semitic or even be used as evidence of anti-Semitism. Indeed, Jewish voices on the left like J Street even suggest that speaking out against Israel is a core Jewish value—that it is to be seen as fulfilling God’s commandment through the prophet Isaiah that the Jewish people serve as a light unto the nations.

It is true that criticizing Israel does not make the critic an anti-Semite. It is anti-Semitism that makes someone an anti-Semite—by which I mean offering a criticism of the Jewish state, or Jewry, or an individual Jew on grounds that are not applied equally to any other nation, people, or individual on earth. Neither is it anti-Semitism to criticize an individual Jew for actions and behaviors that have nothing to do with his Judaism. In such a case, to claim that the criticism is anti-Semitic is to use the charge of anti-Semitism as a shield to protect that individual from criticism that is perfectly standard and appropriate.

This is what happened in October with George Soros, the left-wing activist and philanthropist. As the battle to confirm Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court was reaching its apex, Senator Jeff Flake was confronted in an elevator by activists demanding he listen to their complaints. Donald Trump issued the following tweet: “The very rude elevator screamers are paid professionals only looking to make Senators look bad. Don’t fall for it! Also, look at all of the professionally made identical signs. Paid for by Soros and others. These are not signs made in the basement from love!”

Trump’s invocation of Soros’s name here immediately set off a barrage of complaints alleging the tweet was anti-Semitic. In a piece that begins by stating Trump was no anti-Semite, the Washington Post’s Richard Cohen was at low ebb even for him: “What you have is not anti-Semitism with intent, but anti-Semitism nonetheless.”

Soros has come under vicious attack in Central and Eastern Europe by rising nationalists, and 20 years ago he was the focus of anti-Semitic ire in Malaysia for a hedge-fund play that tanked that nation’s currency. He was born and raised in Hungary and survived the Holocaust by hiding as a Christian and scavenging, doing what he had to do to survive. He did so and became a billionaire many times over. After the Cold War, he became a supporter of democratic voices in Hungary and elsewhere.

He also became a player in American politics and has, it is said, invested more than $300 million over the past 20 years in liberal and leftist causes. In a 2004 book, Byron York detailed the $30 million Soros contributed to prevent the reelection of George W. Bush. And what Trump said in his tweet was true—some of those activists in the Senate halls were indeed employees and volunteers of organizations funded by Soros, including the two women who confronted Senator Flake in that elevator.

But even had it not been true, there is nothing remotely anti-Semitic about calling out Soros in conjunction with a coordinated and staged series of protests in the most contested ideological and partisan moment of 2018. He is to be commended for putting his money where his mouth is. But just as Soros’s generosity should not give him a free pass when it comes to the ideas and causes he promotes, neither should his own life history and peoplehood serve as weapons in the hands of others who wish to render criticisms of his causes null and void—or who want to score a cheap political point against a president who has generously provided his critics more than enough ready ammunition.
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To the Editor:

I HAD A THOUGHT after reading Hal Brands and Peter Feaver’s article on NATO (“Can NATO Survive and Thrive?” September). Like Luigi Pirandello’s absurd play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, NATO is a 29-member alliance in search of a mission in a fragmented world order at the start of a new century.

As Pericles observed, collective security alliances suffer from fatigue and disband once the threat that engendered the formation of the group dissipates. A study of the military alliances from the War of the League of Cambrai in 1508 to the present would show that a majority of such alliances did not survive the test of time once the their raisons d’être disappeared.

Once the primary power of an alliance revaluates its national-security priorities after a league’s bonds weaken, disintegration is usually inevitable. On that note, I leave you with the words of Sir Edward Grey: “An understanding is perhaps better than an alliance, which may stereotype arrangements which cannot be regarded as permanent in view of the changing circumstances from day to day.”

Erol Araf
Pierrefonds, Quebec

Hal Brands and Peter Feaver write:

WE AGREE THAT when an alliance’s original raison d’être disappears, it puts a strain on the alliance. Some prominent academic theorists predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union would strain NATO to the breaking point in the early 1990s. That did not happen, obviously. The academic theorists forgot what Erol Araf has also forgotten: that alliances can choose to adapt and develop new missions that give vitality to their partnership. That is precisely what NATO has done over the past 25 years. And today, the original raison d’être does not seem so distant any longer; given the obvious
challenge posed by a revisionist Russia. In our article, we explored another kind of shock to the alliance, one that could prove more fatal: the possibility that the major power at the center of the coalition loses interest in maintaining the alliance. We shall see whether that may require adjustments beyond what the other allies can muster.

**Israeli Statehood**

To the Editor:
In reading Matthew Continetti’s column about Israel’s new statehood law (“The Misrepresentation of Israel’s Democracy,” September), it occurred to me that there is one key point to bear in mind. Those of the law’s provisions that assert explicit law merely reiterate existing law, while those provisions that are new are more in the nature of resolutions than explicit statements of law.

The law says: “The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People.” This is forceful in tone, but it lacks any kind of legal specificity. Consider this quote from the law: “The State views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value, and shall act to encourage and promote its establishment and strengthening.” This does not create any legal presumption of a Jewish land claim over a conflicting claim from a non-Jew—even though the tone of the sentence implies such a presumption. Finally, there’s this: “The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is
unique to the Jewish People.” This might seem discriminatory, since Israel classifies its citizens under three nationalities: Jew, Arab, and Other. However, it is not clear what this provision means in practice. The law is part reassertion of existing law and part wish list.

That said, however, it remains to be seen how the Israeli courts will interpret it.

**David Kessler**

London, England

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## The Carter Presidency

**To the Editor:**

WHILE I DO not usually comment on reviews of my book, *President Carter: The White House Years*, I do so for the review by Fred Siegel (“Less Mush from the Wimp,” September), because it contains material factual misstatements. I have long read *Commentary* and know that you prize accuracy; and Norman Podhoretz, a previous editor of *Commentary*, is a significant figure in my book, but this is not even discussed.

The reviewer incorrectly states that my book “bypasses the 1976 primaries” when Carter defeated both Jerry Brown, then governor of California, and George Wallace. In fact, I discuss this at length as part of 12 pages devoted to the 1976 primaries in the chapter entitled “The 1976 Campaign.” Likewise, Mr. Siegel states that “Strangely, for such an extended and comprehensive tome, *President Carter* misses one of the salient events of the 1970s—the 1978 Democratic Party midterm convention (since abolished).” It is your reviewer who missed my lengthy, vivid discussion of the midterm convention in Chapter 28, under a clearly marked subchapter “Sail Against the Wind” (pages 829–831), in which I mention that Senator Ted Kennedy’s speech there on December 9, 1978, with me on the podium, was the opening gun to his eventual challenge to President Carter in his reelection bid. I describe how having to follow Senator Kennedy’s rousing speech made me feel like “a pinch-hitter fresh from the minors batting right after Ted Williams hit a grand slam.”

I am also confounded that the review fails to mention the important meeting of January 31, 1980, in the White House, between President Carter and the leadership of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), including Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ben Wattenberg, and others to “avert the leftward drift of Democratic foreign policy.” Several of the attendees eventually worked for Ronald Reagan.

Nor are other salient features of the Carter administration mentioned. There is no reference to any of the foreign-policy issues that were important to CDM and to *Commentary* during Carter’s term in office—the successes, such as Camp David and the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty; the struggle to deal with an aggressive Soviet Union, with both soft power (human rights) and hard power (the military buildup and tough response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) on which President Reagan built; or the failures, such as Iran, which I candidly describe.

**Stuart E. Eizenstat**

Washington, D.C.

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**Fred Siegel** writes:

IN HIS massive book, Stuart E. Eizenstat devotes all of a half sentence to Jerry Brown’s impact on the 1976 presidential primary and the Carter presidency. Brown is mentioned again only once, briefly. The then 38-year-old Californian, then in his first stint as California’s governor, entered the race too late to win. Nonetheless he defeated Carter in several late contests. Brown, like another Carter rival, George Wallace, was a master at mocking the pretenses of “experts.” George Wallace’s biographer Marshall Frady described the Californian, the first to call for a “leaner life-style,” as having “shadowed the Carter presidency.” Carter’s political adviser Pat Cadell saw Brown, who had been described as the “thinking man’s George Wallace,” as the biggest threat to the Georgian’s renomination.

Although Brown ran again in 1980, it was Ted Kennedy who most threatened Carter’s renomination. Mr. Eizenstat does a good job of describing the powerful effect of Ted Kennedy’s stem-winder speech...
at the now defunct midterm con-
vention held in 1978. But he misses
the opportunity to describe the
context of Kennedy's speech.
The Democratic Socialists of
America, once known as DSOC, the
Democratic Socialist Organizing
Committee, are today experienc-
ing their second “flowering” as
an organization. In the 1970s, led
by the writer, journalist, intellec-
tual Michael Harrington, DSOC
scooped up the remnants of the
so-called New Left that had swal-
lowed its once revolutionary pride
and turned to electoral politics.
More important, the unions such
as AFSCME that had supported
McGovern had side by side with
DSOC played a substantial role in
writing the 1976 Democratic Party
program; this was the platform
that Carter had at least nominally
run on against Gerald Ford. The
platform had called for a labor-law
reform that would have made it
easier for unions to organize. This
was an urgent matter for labor,
which was losing members dai-
ly. But Carter was lukewarm on
the idea, prompting Harrington
admirer Doug Fraser, president of
the UAW (United Auto Workers),
to quip that business was “waging
a one-sided class war.” But led by
Michael Harrington, who had good
ties to both Ted Kennedy and left-
wing labor leaders, Fraser and
the president of the machinists,
DSOC member William Winpis-
inger, used the midterm conven-
tion to maximum advantage. They
showed their clout, and their will-
ingness to lead a class war. It was
much more than a matter of a
single speech.
When the midterm convention
ended, Hedrick Smith, writing on
the front page of the New York
Times, declared that the message
of the convention was that there
was a schism in the Democratic
Party. Using Kennedy as his ve-
hicle, Harrington seemed to be on
his way to making the Democrats
an openly left-wing party. “Social-
ism,” reported Business Week in
1979, was “no longer a dirty word”
for trade unionists. Still, Carter
held his ground, Kennedy merci-
fully self-destroyed, and Reagan
saved the day.
ANY YEARS AFTER he had served as President Eisenhower’s chief of staff, Sherman Adams sat for an interview with a presidential historian, who asked his opinion of various officials who had served in Ike’s administration. Finally, the historian had worked his way down the organizational chart and asked, “What about Steve Hess?” Not known for his social graces, Adams replied: “Now you’re really scraping the barrel.”

It is fitting that Stephen Hess himself tells that story, in his charming new memoir of his 60 years in politics and government. Hess knows the value of self-deprecation. As the title of his memoir says, he is a “Bit Player.” Washingtonians like Hess are absolutely indispensable to the operation of the capital, for better and worse, but they are found beaving away at the edges of the spotlight; if they do get called to appear as a major player, it is usually a brief turn, without expectations of stardom. A bit player is Washington’s version of Prufrock—not a prince but “an attendant lord, one that will do to swell a progress, start a scene or two, advise the prince...deferential, glad to be of use, politic, cautious, and meticulous.”

Or as Hess himself describes his career in Washington: “making friends, doing favors, being helpful, not getting into trouble.” You’ll find such functionaries in both parties, of course, and true to the type, Hess has never been much distracted by ideology. This suited the political era he lived through and contributed to. A nominal Republican, he inherited his party affiliation from his father, a small businessman in the Bronx, who in turn was a follower of Thomas Dewey, the New York governor and two-time presidential nominee, and the patron saint of liberal Republicanism in the 1940s and ’50s. For the past 46 years, between interludes of government service, Hess has been a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a Democratic think tank. He still calls himself a liberal Republican, a creature as rare as a Jackalope.

Hess came to politics through academia. A mentor in his graduate program at Johns Hopkins University was called to write speeches for President Eisenhower halfway through his second term. With a passion for politics and no interest in a professor’s career, Hess was happy to tag along. He is especially good at capturing the daily life of the midlevel White House staffer. He conveys the general headiness the bit player succumbs to, with the preposterously large offices in the Executive Office Building, the perks and occasional freebies, the encounters, however fleeting, with figures more important than the bit player: a cabinet officer, a famous author, a movie star (the film noir actor and director Robert Montgomery was a frequent visitor to Ike’s White House). The differences between then and now are striking, too. Eisenhower’s staff was minuscule by today’s gargantuan standard; the dining room where most of them ate held no more than three dozen people. The level of security is simply unimaginable. “I

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of the Weekly Standard and the author of Land of Lincoln and Crazy U.

ANDREW FERGUSON
spent two years innocently walking through the White House without ever having to show identification.”

Hess can testify to the serendipity and the accidental nature both of great events and of presidential utterance. President Eisenhower’s Farewell Address contained the deathless warning about a “military-industrial complex.” The phrase was concocted by one of Hess’s colleagues, a military aide, who explained its origins like so: “You know, you get to the end of a sentence and you don’t know how to end it up and this word comes to you and you write it in and that’s the way it fits and that’s the way it came out.” For liberals, the “military-industrial complex” was precursor to the more recent “Deep State,” the phrase with which right-wingers prefer to frighten themselves.

A bit player’s life has its small pleasures. He is often witness to events of the kind that shake the capital and may even have lasting consequences, though in time they are forgotten by everyone but scholars and political obsessives. Hess tells the story of a notorious remark Eisenhower made during Richard Nixon’s campaign to succeed him in 1960. At his weekly press conference, the president was asked about his vice president’s contributions to his administration. “If you give me a week, I might think of one,” Eisenhower said. The insult dogged Nixon for the rest of the campaign—indeed, for the rest of his career. Hess says he considers it “the most devastating blow to Nixon’s [unsuccessful] campaign.”

So why did Ike do it? Hess was puzzled then and still is. The day after the press conference, as the political damage spread, Hess asked John Eisenhower, the president’s son and a fellow staffer, what the president could possibly have been thinking. Eisenhower fils gave him a strained and implausible explanation. Ike, he said, was eager to wind up the press conference and intended to imply only that he would answer the question when he met with reporters again in a week’s time. Hess is skeptical. “The simple answer,” he writes, “was that the president had made a mean and thoughtless comment about the man who had been his loyal vice president for eight years.” The occasional pettiness aside, Hess’s view of his first great boss is glowing: “a genial, shrewd, optimistic, confident prodigy.”

Nixon brought three speechwriters to the White House with him—a liberal, a centrist, and a conservative—to capture his shifting moods and political direction. Hess instead chose to work as an aide to Nixon’s domestic policy czar, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the liberal-turned-neoconservative-turned-liberal who later served three eventful terms as a United States senator from New York. One of Hess’s aides was Christopher DeMuth, later to gain fame as the reviver of the conservative American Enterprise Institute and the nation’s foremost student of the federal bureaucracy. Another was Richard Blumenthal, nowadays the leftwing senator from Connecticut. Even if it doesn’t happen often, there’s no rule against a bit player moving up in the world.

Hess, for his part, was satisfied with his peripheral position. The primary mood of his memoir is contentment. He has lived a useful and pleasant life among interesting and like-minded people in a beautiful and welcoming city. Contentment would seem to be a less common disposition in 21st-century Washington. We have fewer Prufrocks and many more agitators intent on marshaling the resources of the government to remake the rest of us in their own image. The effect is an atmosphere of perpetual disquiet. I wonder how many young Washingtonians will care about the events and personages Hess writes about with such wit and style. They should buy a copy of Bit Player anyway. Reading it, they might discover a modesty, a disposition toward the privilege of living here, that will make their lives—and ours—less troublesome. 

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S PRESIDENT, Jimmy Carter considered himself uniquely destined to address the issue of Israel and the Middle East: not because of his political skill or diplomatic experience, but because of the time that he spent teaching Sunday school. “I had taught the Bible ever since I was eighteen years old,” he explained. “And exactly half of all my lessons have been from the Hebrew text, and the other half from the New Testament. So I knew history; I knew the background; and I had a strong religious motivation to try to bring peace to what I call the Holy Land.”

So reports Stuart Eizenstat in his book President Carter: The White House Years. The memoir is by a former senior White House aide who admires the administration that he served, which is why his criticisms of Carter are all the more remarkable. Eizenstat particularly targets Carter’s decision to continue to teach Sunday school after assuming office. In these classes, in the presence of reporters, Carter made public statements about the Bible that revealed, for Eizenstat, a “lack of political sensitivity [that] was sometimes breathtaking.”

Yet the tale of Carter’s Sunday-school lessons reveal more than political ineptitude. The subject of his first class was the tale of Jesus driving the moneylenders from the temple. The press soon reported that the president had informed his students that this story was “a turning point” in Christ’s life. “He had directly challenged in a fatal way the existing church, and there was no possible way for the Jewish leaders to avoid the challenge. So they decided to kill Jesus.” Anguished religious leaders involved in interfaith engagement wrote the White House to object to this simplistic gloss on a subject that has inspired persecution, and murder, of Jews for centuries.

Eizenstat reports that even after this catastrophe, Carter was not content “with avoiding further damage from this high-wire exercise.” He soon spoke at a Sunday-school class again; and, with an AP reporter in attendance, told those assembled that Jesus, in proclaiming himself the Messiah, was aware that he was risking death “as quickly as [it] could be arranged by the Jewish leaders, who were very powerful.” Eizenstat, himself apoplectic, was immediately flooded by complaints from both Christian and Jewish leaders asking him “why Carter approached the question of the Jews’ role in Jesus’s death twice.”

Eizenstat’s book allows us to understand how episodes such as these reveal how Carter’s own insensitivity to the Jewish historical experience, and his understanding of the Bible, colored his attitude toward

Meir Y. Soloveichik is the rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City and the director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University.
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matters pertaining to the Middle East. The president harbored a deep dislike for Menachem Begin, “with all his obduracy and legalisms,” and did not sufficiently understand the “history of oppression” in Begin’s own life. Eizenstat further writes that Carter saw American Jewish leaders and Israel “through the filter of the Bible, more the New than the Old Testament.”

Reading Eizenstat’s book, I felt enormous relief, not only that Carter was not reelected, but also that so many millions of deeply religious Christians in America feel differently about Israel and the Jewish people. Carter’s fellow Christians are no less steeped in the New Testament than he; they too have spent years in Sunday school, and they too see the Middle East “through the filter of the Bible.” To paraphrase Eizenstat, the rootedness in what they call the Old Testament is profound and abiding, and for them the New could be seen only through the filter of the Old. I have had the opportunity to meet Christians such as these all over the country. As a friend of mine, the young evangelical leader Robert Nicholson, has noted in an article in Mosaic, their support for Israel firmly rests on the Bible as the “embodiment of God’s everlasting covenant with the people Israel.”

This rootedness in Hebraic texts, Nicholson further explains, plays a key role in the way these Christians understand not only Christian texts but history itself. God, they know, promised Abraham that “I will bless those that bless thee and curse those that curse thee.” And, looking back at the Jewish people’s historic enemies, “they note that all, to a one, have met their doom.” They know as well that “the Bible predicts the destined journey of that people from catastrophic exile to miraculous return.” Israel, for these Christians, reminds them that these scriptural ideas “are not abstract concepts open to interpretation; they are living facts that entail spiritual, social, and political obligations in real time.”

At the same time, Eizenstat’s description of Carter’s Christianity, and the impact that it had on his own attitudes, should be a clarion call to all who care about the future. Carter’s story should impress on Jews the fact that American Christian support for Israel is by no means inevitable. Tens of millions of them still love and support the Jewish state, but Nicholson warns that this is not at all guaranteed to endure in the next generation. Nicholson notes that, influenced by the fashionable nature of progressive issues and by biblical criticism, many young evangelicals are predisposed to embrace the Palestinian narrative of Israeli oppression.

For Christians to remain dedicated to Israel, argues Nicholson, scriptural study is insufficient. Christians must visit the country itself: “The best education on Israel comes from visiting the land, meeting its people, and witnessing its day-to-day life, in all its complexity, firsthand.” Nicholson has gone on to found the Philos project, which is dedicated to educating Christians about the Middle East. Its Passages program brings young Christians to the Holy Land so that they can experience what it calls “the modern-day miracle that is Israel.” These future Christian leaders emerge with a deeper understanding of the richness of Israeli society, the lives of Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Middle East, as well as a deeper understanding of how their own tale is rooted in the Jewish story.

As I read President Carter, I wondered how Carter’s career and policies might have been different if he had been able to travel to Israel, as a young Christian, with someone like my friend Rob. I have spent enough time in religious schools to know that a deep understanding of scripture and texts does not necessarily enhance political instincts, and that no amount of biblical engagement, or travel to the Holy Land, could have made him as skilled at politics as Reagan. Yet a Passages program might have done wonders for Carter. It might have made him more sensitive to the Jewish story and more aware of the miracle that is modern Israel. And if we believe—as many Jews and Christians do—that God blesses those who bless Abraham’s people, then God may have chosen to bless even someone as politically inept as Carter with continued political success. After all, both the Bible and modern Israel remind us to believe in miracles.

Carter’s story should impress on Jews the fact that American Christian support for Israel is by no means inevitable. Tens of millions of them still love and support the Jewish state, but Nicholson warns that this is not at all guaranteed to endure in the next generation. Nicholson notes that, influenced by the fashionable nature of progressive issues and by biblical criticism, many young evangelicals are predisposed to embrace the Palestinian narrative of Israeli oppression.
IN EARLY OCTOBER, in the midst of extraordinarily hostile Senate confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh featuring unsubstantiated claims that Kavanaugh had drugged and raped numerous women, Donald Trump stood on the South Lawn of the White House and told reporters, “It is a very scary time for young men in America, when you can be guilty of something you may not be guilty of.”

The scorn was immediate. “What a terrifying time to be a son,” snarked Washington Post humorist Alexandra Petri in a column mocking the idea that men could ever be falsely accused.

Others pointed out that Trump had been happy to presume guilt when the alleged offenders were young black men accused of raping a jogger in Central Park rather than a privileged white guy who could tap a keg and get into Yale.

Whatever Trump may have said in 1989 in expressing a “view” supported by confessions from the accused and long-standing convictions, he’s not wrong now. One year into the #MeToo movement, men are expected to stand by as “allies” who #BelieveWomen and #BelieveSurvivors and are not to defend themselves or other men against evidence-free accusations or even extreme expressions of misandry. They are definitely not supposed to do what Kavanaugh did: offer a full-throated and angry rebuttal to the charges lodged against him.

As the activist group TimesUp announced on Twitter when calling for Kavanaugh’s withdrawal: “The tide has turned. This chapter in our history book will not be the story of men who believed men, that’s

Christine Rosen, who writes our “Social Commentary” column, is managing editor of the Weekly Standard.

November 2018
old news. It will be the story of an avalanche of women who spoke truths and seized our power.”

Elected officials went low, too. The most forthright of them was Hawaii’s Senator Mazie Hirono, who told reporters, “I just want to say to the men of this country: Just shut up and step up. Do the right thing for a change. ... Not only do women like Dr. Ford, who bravely comes forward, need to be heard, but they need to be believed. They need to be believed.” Hirono later went on television to argue that the presumption of innocence didn’t really apply in Kavanaugh’s case because of his conservative judicial philosophy.

To call the rhetoric that surrounded Kavanaugh’s confirmation extreme would be an understatement. Consider a Washington Post opinion piece by retired history professor Victoria Brown, in which she sarcastically thanks “good men” for “not raping us” and declares that we are in the midst of a “gender war.” She explains that after her (clearly long-suffering) husband did something innocuous that triggered her anger, she “announced that I hate all men and wish all men were dead.” She goes on to rage against “the pathetic impotence of nice men’s plan to rebuild the wreckage by listening to women” and says women who don’t agree with her are “in the deepest denial.” For Brown, evidently, men have no place in the national conversation and no right to speak privately to their wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters until they conform to her demands for their behavior. “Good men have not once organized their own mass movement

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to change themselves and their sons or to attack the
mean-spirited, teasing, punching thing that passes for
male culture,” she writes. “Not once. Bastards.”

Kavanaugh was confirmed and now sits on the
high court, but the tenor of the debate surrounding
the process that put him there revealed that the cul-
tural mainstream has now fully embraced two key
ideas about men that were once relegated to the rad-
cal feminist fringe:

1) Maleness itself is a disease requiring treat-
ment or elimination.
2) Masculinity itself has produced a “rape cul-
ture” and violent patriarchy that will stop at
nothing to maintain power.

The wide acceptance of these ideas will have par-
lous long-lasting consequences for the country.
Feminist theorists have long squabbled about
how much to implicate all men in women's oppres-
sion. Judith Kegan Gardiner described in her essay on
“Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theories” how such
theories “hope to develop effective ways to improve
women's conditions, sometimes by making women
more similar to men as they are now, sometimes by
making men more similar to women as they are now,
sometimes by validating women's traditional charac-
teristics, sometimes by working toward the abolition
or minimizing of the categories of gender altogether,
but all simultaneously transforming ideologies and in-
stitutions, including the family, religion, corporations,
and the state.”

The 1969 “Redstockings Manifesto,” an influ-
ential treatise written by a group of radical feminists,
made this claim: “All men receive economic, sexual,
and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All
men have oppressed women.” This “fact” justified a
range of radical acts on behalf of women. “We do not
need to change ourselves but to change men,” the man-
ifesto stated. They should “give up their male privi-
leges and support women's liberation in the interest of
our humanity and their own.”

This document, now nearly a half-century old, is
surprisingly relevant to the debate that erupted over Ka-
vanaugh's nomination. “The most slanderous evasion
of all is that women can oppress men,” the manifesto
observes, remarking on “the tendency of men to see any
legitimate challenge to their privilege as persecution.” As
for the basis of women's grievances, the manifesto reads
like an early draft of #BelieveAllWomen's embrace of
feelings over facts: “We regard our personal experience,
and our feelings about that experience, as the basis for
an analysis of our common situation. We cannot rely on
existing ideologies as they are all products of male su-
premacist culture. We question every generalization and
accept none that are not confirmed by our experience. ...
In fighting for our liberation we will always take the side
of women against their oppressors.”

IN SOME WAYS, KAVANAUGH WAS THE PERFECT FOIL
for female rage: Nominated by Trump (strike one),
he fit the stereotype of the worst sort of
beer-bro prep-school guy (strike two);
and his choice of friends and drinking buddies
in high school didn’t help (strike three).

Such rhetoric remained largely out of the na-
tional conversation in the decades after the Redstock-
ings issued their manifesto. And when it did start to
creep in (particularly on college campuses), it did not
go unchallenged—notably by scholars such as Christi-
na Hoff Sommers, whose 2000 book The War Against
Boys noted the many harms such blanket generaliza-
tions about boys have caused. But in recent years, with
metastasizing claims of a growing “rape culture” on
college campuses, and with the revival of questions
about due process and women's truth claims when it
comes to accusations of assault, it has become not only
acceptable but even necessary in some circles to talk
in sweeping generalizations about men in a way that
would never be tolerated when talking about women.

The picture feminist critics paint of contem-
porary masculinity isn’t pretty. After Trump was
elected, sociologist Michael Kimmel, who has writ-
ten a dozen books about masculinity and is a self-
identified feminist, used the phrase “aggrieved en-
entitlement” to describe the male Trump supporters he interviewed for his book *Angry White Male*. This new toxic male sensibility, he argued, stemmed from a misguided belief that “beneﬁts to which you believed yourself entitled have been snatched away from you by unseen forces larger and more powerful.” He concludes, “The era of unquestioned and unchallenged male entitlement is over.”

The issues around what men are entitled to and masculinity’s place in contemporary culture also occupy critics on the right. Lacking traditional rituals to help boys become men (and amid the decline of civilizing, stabilizing institutions such as traditional dating culture and marriage), young men in particular are adrift, the argument goes. Pop philosophers such as Jordan Peterson have stepped up to ﬁll the void, offering their proposals for reconciling masculinity in a feminist age.

Their advice is useful up to a point (stand up straight, make your bed, stop wallowing in self-pity and videogames) and its vast popularity speaks to the hunger for guidance that so many men have. But as we saw during the Kavanaugh hearings, these quasi-philosophical efforts to craft a respectable masculinity fail utterly in the face of an explosive charge like rape, when the feelings-over-facts testimonial style holds sway over public opinion and even over the procedures of many institutions (from Silicon Valley to the Senate).

It’s also not an effective response to the angry tone of our tribal politics. TimesUp isn’t just an elaborate branding campaign; it’s an apt description of a swath of feminist women who believe they’ve waited long enough and played by men’s rules long enough—and now it’s time to get angry and, in some cases, get revenge. In other words: Women are angry; men should step aside. Trump’s election was the last straw. He embodied everything they hate, and yet he still managed to defeat Hillary Clinton. “Over the threat of a potential female leader, brutal masculinity won,” writes Rebecca Traister in her new book, *Good and Mad*.

Unlike Kavanaugh’s flashes of anger, however, this kind of anger is righteous. “Women’s anger spurs creativity and drives innovation in politics and social change, and it always has,” Traister argues. “We must come to recognize our own rage as valid, as rational, and as not what we are told it is: ugly, hysterical, marginal, laughable.”

Indicting other women is also a component of the righteous anger. Traister calls out white women who support nonfeminist “policies and parties that protect the economic and political status of the men on whom they depend,” in another iteration of the tired trope of female false consciousness. “White Women, Come Get Your people,” was the headline for an op-ed by the Democratic consultant Alexis Grenell in the *New York Times*, evidently because 53 percent of white women voted for Trump (who nominated Kavanaugh) and anyone with a uterus who would dare support Kavanaugh is to be considered a “gender traitor.” Grenell is a white woman herself, but because she is progressive and hates Trump, she is not tarnished by that group’s supposed sins. This is also why Senator Susan Collins was called a “rape apologist” when she cast her vote to conﬁrm Kavanaugh.

Women’s anger is also invoked to justify eliding traditional methods of fact-gathering and veriﬁcation; an accusation is enough, and the assumption is that all women will believe other women. “Today, every woman in America was Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s co-witness,” a tweet from TimesUp stated. “We believe you. We are with you. #BelieveSurvivors.” In a public statement demanding that Kavanaugh withdraw his nomination, the organization doubled down on the idea that an accusation should be taken as proof enough of male turpitude: “A man accused of multiple instances of sexual violence cannot have decision-making power over the lives of American women for decades to come.”

**Commentary**
IN SOME WAYS, Kavanaugh was the perfect foil for female rage: Nominated by Trump (strike one), he fit the stereotype of the worst sort of beer-bro prep-school guy (strike two); and his choice of friends and drinking buddies in high school didn’t help (strike three).

But something unexpected happened on the way to his character assassination: Kavanaugh defended himself and was defended by others, including many women. Where feminists wanted women to see themselves in the seat Christine Blasey Ford occupied, many instead saw their sons or husbands or brothers sitting in the chair where Kavanaugh sat.

And they should have, and they still should. For what the Kavanaugh nomination did was bring the Star-Chamber-driven transformation of gender norms into broader view. For several years now on many college campuses, regrettable sex has been an actionable offense that can get young men expelled without anything remotely resembling due process.

Consider the ways in which the logic of the presumption of innocence has already been thoroughly warped. The feminist website Jezebel used an “investigation” into the dating habits of a progressive male reporter to argue that the next arena for combat is the so-called gray areas. Julianne Escobedo Shepherd writes, “The public sympathy for these men and eagerness for their redemption is a depressing yet familiar iteration of what we’ve always known: that alleged abusers are, in all contexts, held by default to be innocent until proven guilty.”

Instead, she argues, we should be guided by feminist philosopher Kate Manne’s notion of “the sex he takes,” which she describes as “not, according to the law, rape or sexual assault. It does not rise to the scrutiny of a judge and jury. It does not meet the legal definitions of sexual assault or rape. Its boundaries, shapeless and shifting, treat consent as something to be extracted, transforming sex into a commodity to be taken, rather than freely exchanged. Rarely can that sex be labeled explicitly as coercion because it conceals itself beneath a legalistic definition of sexual assault, treating consent as a binary, a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no.’”

This is the logic that has given rise to the Orwellian phrase “speak your truth” and the assumption that personal, powerful, emotional testimony is tantamount to provable fact.

What radical feminist theorists have long been arguing—that there is no such thing as true consent because of patriarchy and that all women are potential victims of men—has reached full flower.

Consider the new practice by a younger generation of parents raising gender-neutral “theybies,” (rather than boys or girls). Although only a tiny fraction of all parents, they are conducting an experiment in child-rearing that tells us as much about our cultural moment as Kavanaugh’s hearings did. Their child-rearing philosophy is as much about stamping out “toxic masculinity” as it is about signaling their supposedly enlightened agnosticism about gender. (Shulamith Firestone, one of the authors of the “Redstockings Manifesto,” argued for just such gender-neutral child-rearing practices in a key radical feminist text, The Dialectic of Sex.)

There is not an effort to raise boys into men who can integrate into a kinder, gentler future economy of helping professions and easily expressed feelings. It is an effort to overcome maleness itself. And it is an admission of failure, because when boys fail to grow into civilized men, everyone suffers, just as they do when women are denied equal opportunity. The answer isn’t reeducation in radical feminist notions of men’s innately violent natures. It’s raising boys and girls to treat one another with respect and to uphold gender-free values such as the presumption of innocence and due process and equal opportunity. Civil society relies on due process not only because it’s an objective good (though it is). Everyone should embrace both due process and the presumption of innocence because everyone might need these themselves one day, regardless of his or her gender.

There’s a saying of radical feminist poet Audre Lord that activists on the left often invoke when they are attempting to justify norm-breaking and change by any means necessary: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” It’s the logic behind the progressive left’s attacks on the electoral college, the Senate, and now the Supreme Court as illegitimate institutions. It’s the logic that claims the accused should not be allowed to defend himself because some men are rapists or that it’s fine to hurl the most devastating charges with no evidence because “it’s just a job interview,” not a criminal trial. It’s the logic that might garner short-term victories but at the expense of long-term civility and justice.

The #MeToo movement has brought to light the horrific abuses of many men, and it has sparked long-overdue and crucial conversations about consent and power. And while it’s true that not all radical ideas that become mainstream are harmful, it’s not true that all radical ideas bend the arc of history toward progress. It would be a shame if a movement with the potential to sort through some deeply troubling and stubborn aspects of human nature instead embraced misandry and power-seeking. The shame is upon us.
The Shame of the Anti-Defamation League

How its new executive director is betraying the organization’s purpose

By Seth Mandel

THE BURGEONING HATE aimed at Jewish immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century was the driving force behind the 1913 formation of the Anti-Defamation League. According to its original charter—as laid out by its sponsoring organization, B’nai B’rith, the largest Jewish communal group in the United States—the ADL’s “immediate object” was “to stop, by appeals to reason and conscience, and if necessary, by appeals to law, the defamation of the Jewish people. Its ultimate purpose is to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike and to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against, and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens.”

Countering organized hate movements was, practically from the start, at the center of the ADL’s mission. The seminal case was that of Mary Phagan, a teenaged factory laborer in Atlanta, who was found murdered in 1913. Leo Frank, the factory’s Jewish superintendem, was framed in what became America’s blood-libel story for budding white supremacists. Frank was abducted from prison in 1915 and lynched. Before he was killed, Frank’s sentence was commuted by Georgia’s governor due in large measure to the argumentation and lobbying of the ADL and associated civil-rights organizations. The horror of Frank’s demise did not vitiate the lesson that organizing and solidarity with other minority groups were the key to political success in protecting Jews.

In 1920, under the banner “The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem,” Henry Ford’s Dearborn Independent began serializing excerpts of the most infamous of all conspiracies: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Having inspired pogroms two decades earlier when first published in Russia, and coming on the heels of the Leo Frank case and the re-emergence of the KKK, Ford’s actions sent a shiver up the spine of the Jewish community. A seven-year campaign of pressure, helped by Ford’s mounting financial troubles, succeeded in getting Ford to stop the series and apologize.

The cases of Leo Frank and Henry Ford still resonate, representing the twin pillars not only of
anti-Semitism through the ages but of the resurgent anti-Semitism of the 21st century. One sees the Jew as an unwanted foreigner, the despoiler of white bloodlines. The other holds the Jew responsible, from afar, for the world’s ills. Today, the Israeli has been substituted for the Jew like a clumsy search-and-replace macro in Microsoft Word. When nations go to war, the conspiracy theorists often blame not Jewish financiers but manipulative Israelis, and the censorial Jew is now the blacklisting Zionist.

Both pillars of anti-Semitism exist all along the partisan spectrum, but the nationalist pillar is, both in ideology and practice, more closely associated with the right, and the “Protocols” pillar with the left. This has rarely posed much of a challenge to groups like the ADL, which found itself able to criticize both. Like every organization, the ADL had its blind spots, but it never had an obstructed view of its own raison d’être—until the summer of 2015.

That was when Jonathan Greenblatt succeeded longtime ADL director Abe Foxman. Greenblatt is a man of the left in the purest sense, and one who holds partisan politics paramount. In the years leading up to his hire, the American left’s relationship with world Jewry had begun a steady decline. This decline was exploited and exacerbated by President Barack Obama—for whose administration Greenblatt worked before taking over the ADL. It is unclear whether the ADL's reputation can survive Greenblatt's stewardship.

From 1988 to 2001, the Gallup Poll found that sympathy for Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians didn’t vary greatly between Republicans and Democrats. The gap was nearly nonexistent around 9/11. But the attacks, and the War on Terror that followed, proved to be a political earthquake. Republicans broadly identified Israel as a natural ally in the same fight. Many Democrats weren’t so sure. The partisan gap on the “sympathy” question is now nearly 40 points, with Democrats now under the 50 percent mark when it comes to supporting Israel against its existential foe.

The Iraq War, in particular, exacerbated the growing divide. Opposition to so-called American militarism was now a driving force in left-wing politics—and Israel was considered a partner in that militarism (even though Israel’s leaders were unnerved by the decision to invade Iraq). Western European capitals defied George W. Bush; Jerusalem didn’t. Conspiracism spread quickly among Democrats seeking to delegitimize the war. Conspiracy theories usually end up pointing the finger at the Jews.

This is where the two pillars of anti-Semitism meet and join forces. The nationalists see the hand of the Jew in sending “real” Americans to fight global battles that have nothing to do with them. The ideological descendants of Henry Ford point to the foreign Jew as the rabble-rouser. Patrick J. Buchanan’s line about “the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States” was dusted off and given new prominence and mainstream juice by two leading academics, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. In a shoddy essay, which was then expanded into an even shoddier book, Walt and Mearsheimer blamed “the Israel Lobby” for using Jewish money to control American politicians on behalf of Israel. It was an important moment in American history, because it covered the old calumny with Harvard Ivy.

Abraham Foxman saw it. In a 2007 book, The Deadliest Lies, he explained that many in the public would take “the authors’ impressive credentials as a guarantee of quality.” Walt and Mearsheimer argued that “the Israel lobby” had provoked a crisis that, for its kind, had never been faced before: “This situation has no equal in American political history. Why has the United States been willing to set aside its own security in order to advance the interests of another state?” Foxman took pains to say he had no idea whether the duo were anti-Semites—what was in their hearts wasn’t the point. But when it came to judging what they wrote, Foxman dropped the hammer: “Walt and Mearsheimer sound all the same notes—not with the crudity we’d encounter from spokespeople for neo-Nazi groups like the National Alliance, but with a subtlety and pseudoscholarly style that makes their poison all the more dangerous.”

Walt and Mearsheimer helped launder this into leftist discourse with their taunting references to “a small band of neo-conservatives” many of whom “had close ties to Israel’s Likud party.” This gave the old dual-loyalty canard an added dimension. The left ate it up, and not just in the academy; suddenly accusations of pro-Israel Americans enforcing loyalty to Is-
rael’s Likud party popped up in *Time*, the *Nation*, and the *American Prospect*. And it echoed an argument already being made by Greenblatt’s future boss: Barack Obama.

Conventional wisdom hails Obama’s 2002 speech against war in Iraq, when he was an Illinois state senator, as prophetic and wise. Obama thought this himself—he rerecorded audio for it for a 2007 ad. The speech, however, was an ugly mishmash of conspiracy theories straight from the fever swamps. He attacked Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, two high-profile neoconservative Jews who were most certainly not the primary drivers of the invasion, as bloodthirsty warmongers. Then he said Karl Rove pushed the war to distract the country from “a rise in the poverty rate.”

When Obama moved into the White House, he showed a surprising Nixon-like conspiracism streak when it came to American Jewry. He was consumed with negative feelings for Jewish Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson: In August 2014, *Haaretz* reported that “each step or statement made by Netanyahu is a-priori examined by the White House to see if it helps the Republicans or if Sheldon Adelson might be behind it.” In January 2015, the president accused fellow Democrats who were undecided on his Iran deal of being bought off by donors. An editorial in *Tablet* called it “the kind of naked appeal to bigotry and prejudice that would be familiar in the politics of the pre-civil rights era South.”

It would get far worse that summer, Greenblatt’s last in the Obama administration (he took over for Foxman in late July 2015). In August, Obama went after the monied lobbyists buying off politicians and said that those who sided against him on this were siding against America, while also calling back to the Iraq War. *Haaretz*’s Chemi Shalev, as sympathetic an ear as the president could hope for, recoiled: “Obama may have also sent some shivers down the spines of many Jewish leaders and activists by reopening old scars and reviving past traumas.” The following month, the *New York Times* picked up the baton, listing the members of Congress and where they stood on the Iran deal—and color-coded the Jewish lawmakers in yellow.

A Rubicon was crossed. And just at the moment that one of the twin pillars of American anti-Semitism was being laundered through the Democratic Party, Jonathan Greenblatt left the administration that enabled this bigotry to take the helm of the Anti-Defamation League.

Greenblatt took three hallmarks of Team Obama with him when he left: a belief that liberalism and modern morality were synonymous; an obsession with Benjamin Netanyahu; and a rivalrous antagonism toward anyone to his right who called out anti-Semitism.

The liberalism part of that isn’t unique to Greenblatt—the ADL has long supported abortion rights, which is not a “Jewish issue” in any way. But there are two puzzling aspects to Greenblatt’s behavior. First, he makes it personal. Immediately after Trump announced he would nominate to the Supreme Court Brett Kavanaugh, Greenblatt went on the attack, tweeting that Kavanaugh’s record “does not reflect the demonstrated independence and commitment to fair treatment for all that is necessary to merit a seat on our nation’s highest court.”

Slandering a respected judge is so far beneath the ADL that Greenblatt’s behavior should’ve been a gut check for the group’s leadership. Additionally, as Jonathan Tobin pointed out at *National Review*, “the group’s haste showed that it had planned to oppose anyone nominated by Trump,” thereby making a leap into blind partisanship.

The second difference is an overt hostility to religious liberty—an absolutely dangerous gamble for a Jewish-rights group. It isn’t merely that Greenblatt publicly lamented June’s Supreme Court ruling in favor of a Christian baker’s First Amendment rights. It’s also the way the organization has embraced liberalism as a form of religion in itself. Thus the ADL in 2016 called opposition to abortion a “right-wing assault on religious diversity in reproductive freedom,” an Orwellian mangling of language and faith.

Greenblatt’s antipathy toward the elected Israeli government is perhaps even more out of character. In 2016, Netanyahu confronted the Palestinian demand that no Jews remain in a future Palestinian state, calling it “ethnic cleansing.” This is quite literally the definition of the phrase. But Greenblatt—again, it bears repeating, as the director of the Anti-Defamation League—took a long swing at Netanyahu with a full column in *Foreign Policy* magazine. Greenblatt wrote: “Like the term ‘genocide,’ the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ should be restrict-
ed to actually describing the atrocity it suggests—rather than distorted to suit political ends.”

This is nonsensical, but it’s worth pointing out the hypocrisy here as well. In late July, Greenblatt tweeted out an ADL video of two Holocaust survivors describing the trauma of being separated from their families by the Nazis. Greenblatt’s point was to draw a parallel to the Trump administration’s policy of separating migrant children from the adults who had carried them across the border. Greenblatt tweeted: “Miriam & Astrid were separated from their parents during the Holocaust. They know the trauma this causes. 38,000+ people signed the petition we delivered to @DHSgov & @TheJusticeDept demanding an end to zero tolerance & to reunite families they tore apart.”

As the Jewish activist Noah Pollak responded to Greenblatt: “ADL spent decades successfully shaming people who appropriated the Holocaust to serve contemporary political agendas,” yet it is now a “leading perpetrator” of this trope. In this case, the analogy is not only false, it is dangerously irresponsible, tying the president of the United States explicitly to Hitler—all after kicking sand at the Israeli prime minister for correctly calling a policy of the expulsion of all Jews from a state “ethnic cleansing.”

This pathological distaste for Netanyahu has proved problematic for the supposed anti-Semitism watchdog. On May 1, Netanyahu gave a televised presentation of Iranian deception regarding its nuclear program, thanks to intel gleaned from a mind-boggling Mossad operation in which agents broke into secret vaults in Tehran, evaded detection, and fled the country with “some 50,000 pages and 163 compact discs” covering “years of work on atomic weapons, warhead designs and production plans,” according to the New York Times.

Tommy Vietor, Obama’s National Security Council spokesman, went so far as to accuse the Jewish state of fabricating intelligence to satisfy its bloodlust, tweeting that “Trump is now cooking up intel with the Israelis to push us closer to a conflict with Iran. A scandal hiding in plain sight.” These horrifying words, retweeted nearly 2,500 times, would have been met with thunder by Foxman’s ADL. Greenblatt’s ADL remained silent. And the poison spreads.

Every so often, Greenblatt’s ADL will rap a Democrat on the knuckles and claim partisan evenhandedness. But the larger problem is that Greenblatt sees right-wing bigotry as a crucial element of conservative ideology, while viewing any such transgressions on the left as isolated anomalies. But the mainstream Democratic Party’s overt embrace of its left flank, which is the source of the nation’s most explicit anti-Israel rhetoric and ideas, has made such assumptions naive to the point of professional malpractice for someone like Greenblatt.

Keith Ellison was probably thrilled when Foxman left his post. The deputy chair of the Democratic National Committee and Minnesota congressman, who is leaving Congress and trying instead to become state attorney general, had a famous run-in with Greenblatt’s predecessor in 2007 after Ellison compared then President George W. Bush’s response to 9/11 to Nazi Germany. Foxman’s ADL called Ellison out. Ellison agreed to put out a statement walking back his comments. When Ellison dragged his feet, Foxman released a statement slamming Ellison, who became furious because he had lost his chance to control the story.

Ellison has long been dogged by his past affiliation with Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, having even defended the openly anti-Semitic Farrakhan well before he entered Congress. Ellison insisted that he had left Farrakhan behind. But in February, the Wall Street Journal revealed a Jew-baiting twofer: In 2013, Ellison had dined with Farrakhan at a dinner hosted by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in New York. Greenblatt was silent for days. When he was finally pressured to make a statement, he denounced Farrakhan…but never mentioned Ellison.

It wasn’t Greenblatt’s first swing-and-a-miss on Ellison. In 2016, after the presidential election, the Democratic National Committee held its election for its new chair. Ellison threw his hat in the ring and won the backing of Senator Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat and incoming party Senate leader. Statements by Ellison about Israel, however, placed the congressman yet again in conflict with the Jewish community. On a trip to Hebron, he posted a photo of a sign calling Israel an apartheid state and he called on Israel to lift its blockade of the Hamas terrorists in Gaza.

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Pressure mounted for Greenblatt to say something. He did. He defended Ellison as a friend to Israel and insinuated that his pro-Israel critics were motivated by racism and anti-Muslim bigotry. Then a tape surfaced of Ellison accusing Israel of controlling American foreign policy, and Greenblatt, egg squarely on face, walked back his support.

This ridiculous dance has become a hallmark of Greenblatt's mismanagement of the ADL. Progressive activist Linda Sarsour catapulted to liberal fame by organizing and chairing the Women's March, a national feminist protest movement in response to Trump's 2016 victory. But Sarsour has long practiced the politics of anti-Jewish hate: She signed a statement declaring Zionism to be racism, declared that "nothing is creepier than Zionism," embraced Palestinian terrorist Rasmeah Odeh, and claimed that anti-Semitism is "not systemic." She was invited last year to give the commencement address at the City University of New York's School of Public Health. CUNY came under criticism for the choice—a public university (in New York of all places) bringing in a hatemonger for its commencement ceremony raised plenty of eyebrows.

When Greenblatt finally commented on the commencement matter, his statement was both absurd and irrelevant: "Despite our deep opposition to Sarsour's views on Israel, we believe that she has a First Amendment right to offer those views." Well, sure—no one claimed Sarsour didn't have a right to speak out loud. But the key fact remained that Sarsour opposes the very existence of the Jewish state. All Greenblatt could muster was "opposition" to what he meekly characterized as her "views on Israel."

It's a pattern with Greenblatt. In July 2016, Democratic Representative Hank Johnson called Jews who live beyond Israel's Green Line "termites." The ADL responded in milquetoast fashion by calling Johnson's choice of words "offensive and unhelpful." When the organization got the pushback it deserved for letting bald anti-Semitism pass with a mere finger wag, Greenblatt eventually wrote a long post for the ADL's website that was only slightly less mealy-mouthed, and which endeavored to add "context" to Johnson's dehumanization of Jews.

If Greenblatt is missing the trees, he's also missing the forest. His ADL has compiled a guide to right-wing hate, "From Alt-Right to Alt-Lite: Naming the Hate," as well as a running tab of "extremist candidates" for state or national office. All are Republicans.

Greenblatt's defenders like to point to the occasional times he's managed to criticize a non-Republican for anti-Semitism, but such criticism usually comes after indefensible silence. The larger point is that under Greenblatt, the ADL paints a picture of the political right's extremists as connected. But instances of left-wing extremism aren't given the same treatment; they are depicted as isolated incidents, not dots to be connected. Meanwhile, Ellison is the DNC's No. 2; Sarsour helped the campaign of New York Mayor Bill de Blasio and then ran the Women's March; and a slew of prominent Democrats have been kicking the Jewish community in the teeth.

The party's newest rising star is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America who parroted Hamas talking points to accuse Israelis of being butchers and occupiers of "Palestine." The leading candidate for Ellison's congressional seat is Ilhan Omar, who accused Israel of "evil doings" in Gaza. In Michigan, Democrats are about to send to Congress Rashida Tlaib, an avowed supporter of a one-state solution (i.e., the destruction of the Jewish state) and a "mentor" to Sarsour (in the latter's characterization). The Democratic nominee for a House seat in Pennsylvania, Scott Wallace, led a fund that shoveled money at groups that support the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS). A Democratic congressional nominee in Virginia, Leslie Cockburn, has been a notorious anti-Israel conspiracy theorist going back nearly three decades.

An even more virulent anti-Israel candidate, Mal Hyman, nearly won a Democratic primary in South Carolina. Maria Estrada, a Democrat vying for a California Assembly seat, has made a habit of blatantly anti-Semitic Facebook posts and praises Farrakhan. Another fan of Farrakhan's is Representative Danny Davis, a Democrat from Illinois. And when Andre Carson, a Democratic congressman from Indiana, was criticized for his association with Farrakhan, he demanded that his American Jewish critics denounce Netanyahu.

Meanwhile, the deep and abiding hostility Jews face on liberal campuses across the country is shaping...
American leftism is increasingly organized by the principles of ‘intersectionality,’ used generally to refer to the ways in which different forms of discrimination can overlap.

the next generation of left-wing politicians, activists, and business leaders. And while Greenblatt certainly condemns anti-Semitism on campus, he is like a man who feels a drizzle and insists it’s just a few drops of rain even as the storm clouds gather overhead and block out the sun.

Past ADL directors going back before Foxman would have had no trouble connecting the dots. The ADL could very easily have done the work and figured out, for example, that Jeremy Corbyn, the viciously unrepentant anti-Semitic leader of the Labour Party who could very well be Britain’s next prime minister, isn’t just a problem for our cousins across the pond. A Labour Party member who worked with Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign, Max Crema, told LabourList that Corbyn serves as “an inspiration to the American left,” so much so that Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign echoed Corbyn’s favorite slogan, “For the Many.” Crema’s comments were amplified on Twitter by a Europe-based editor from the American socialist magazine Jacobin. Last year, Crema was a press officer at a conference of the Democratic Socialists of America at which the DSA passed a resolution endorsing the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. The leader of America’s socialist resurgence, Bernie Sanders, has praised Corbyn and compared himself to him.

As if it needed to be said, Democratic Party chairman Tom Perez told radio host Bill Press in July that Ocasio-Cortez “represents the future of our party.”

It’s hard to argue with that. The incentive for supporting the Jewish state among new Democratic candidates seems to be evaporating. “Progressive Democrats increasingly criticize Israel, and could reap political rewards,” blared a July headline in ABC News. Chuck Schumer is now his party’s floor leader in the Senate. But he has been unwilling or unable to do anything about this trend. He even backed Ellison’s bid for DNC chairman.

ABC correctly notes that “during the 2016 presidential campaign, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders condemned Israel, arguably clearing a path for Democratic candidates to break with party tradition and criticize the U.S. ally.” In early October, the New York Times checked in on how the anti-Israel insurgents were doing. Quite well, it turned out. This “cluster of activist Democrats,” the Times reports, are mostly young and mostly “cruising toward House seats this fall.” Democrats, according to the Times, “are testing the boundaries” of discourse on Israel—and Democratic leadership and veterans of the Obama White House are silent or egging them on.

The socialists aren’t the only strand of the new left with anti-Semitism in its DNA. American leftism is increasingly organized by the principles of “intersectionality,” used generally to refer to the ways in which different forms of discrimination can overlap. The result is essentially a sort of “pyramid of oppression” that seeks to prioritize minority issues in order of the groups’ level of marginalization. The left sees Jews as white (in contrast to the way blood-and-soil nationalists of the right view them) and Zionists as supporters of “white” colonial oppression. In the intersectionality hierarchy, protecting Jews from others simply doesn’t rate, while protecting others from Jews is a common theme.

Greenblatt should know this firsthand. In April, police arrested two black men in a Starbucks for no apparent reason other than that their presence made whoever called the cops uncomfortable. Starbucks apologized and said it would be providing anti-bias training to all employees. The ADL was announced as one of the partners in this effort. Yet Sarsour and her Women’s March co-chairwoman Tamika Mallory—who had professed support for Louis Farrakhan—objected, calling the ADL “anti-Palestinian.”

In the new left, governed by intersectionality, a century-old civil-rights group is considered too Jewish for comfort.

To be clear, then, anti-Semitism is an integral part of the various ideologies underpinning American leftism in 2018. Greenblatt adamantly refuses to confront this, an unconscionable abdication of his responsibilities.

In a piece for Tablet, the journalist Paul Berger noted that Foxman seemed increasingly uncomfortable with Greenblatt’s partisanship. In March 2017, Foxman knocked the obsessive way Trump’s critics twisted themselves into logic pretzels in blaming the president for every anti-Semitic act. “The whole issue has become a political football and that doesn’t serve us,” he told the Forward.
Turning anti-Semitism into a purely partisan cudgel takes an existential threat to the Jewish people and flattens it, sapping the Jewish community of its credibility.

Greenblatt responded by effectively saying that Foxman, now running a center for the study of anti-Semitism at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, didn't know what he was talking about: “When you are dealing, as I am, with individuals and families and communities who are affected by these issues ... it affects you. And that's a lot different than when you are sitting in a museum. I also have something at my fingertips, which is the data.”

But Foxman was undeniably correct: Turning anti-Semitism into a purely partisan cudgel takes an existential threat to the Jewish people and flattens it, sapping the Jewish community of its credibility when making the accusation and of its ability to build coalitions across political and religious lines.

Foxman wasn’t trying to pick a fight with Greenblatt, but he did highlight one of Greenblatt’s glaring weaknesses: He plays to his base and alienates all but his fellow partisans.

Indeed, one gets the sense that Foxman hoped one lesson of Trump’s victory would be the futility of spurning such broad coalitions. A month after the election, Foxman, in an emotional speech honoring the Hidden Child Foundation, said, “I don’t care how you feel politically: To compare a candidate for the presidency of the United States of America, because you don’t like him, to Hitler is Holocaust trivialization.”

This, while not directed at Greenblatt, nonetheless highlighted the second of Greenblatt’s glaring weaknesses: his historical ignorance, which leaves him flailing to accurately describe political outrages, because he has such a shallow grasp of the subject at hand—the way anti-Semitism mutates in order to thrive in each new time and place. This just so happens to be the raison d’être of the organization Greenblatt runs.

Indeed, Greenblatt sees institutional memory itself as an obstacle. In May, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations convened a panel to hear complaints by three member groups: the ADL, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and the Zionist Organization of America. ADL and HIAS brought complaints about the ZOA’s criticism of their work. According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), Greenblatt “submitted to the Presidents Conference a six-page letter and an Excel sheet with 36 complaints against ZOA dating back to 2007.”

He wanted the Presidents Conference to muzzle criticism of those who said the ADL was losing its way. ZOA’s complaint was far more serious. It alleged that after a 2016 panel discussion on BDS at the United Nations, Greenblatt was so angry about criticism of his ADL that he physically accosted the ZOA’s Liz Berney. She told JTA that Greenblatt “came up to my right side, put his arm around my back, grabbed me with his left hand on my left shoulder. He starts pushing me with the force of his arm down the hall. I was trying to get away from him, and he was restraining me.” Berney said Greenblatt brought her to the Iraqi and Syrian missions and yelled that they—not ADL—were the real enemy. Greenblatt and the ADL unequivocally denied the allegation, though JTA spoke to six people to whom Berney related the story right after it happened.

Then there’s the case of the Canary Mission, a pro-Israel campus group whose name-and-shame approach to anti-Semites has brought it into conflict with other pro-Israel groups who say its tactics are merely encouraging BDS groups to carry out some of their work in secret. When a group of pro-Israel students at the University of Michigan wrote an op-ed on the tension between these groups, the ADL thanked the “@umich student leaders for exposing Canary Mission’s Islamophobic & racist rhetoric.” Unable to provide a single instance of the Canary Mission’s supposed Islamophobia and racist rhetoric, ADL walked it back: “It was wrong to apply those labels to a group working, like us, to counter anti-Semitism on campus,” a spokesman told JTA. No kidding.

I had my own surreal run-in with Greenblatt over his fondness for using his organization as a tool of his personal retribution.

In April 2017, then White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, in an attempt to defend his boss’s appropriately harsh response to Syrian butcher Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons, made a boneheaded comment to the effect of: Not even Hitler did that. Spicer apologized, but Greenblatt wouldn’t let up and sent an incredibly condescending and obnoxious letter signaling that the ADL was treating Spicer’s comment as borderline Holocaust denial. On Twitter, I took a swing at Greenblatt for it.

Apparently I hit a nerve. I began getting a series
That a prospective CEO would treat an organization dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism as a playground for tech-bro chatter was confirmation that Greenblatt wasn’t qualified.

As childish and superficial as this “branding and millennials” plan for an ADL makeover was, it offers a window into the failures of the new, “cool” Anti-Defamation League. After all, the generation gap on issues directly tied to anti-Semitism—such as Israel and socialism—means you will often have to choose between flattering millennial sensibilities and combating anti-Semitism.

_Haaretz_ summed up the latest Pew poll on Israel in January: “While 56 percent of Americans over the age of 65 say they support Israel more than the Palestinians, the same is true for only 32 percent of those between the ages of 18 and 29. Within that age group, 23 percent say they sympathize more with the Palestinians, and 19 percent sympathize with neither side or have no opinion.”

And here’s Gallup in August on socialism: “Americans aged 18 to 29 are as positive about socialism (51 percent) as they are about capitalism (45 percent). This represents a 12-point decline in young adults’ positive views of capitalism in just the past two years and a marked shift since 2010, when 68 percent viewed it positively. ... For those 50 and older, twice as many currently have a positive view of capitalism as of socialism.”

The integration of the two into mainstream Democratic Party politics is not a theoretical matter—refer back to the aforementioned Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Democrats’ praise of Corbyn, etc. Or watch the fusion in action: The confirmation of the judge Greenblatt came out so hard against, Brett Kavanaugh, saw a protest in Washington at which Democratic Senator Kirsten Gillibrand was introduced glowingly by Linda Sarsour. It’s a mutual-admiration society: Last year in _Time_ magazine, the senator extolled the “courage” of “extraordinary women”—Sarsour, Mallory, and two of their colleagues.

If this is Greenblatt’s idea of “branding,” it’s understandable that those who want to fight anti-Semitism but who have been abandoned by Greenblatt—college students, political conservatives, strident pro-Israel advocates—would look to fill the gap. And it’s certainly reasonable for the existing Jewish establishment to be alarmed at the wrecking-ball revolutionary who wants to replace it with one that finds the very idea of criticizing anti-Semitism outrageous.

of prefab form tweets from ADL officers and others. It was immediately recognizable as an amateurish rapid-response campaign in which the ADL sent word out to supporters to attack me and offered sample tweets they could use. Indeed, the minions ADL brass sicced on me had merely copied and pasted the suggested tweets so that many contained not only the same wording but the same typo. For good measure, the ADL’s sample tweet called me “FakeNews.”

The ADL attempted to deny the harassment campaign it ordered against me, but Paul Berger obtained the internal communication from an official ADL messaging system proving it.

Here was an organization that had been focusing on tracking and exposing coordinated social-media harassment campaigns against Jewish journalists... caught coordinating a social-media harassment campaign against a Jewish journalist.

Combine the penchant for bridge-burning and a flash-bulb anger, and you have a CEO who seems to regard the Jewish establishment around him with great suspicion. It’s a deeply poisonous modus operandi that virtually guarantees the Jewish community will have an establishment against itself for Greenblatt’s tenure at the ADL.

Perhaps that’s by design. Greenblatt seems eager to replace the existing American-Jewish establishment with one far more hostile to its values. According to _Tablet_, when an ADL-hired headhunting firm contacted Greenblatt about the opening, “he thought he was vastly unqualified. He had barely any experience in civil rights and no experience as a Jewish communal leader.”

Greenblatt thought the firm was simply mining him for ideas someone else would use. He spoke to them anyway. Greenblatt says he told them: “The next CEO of ADL, I thought, should be thinking about social and tech and innovation and earned income and brand and global and millennials.”

This should have been the reddest of red flags. That a prospective CEO would treat an organization dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism as a playground for tech-bro chatter was confirmation that Greenblatt was right: He wasn’t qualified. He wanted to treat the Anti-Defamation League as a cross between McDonald’s and The Trump Organization.
Greenblatt appears to see himself as a “disruptor,” the Silicon Valley self-designation that supposed rebels wear with pride. At a speech on philanthropy in Israel in 2017, he boasted of his work at the Obama White House, where he led the Office of Social Innovation and instituted “outcome-based payments, civic hackathons, and hybrid value chains.” His efforts “catalyzed new public-private partnerships that facilitated the flow of large-scale capital on long-standing problems.”

When he segued into his new responsibilities as head of the Anti-Defamation League, he didn’t leave his inner Elon Musk behind: “The question that animates me every day is, How can I apply what I learned in business and government to the social sector, how can I infuse our work with innovation and impact?”

He warned: “We have crossed a threshold that is less about the micro-economics of individual labor markets and more about the meta-economics of our common humanity. Facing planetary challenges like accelerating climate change, shrinking water and food access, and widening income gaps, we urgently need new response strategies.”

You almost expect Greenblatt to announce how to prevent cemetery vandalism using blockchain. Good luck solving climate change by catalyzing partnerships of civic hackathons that address the meta-economics of our common humanity. Facing planetary challenges like accelerating climate change, shrinking water and food access, and widening income gaps, we urgently need new response strategies.”

CAN A GREENBLATT-LED Anti-Defamation League be saved? The ADL has an admirable history of self-correction. In 1913, the anti-Semitic portrayals of Jews in educational materials and newswriting were the focus of the ADL’s work. Then the new organization decided to push for legislation to outlaw the hateful or false depiction of “the Jew” on stage and screen and to lobby for state boards of censorship—and in this case was forced to pull back. A commendably self-critical history of the ADL published in 1965 by B’nai B’rith notes that “the League later realized that its proposed cure was worse than the disease.” In 1962, the ADL expressed its distaste for a New York showing of The Merchant of Venice but was careful to state that it opposed censoring the play: “In its search for methods to protect the Jew, it found its most potent weapon in the democratic ideals of the American society as a whole. These ideals it serves steadily, and in so doing it serves and enhances the status of American Jewry.”

But for a ship to turn around in this way, its captain must be ready to steer in a new direction. Greenblatt’s attack-the-messenger philosophy is discouraging. His tetchy, defensive attitude is his way of ensuring he will not learn from mistakes but instead double down on them. His resentment of the Jewish communal figures who came before him is petty and petulant. His partisanship is toxic. And his hostility toward religious freedom represents a historically ignorant tempting of fate for the leader of a Jewish institution. Perhaps this won’t all lead to disaster. But if we should be so lucky, it will be in spite of Jonathan Greenblatt. ■
Whiteness Is Blackness, and Blackness Is Whiteness

Believing otherwise corrodes us, corrodes freedom, and corrodes the world we live in

By Chloé Simone Valdary

“The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended.”

—James Baldwin

As a six-year-old attending Langston Hughes Elementary School in New Orleans, I had to engage with the writings of Maya Angelou, the poems of writers who lived during the Harlem Renaissance, and the stories of former slaves and abolitionists who were forerunners to the leaders in the civil-rights movement. Parsing and unpacking these writings were some of my first grade homework assignments, a testament to my teacher’s insistence on introducing us to the very best of our people’s power to express the tired struggles and abiding resilience of the human spirit. This artistic impulse to express and create was drilled into our collective psyche by P.E. teachers and choir leaders alike who gave this to us because we were not only black students needing to remember our past but also attendees of a school with a legendary namesake and we needed to understand and take seriously the idea of freedom.

This freedom was sacrosanct, a product of our black experience and a rejection of any idea that tried to confine our being black to one particular label or

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stereotype. The stakeholders of the Jim Crow system had attempted to do that, believing that we were devils and that this was what defined “blackness.” They believed we were subhuman and so our ability to be anything—avant-garde artists or well-to-do investment bankers, charitable or devastating, complex or simple—was a rebellion against the old guard’s attempt to define us by any one experience.

And yet today, political commentators and social influencers continue to promote a narrative that eerily repeats that macabre process of categorizing people according to color in whatever grouping they deem appropriate, as if they and they alone were the arbiters of a group’s experience.

This has been on display ever since Brett Kavanaugh’s Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, a few weeks after which well-meaning journalists characterized his tears and outrage as “angry white male” syndrome. Following Senator Susan Collins’s 45-minute defense of her decision to vote for him, she too was marred with the brush of “white woman” and accused of representing the regressive, backwards system that produced Jim Crow.

The litany of pieces echoing these sentiments is astounding. There was Alexis Grenell asking “white women [to] come get their people” in the New York Times and Maureen Dowd, describing Kavanaugh as part of a system of “entitled white men acting like the new minority, howling about things that are being taken away from them.” (What’s especially ironic about that piece is that she pointed to the behavior of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas to support her assertions—a very obviously African-American male whose behavior, if we are to believe it constituted entitlement, clearly had nothing to do with being white.) There was Rebecca Traister, of New York, accusing Susan Collins of perpetuating a “white capitalist patriarchy”; similarly, when assessing Kavanaugh’s behavior, Paul Krugman described him as part of an “angry white male caucus” defined by the “fear of losing traditional privilege.”

These statements are easy to make because they are attractively simplistic; they help us divide the world into simple battle lines of black and white, what John McWhorter has called an “us vs. the pigs” paradigm. But what would Dowd and Krugman and Grenell and Traister make of Bill Cosby, who reportedly lashed out and cursed the prosecutor after he was convicted in April for sexual assault? Would they, believing in consistency, call this “angry black male” syndrome? Or would they instead understand the futility and cruelty of reducing an entire community of people to the behavior of one person in that community simply because he shared the same skin color? That this must be asked, still, in 2018 is a tragic reminder of how far we have to go as a society that dares to call itself “united.”

It’s worth asking just how we arrived at this point, where passing judgment against individuals based on skin color came in vogue again and is considered not only fair game but progressive.

I suspect that the kernels of the “angry white male” designation as a phenomenon began when intersectionality, a postmodernist social theory, began to be accepted not only in the halls of academia but also in public discourse facilitated by politicians and pop-cultural elites.

In its most basic form, intersectionality is a theory that posits interlinked and intersecting forms of oppression. For example, a woman of color can experience discrimination for being both a woman and a person of color; this sounds logical enough, but its deeper claim is that human interaction arises not from an individual’s behavior but is entirely due to the social group to which he or she belongs. Additionally, all so-called knowledge is merely the subjective reality of one’s group. Knowledge is a construct, not an independent thing. Finally, the proponents of intersectionality believe that the only social motive that exists is power.

Intersectionality’s most basic definition masks its most sinister effects. It is, as Helen Pluckrose and James A. Lindsay write in Aeo magazine, an “authoritative form of identity-based knowledge that cannot be disagreed with by anyone outside that group.…[It] argues that prejudice against white people and men is acceptable while prejudice against people of color and women is not… [and] attempts to restore a balance by ‘evening the score’ a little, particularly thinking historically.”

This way of thinking has led to the condemnation of what some refer to as “whiteness,” a pathology.
that has come to serve as a stand-in for everything from exploitation to abuse to colonization to anything that is bad and malicious in human history. Whiteness is synonymous with evil behavior. Never mind that during our vast and long human history, all races and peoples have practiced forms of brutality against one another to a degree, from the indigenous Samoans of Polynesia to the !Kung San of the Kalahari desert to the ancient Aztec empire, whose blend of human sacrifice and terrorism made them arguably as brutal as the Spanish conquistadores who conquered them, if not more so.

**Freedom entails the freedom to be human: autonomous and engaging in free thought. Freedom includes the ability to be wrong sometimes.**

But history, which attests to the universality of our awesome and terrible ability to be cruel and compassionate to one another is too much of an inconvenience for those who believe that reality is merely a social construct, and that whiteness—by which one really means white people—is the defining fact of a civilizational force that has historically engaged in acts of totalistic violence and is the only force capable of doing so today.

The acceptance of this theory has led to the acceptance of social ideas that, once taboo, are now mainstream and considered enlightened. Talk of privilege led to talk of white privilege, which led to talk of whiteness, which has now led to its latest iterations, “angry white male” syndrome and “white women come get your people” theory—a pathological belief that any time a white person is politically at odds with intersectionalist orthodoxy, it is in fact because he is white not because he may have legitimate differences of opinion. White people’s very existence is proof of the poison they supposedly spread.

This way of thinking has influenced some of our most popular thinkers, including and perhaps especially Ta-Nehisi Coates, who in May accused the performer Kanye West of “dying to be white” and “championing a kind of freedom—a white freedom, freedom without consequence, freedom without criticism, freedom to be proud and ignorant; [and a] freedom to profit off a people in one moment and abandon them in the next.”

Once one begins to make sweeping generalizations about one group of people because of their skin color, one can begin to find justifications to do the same for others, including, one’s own community. If “whiteness” is a real thing, then “blackness” is a real thing, too—and if one does not conform to Coates’s perception of how one is supposed to behave while being black, then one is acting white. And if being white is equivalent to arrogance, theft, and exploitation, then the white male is the literal embodiment of such attributes. If a white man does not believe this is true or that is fair, then he is simply promoting a reality that serves his own power and domination.

Like a radical religious order purging dissenters at the stake, those who believe in the doctrine of destroying “whiteness” view America as a caste system and are woefully ignorant of the exploitive measures they take in service of inverting it. Consider Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam, who once stated in a sermon that “white people deserve to die.” Think he has no power in America? Think again. While it is disturbing that three of the four co-founders of the Women’s March were seen gleefully associating with Farrakhan—with no qualms about the obviously cruel and hateful ideas he has peddled—what’s even more disturbing is that his ideas have already become mainstream in far-left spaces. Consider Sarah Jeong, a recent hire at the New York Times editorial page. Though she kind of, sort of apologized for some of her previous tweets aimed at trolls, apropos of nothing, she once tweeted: “White people have stopped breeding. You’ll all go extinct soon. That was my plan all along.”

And thus do the acolytes of this new cult grow: from the pulpit to the paper, giving worshippers the very thing these devout believers claim they want to take away from those who do not look like them—social and political power.

The danger behind this sort of thinking cannot be overstated. The “angry white man” canard essentializes a fundamentally human impulse like anger, or sorrow, or even entitlement, and through this process we end up reducing humans to their skin color—thus taking away their dignity and justifying their destruction.

An example of this occurred on social media when Georgetown professor Carol Christine Fair was suspended from Twitter after she suggested that “entitled white men...deserve miserable deaths...while we castrate their corpses and feed them to swine.”

This is the inevitable end of racial essentialism. The caricaturing of white people or black people is
trite and deadly. Gangbanger, thug, intellectual, artist, angry, calm, conservative, liberal—all are descriptors of human beings and none of them defines “blackness” or “whiteness.” Freedom entails the freedom to be human: autonomous and engaging in free thought. This is the freedom to be good or bad, to state intelligent opinions or uninformed ones, and it is a freedom that is no more “white” than writing an essay or stealing money is. Freedom includes the ability to be wrong sometimes. To suggest that there is only one or the other within a human being is to strip him of his depth and complexity and, subsequently, to strip ourselves of our own. As James Baldwin wrote in *Notes of a Native Son,* “in overlooking, denying, evading...complexity — which is nothing more than the disquieting complexity of ourselves—we are diminished and we perish.”

This tendency has been repeated for some time now in both right- and left-wing circles. Writers at Vice and Huffington Post often claim to be woke pen guides for white people as if they are the representatives of all black people. Conservatives such as Candace Owens have suggested that being black and liberal is like being a slave. While these claims are often made not out of spite for black people, those who make them are plagued by what Doris Lessing described as the “atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun.” In the 21st century, we have yet to discover that we are just as selfish and as prejudiced and as fickle as we accuse one another of being, just as capable of love as we deny one other of being.

What beats in the heart of the white man also beats in the heart of the black man. It beats in the heart of Man. This is the point and the central aim of freedom. The “angry white male” canard erodes the point and that aim. 

Commentary
Europe’s Civilizationalist Parties

Don’t shun the populists; work with and learn from them

By Daniel Pipes

Is Europe returning to the horrors of the 1930s? In an assessment typical of the moment, Max Holleran writes in the New Republic that “in the past ten years, new right-wing political movements have brought together coalitions of Neo-Nazis with mainstream free-market conservatives, normalizing political ideologies that in the past rightly caused alarm.” He sees this trend creating a surge in “xenophobic populism.” Writing in Politico, Katy O’Donnell agrees: “Nationalist parties now have a toehold everywhere from Italy to Finland, raising fears the continent is backpedaling toward the kinds of policies that led to catastrophe in the first half of the 20th century.” Jewish leaders such as Menachem Margolin, head of the European Jewish Association, sense “a very real threat from populist movements across Europe.”

Germany and Austria, the birthplaces of National Socialism, naturally arouse the most concern, especially after the elections in 2017, when the Alternative for Germany (AfD) won 13 percent of the vote and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) won 26 percent. Felix Klein, Germany’s commissioner to combat anti-Semitism, says that the AfD “helps make anti-Semitism presentable again.” Oskar Deutsch, president of the Jewish Communities of Austria, argues that the FPÖ “has
Civilizationalist parties cherish the West’s traditional culture and want to defend it from assault by immigrants aided by the left. They are populist and anti-Islamization.

never distanced itself from its Nazi past.

Is this correct? Or does this insurgency reflect a healthy response by Europeans to protect their way of life from open immigration and Islamization?

T

O BEGIN WITH, what to call the phenomenon under discussion? The parties in question tend to be called far-right, but that is inaccurate, for they offer a mixture of rightist policies (focused on culture) and leftist ones (focused on economics). The National Rally in France, for example, attracts leftist support by calling for the nation’s banks to be nationalized. Indeed, ex-Communists make up a key element of support; Hénin-Beaumont, which is now among the most fervently pro-National Rally towns of France, previously was among the most Communist.

Charles Hawley of Der Spiegel claims that “all these parties are, at their core, nationalist,” but this is historically incorrect. They are patriotic, not nationalist; defensive, not aggressive. They root for soccer teams, not military victories. They cherish English customs, not the British Empire; the bikini, not German bloodlines. They neither hanker for empires nor claim national superiority. Nationalism classically concerns power, wealth, and glory; they focus on mores, traditions, and culture. Though called neo-fascist or neo-Nazi, these parties put a premium on personal liberty and traditional culture; notions such as “One People, One Nation, One Leader” have little attraction to them.

Better to call them “civilizationist,” focusing on their cultural priority, because they feel intense frustration at watching their way of life disappear. They cherish Europe’s and the West’s traditional culture and want to defend it from assault by immigrants aided by the left. (The term civilizationist has the additional benefit of excluding those parties that loathe Western civilization, such as Greece’s neo-Nazi Golden Dawn.)

Civilizationalist parties are populist, anti-immigration, and anti-Islamization. Populist means nursing grievances against the system and a suspicion of an elite that ignores or denigrates those concerns. These are the “6Ps”: police, politicians, press, priests, professors, and prosecutors. At the height of the migrant tsunami in 2015, German chancellor Angela Merkel responded to a voter worried about uncontrolled migration with a characteristic rebuke about Europe’s faults and condescending advice about attending church services more often. Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European commissioner for migration, flatly announced that Europe “cannot and will never be able to stop migration” and proceeded to lecture his fellow citizens: “It is naive to think that our societies will remain homogenous and migration-free if one erects fences. We all need to be ready to accept migration, mobility, and diversity as the new norm.” Former Swedish prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt argued for more migrants: “I often fly over the Swedish countryside and I would advise others to do. There are endless fields and forests. There’s more space than you might imagine.”

All of these three, it bears noting, are what pass for conservatives in Europe. Others, like Nicolas Sarkozy of France and David Cameron of Great Britain, talked tough but governed soft. Their contemptuous dismissal of anti-immigration sentiments created an opportunity for civilizationist parties through much of Europe. From the venerable FPÖ (founded in 1956) to the Netherlands’ new Forum for Democracy (founded in 2016), they fill an electoral and societal gap.

Civilizationist parties, led by Italy’s League, are anti-immigration, seeking to control, reduce, and even reverse the immigration of recent decades, especially that of Muslims and Africans. These two groups stand out not because of prejudice (“Islamophobia” or racism) but due to their being the least assimilable of foreigners, an array of problems associated with them, such as not working and criminal activity, and a fear that they will impose their ways on Europe.

Finally, the parties are anti-Islamization. As Europeans learn about Islamic law (Sharia), they increasingly focus on its role concerning women’s issues, such as niqabs and burqas, polygamy, taharrush (sexual assault), honor killings, and female genital mutilation. Other concerns deal with Muslim attitudes toward non-Muslims, including Christophobia and Judeophobia, jihadi violence, and the insistence that Islam enjoy a privileged status vis-à-vis other religions.

Muslims, it bears noting, form a geographical membrane around Europe, from Senegal to Morocco
to Egypt to Turkey to Chechnya, enabling vast numbers of potential migrants with relative ease to enter illegally the continent by land or sea. It’s 75 kilometers from Albania to Italy, 60 kilometers from Tunisia to (the tiny island of Pantelleria in) Italy, 14 kilometers across the Straits of Gibraltar from Morocco to Spain, 1.6 kilometers from Anatolia to the Greek island of Samos, fewer than 100 meters across the Evros River from Turkey to Greece, and 10 meters from Morocco to the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

Increasing numbers of would-be migrants are circling around the entry points, in some cases resorting to violence to force their way in. In 2015, Johannes Hahn, the European Union’s enlargement commissioner, estimated that “there are 20 million refugees waiting at the doorstep of Europe.” That may sound like a large number, but when one adds economic migrants to the mix, the numbers shoot up still more; especially as water shortages drive Middle Easterners from their homelands, aspiring migrants might begin to approach Europe’s population of 740 million.

Almost without exception, civilizationist parties suffer from deep problems. Mainly staffed by neophytes, they contain disturbing numbers of cranks: anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim extremists, racists, power-hungry oddballs, conspiracy theorists, historical revisionists, and Nazi nostalgists. Autocrats run their parties undemocratically and seek to dominate parliaments, the judiciary, schools, and other key institutions. They harbor anti-American resentments and take money from Moscow.

These shortcomings usually translate into electoral weakness, as Europeans resist voting for parties that spew bile and cantankerous ideas. About 60 percent of the German voting public worries about Islam and Muslims, polls show, but only one-fifth of them voted for AfD. To advance electorally and achieve their potential, then, civilizationist parties must convince the voters that they can be trusted to govern. Older parties especially, such as the FPÖ, are changing, as shown by the perpetual personnel battles, party splits, and other drama; however messy and off-putting, this process is both necessary and constructive.

Anti-Semitism, the issue that most delegiti-
cent in 2006, 5.7 percent in 2010, and 12.9 percent in 2014. It did not sustain this pattern in 2018, winning just 17.6 percent of the vote, but that sufficed to make it a substantial force in Swedish politics.

No other civilizationist party has grown so mathematically, but votes and survey research suggest that they will gain support. As Geert Wilders, the leader of a Dutch civilizationist party, notes: “In the Eastern part of Europe, anti-Islamification and anti-mass-migration parties see a surge in popular support. Resistance is growing in the West, as well.” They have three paths to power.

1) **On their own:** Civilizationist parties govern Hungary and Poland. Populations of these two former-Warsaw Pact countries, who won their independence only a generation ago and who watch developments in Western Europe with dismay, decided to go their own way. Both their prime ministers have explicitly rejected illegal Muslim migrants (while keeping the door open to Muslims who abide by the rules). Other Eastern European countries have more tentatively gone down this same path.

2) **Joining with legacy conservative parties:** As legacy conservative parties bleed voters to the civilizationists, they respond by adopting anti-immigration and anti-Islamization policies and join forces with the civilizationists. So far, this has happened only in Austria, where the Austrian People’s Party and the FPÖ jointly won 58 percent of the vote and formed a coalition government in December 2017, but more such collaborations are likely.

The 2017 Republican presidential candidate in France moved toward civilizationism and his successor, Laurent Wauquiez, has continued in the same direction. The nominally conservative party in Sweden, the Moderates, has started in the hitherto inconceivable direction of cooperating with the Sweden Democrats. Germany’s Free Democratic Party has moved toward civilizationism. Merkel may still be chancellor of Germany, but some in her government have repudiated her reckless immigration policy; in particular, the interior minister and head of an allied party, Horst Seehofer, articulated hardline immigration policies and even said that Islam does not belong in Germany.

3) **Joining with other parties:** Italy’s eccentric, anarchist, more-or-less leftist Five Star Movement teamed up with the civilizationist League in June to form a government. To forestall civilizationist advances, some leftist parties, like Sweden’s Social Democrats, are with clenched teeth adopting vaguely anti-immigration policies. The Social Democratic party in Denmark took a leap in this direction when its leader, Mette Frederiksen, announced the goal of limiting “the number of non-Western foreigners who can come to Denmark” by setting up reception centers outside Europe, where applicants would stay while their application for asylum would be examined; strikingly, if accepted, the asylum seeker would remain outside Europe, his expenses paid for by the Danish taxpayer. More broadly, as the leftist political theorist Yascha Mounk argues, “the attempt to turn countries with monoethnic identities into truly multiethnic nations is a historically unique experiment.” Understandingly, he notes that this “has encountered some fierce resistance.”

As these parties gain in support and power, they open the eyes of the other parties throughout Europe to the challenges related to immigration and Islam.
and his ambitions to remake the European Union. Hungary in particular and Central Europe in general are acquiring unprecedented influence because of their stance against immigration and Islamization.

I hope to have established two fundamental points here. First, that civilizationist parties are amateurish, raw, and error-prone, but not dangerous; their advent to power will not return Europe to the "low dishonest decade" of the 1930s. Second, that they are inexorably growing so that in 20 years or so, they will be widely serving in government and influencing both conservatives and leftists. Rejecting, marginalizing, ostracizing, and ignoring civilizationist parties in the hope they will disappear will fail. Such steps will not stop them from reaching power but will, counterproductively, make them more populist and radical.

The 6Ps should accept civilizationists as legitimate, work with them, encourage them to slough off extremist elements, help them gain practical experience, and guide them to prepare for governance. But it is not a one-way street, for civilizationists have something to teach the elites, possessing as they do realistic insights about sustaining traditional ways and maintaining Western civilization.
Can We Eat Kosher Bacon?

A question from 1949 rises anew

By Elliot Cosgrove

THE OCTOBER 1949 ISSUE OF COMMENTARY featured a peculiar entry—a strange reflection, almost but not quite a short story, that was nestled quietly between one essay by Franz Rosenzweig and another by John Dewey. It was called “Adam and Eve on Delancey Street” and was the work of Isaac Rosenfeld—a brilliant young writer then considered the equal of his boyhood friend Saul Bellow in talent and possibility.

The piece drew its inspiration from the initial prohibition given by God to Adam when it came to eating from the fruit of the tree—the starting point for all subsequent biblical and rabbinic dietary restrictions. The setting for Rosenfeld’s story is a Lower East Side delicatessen surrounded by onlookers who stand transfixed as they watch, separated by a glass window, “kosher fry beef” coming off the slicing machine. With delicious literary skill, Rosenfeld describes the overpowering gravitational pull these chunks of kosher would-be bacon have on all those so fortunate, or unfortunate, like Adam and Eve in the Garden, to cast their gaze on the mysterious, alluring, and altogether forbidden delicacy.

Rosenfeld leverages the scene to deconstruct all of the Jewish dietary restrictions and regulations from Eden onward: milk/meat, kosher/treif, the prayers before and after eating and otherwise. He describes how these rules are meant to guard against not just prohibited food, but forbidden sexuality. We desire most that which we cannot have, like entry into non-Jewish society—an aspiration signified by a Jew’s voyeuristic gaze through a glass window. “Kosher Fry Beef, Jewish Bacon,” Rosenfeld writes, “is food in the form of the forbidden, an optical pun on kosher and treif.”

He describes the crowd standing “in a sexual trance.” The trance comes from the forbiddenness, which extends from food to, well…: “In the end, it is not merely the shaigel and the shiksa who are taboo; the sexual object per se is treif; for within the culture it is overlaid by the all-nourishing mother, the authoritarian father, both under the incest ban.”

The most interesting thing about the piece, however, is not its risqué content—which, by today’s standards is altogether tame, or, if you will, pareve—but rather the reaction to it in the Jewish world. Angry letters poured in to the magazine from every corner. M.L. Isaacs, the dean of Yeshiva University, was appalled by the “indecency” of the article. Samuel Kramer, then

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The most vicious attack came from the pulpit of Park Avenue Synagogue, the shul at which I serve as senior rabbi. Rabbi Milton Steinberg went into full attack mode. He delivered a scathing sermon against Commentary, criticizing its editorial staff’s decision to publish the piece. Steinberg mimeographed hundreds of copies of his sermon and, with the help of a journalist friend, sent copies out to the national leadership of American Jewry. Still not satisfied, he contacted the entire membership of Commentary’s then-publisher, the American Jewish Committee. “If you approve of pornography and anti-Semitism peddled under the imprint of the AJC, you may not be interested in the rest of this letter,” Steinberg wrote. “Please re-read the Rosenfeld article. It is not only smut, but actually anti-Semitism worthy of the best efforts of St. Reicher and Goebbels.”

A novelist of note himself as well as a scholar, Steinberg was arguably the dominant voice of American Jewry in his day. And while there were those who countered that freedom of expression was at stake, in the months that followed, the leadership of the AJC would apologize for running the piece and Eliot A. Cohen, this magazine’s editor, would offer a grudging acknowledgment that he had done wrong (“certainly there was one anecdote that was in very bad taste”). A mini furor of midcentury American Jewry, all over the thought of kosher bacon.

That is pretty much where things have stood for just shy of 70 years, until an article in the New York Times brought it all back. Nathaniel Popper’s September 30 piece is about the development of something called

If meat is defined by way of the slaughtered animal it comes from, then cell-based ‘clean meat’ is not meat and therefore it would not be treif.

“clean meat,” also known as cell-based agriculture. Cells taken from an animal can now be isolated, put into a solution that mimics blood, and encouraged to replicate. Still in its infancy, the technology has excited animal rights activists and environmentalists delighted at the prospect of lab-grown meat brought to market without the moral and ecological costs associated with meat consumption. The first “lab hamburger” was served in 2013, and a race is underfoot to create the first commercially available product.

It is an advancement that has brought about the possibility of something that neither Rosenfeld nor Steinberg could have imagined possible—a world with actual kosher bacon. As the rabbinic thinking goes, if meat is defined by way of the slaughtered animal it comes from, then cell-based “clean meat” is not meat and therefore it would not be treif.

This is not an open-shut case, and I have no idea how this new non-meat will taste, but what is clear is that we are living through the most significant culinary transformation for American Jewry since the 1997 koshering of the Oreo, and arguably the most significant food development for Jewry ever. Not just meat, not just pork, but the possibility of a bacon cheeseburger, with all the toppings! And you can hold the guilt! The glass window separating the Jews of Delancey Street and the kosher bacon of their fantasies has been shattered. Go ahead, Adam and Eve—eat that fruit! The forbidden has become permitted, the illicit made lawful!

This entire conversation, though prompted by a development in food, is about far more than the dietary choices any one individual or family makes. My assumption is that the vast majority of non-Orthodox American Jews consume “the other white meat” or, at the very least, order from what I call “the other side of the menu.” The question I am raising, rather, is philosophical in nature, namely what it means to be a Jew in a time where one can—without hesitation, shame, or guilt—delight in precisely those things that have been proscribed by Jewish law for millennia, those things that have kept us differentiated as a people throughout time.

In retrospect, I think what Steinberg and his contemporaries understood in 1949 was that they were living through a transformational moment for American Jewry. The traumas of the Holocaust had yet to be absorbed, the continued survival of the State of Israel was not a given. World Jewry was bruised, battered, and vulnerable in so many ways. As for American Jewry, we were shifting geographically, economically, and culturally from the insular, working-class, immigrant communities of the first half of the century to the integrated, upwardly mobile, and suburban communities of the second half of the century.

Rosenfeld’s article touched a nerve because he

* The controversy is well described in Steven J. Zipperstein’s 2009 book, Rosenfeld’s Lives, published by Yale University Press.
said, by way of the tantalizing image of kosher bacon, all that needed to be said about everything that hung in balance in his time—and Steinberg knew it better than anyone. To give voice to the Jewish desire but inability to attain entry into the non-Jewish world; to suggest that our dietary restrictions are some sort of Freudian psychosexual mechanism to inhibit contact with the non-Jewish world; to put those thoughts in print for Jew and non-Jew to read and by a Jewish author no less; that was what we Jews call a shanda—a shame, a disgrace, a matter to cause scandal. Steinberg reacted as he did because he somehow understood what was at stake if the ideas that generated Rosenfeld’s piece became commonly accepted.

A great deal has changed for American Jewry since 1949. You can track the transformations in all sorts of ways—marital choices, economic advancement, educational achievement, and so on. Boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish society have been blurred in a way unthinkable to our predecessors. Television is but one of a million ways to measure the distance traveled. We have moved from Bridget Loves Bernie—the short-lived 1972 hit sitcom about an interfaith couple canceled due to protests from both the Jewish and Catholic communities—to our age of Seinfeld, Will and Grace, Friends, and New Girl, in which depictions of interfaith relations have become so commonplace that they have ceased to be transgressive and worthy of comment at all.

Once upon a time, being Jewish was an impediment to professional and social advancement, and one's Jewish roots were spoken of in hushed tones. Jews changed our names and our neighborhoods in hopes of fitting in. Not any longer. Jews have gone from being the “other,” to “just another.” Somewhere along the way, Jews have become ‘white people.’ In this country, if you fill out an application for college, the fact of your Jewishness never comes up. Being a Jew is no longer the distinguishing external mark it once was. From the First Family right down to our own families, the most interesting thing to say about being a Jew (or marrying a Jew) is just how uninteresting it has become. Ours is a time when the proverbial kosher bacon is no longer a fantasy but a reality.

It is this, our present reality, about which we must be willing to ask all the hard questions. What does it mean to live in a time when there are no barriers, no stop signs, and maybe not even any speed bumps preventing a Jew from participating fully in non-Jewish life?

If one can lead a fully integrated existence as a Jew in America, and if one believes, as I do, that every human being is created equally in the image of God and that Judaism is but one of multiple equally valid paths to seek out an unknowable God, then what precisely is the compelling argument for a young person to choose to lead a Jewish life?

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Jews have gone from being the ‘other,’ to ‘just another.’ Somewhere along the way, as noted by many sociologists, Jews have become ‘white people.’

If there are no external markers differentiating us from the world in which we live, then what are the internal markers by which our faith and people will remain compelling and distinct? If all faith traditions are of equal merit, then what exactly is the argument for an interfaith couple to create a Jewish home and raise Jewish children, all the more so for a non-Jewish partner to convert to Judaism?

Taken as a whole, the challenges of our time are a good thing. It is a blessing to have been born into this country and this age of unprecedented freedoms. But they are freedoms that come with a challenge, the challenge of how to inspire, educate, and support Jews to help them live passion-filled Jewish lives—lives that could, if left to their own devices, just as easily tip the other way.

Ever since the Garden of Eden, men and women have gazed at the fruit of the tree, face-to-face with the possibilities and consequences that come with the decision to reach out and eat of that forbidden delicacy. For the first time in a long time and maybe ever, Jews can reach out and grab that fruit without any of the consequences of yesteryear—and even more interestingly, the question of what is and isn’t forbidden, what is and isn’t kosher is in play.

The flourishing of Jewish life in America will always depend on our people’s ability to balance an appreciation for the blessings and choices of our lives with the restraint required in order to remain a distinct people. For some, that restraint may manifest itself in keeping kosher; for others, keeping Shabbat; for others, Jewish summer camps; and for still others, some combination of those and other particularisms. Jews on Delancey Street in 1949 or on Park Avenue in 2018 or who knows where in 2087 needed, need, and will continue to need some speed bumps, some stop signs, and some measure of internal discipline in order to live a life of difference and thus make a difference as Jews in our blessed society.

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MOST PARENTS I know, not all of them conservative, read news of American universities with increasing alarm. How can we send our teens to the very schools we attended only a generation ago, to be taught little else than to deplore our values? If this anxiety afflicts you, then perhaps the last thing you should do is read Heather Mac Donald’s brilliantly argued, meticulously researched, and often quite funny dissection of the American university, The Diversity Delusion.

Mac Donald collided head-on with the contemporary campus in April 2017, when she was invited to speak at Claremont McKenna College about her book The War on Cops. A conservative political commentator (including for Commentary) and fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Mac Donald had dared in her book to criticize Black Lives Matter. For this sin, campus groups accused her of racism, which she cleverly terms the “phlogiston of modern liberalism,” since it so often “can neither be perceived nor measured” but is nonetheless endlessly invoked as an explanation for every societal discrepancy. Campus police kept her safe from a violent, masked mob clad in black, but they did not ensure passage for those students who had wanted to attend. The administration’s sympathy lay squarely with the radicals. In the end, Mac Donald spoke to an almost empty room, while protesters outside pounded the windows. To follow Mac Donald’s propulsive, tightly argued rendering of the university is to arrive at the inescapable conclusion

Abigail Shrier is a writer in Los Angeles.
SHE BEGINS WITH a serious discussion of the “positively sadistic” harms inflicted by affirmative action on its beneficiaries, even at California’s schools, which have managed to skirt California’s anti-affirmative-action law, Proposition 209, “through fiendishly clever compliance with the letter of the law, while riding roughshod over its spirit.” In 2004, UCLA law professor Richard Sander published a groundbreaking empirical study that showed affirmative action in law-school admission actually hurt the chances of minority students eventually passing the bar exam. The resulting “mismatch” (the title of Sander’s book) between the preference beneficiaries’ academic preparedness and the rigor of the school made it harder for them to learn the necessary material. (Sander found that black students, in Mac Donald’s telling, were also “twice as likely to drop out as whites” and “six times as likely to fail the bar after multiple efforts.”)

In fact, preference beneficiaries are often so ill-prepared for the universities to which they are admitted that they flee economics and the more demanding sciences for those humanities classes where grievance offers an alluring succor and even an academic major. If administrators hoped to advance minority students or to encourage minorities in STEM subjects, this would seem counterproductive. But the point of these efforts, Mac Donald argues, is for administrators to “flatter their own egos, so that they can gaze upon their ‘diverse’ realm and bask in their noblesse oblige.”

Under the diversity mantle, college administrators have mangled every aspect of universities from hiring processes to disciplinary proceedings to curricula in the humanities and the sciences. (An introductory chemistry course at Berkeley has as its stated primary goal “to disrupt ‘the racialized and gendered construct of scientific brilliance,’ which defines ‘good science’ as getting all the right answers. The course maintains instead that ‘all students are scientifically brilliant.’”) From this mayhem, the diversity administrators are conveniently poised to gain the most: Nearly every diversity failure is “remedied” by hiring more diversity enforcers, further feathering these sinecures. The sheer number of these officers is staggering: UC Davis alone has 28 diversity departments, covering every conceivable racial, sexual, and gender identity.

With administrators’ encouragement, charges of campus “microaggressions” proliferate like bacteria and destroy like them, too. In November 2013, nearly two dozen graduate students at UCLA marched into an education class and accused professor emeritus Val Rust of having created a racially hostile environment by correcting his students’ grammar and spelling. (Administrators rushed to the students’ defense; only Rust’s status as emeritus professor saved him from the ax.) Again, the nominal beneficiaries of this kowtowing suffer most, in Mac Donald’s view: “Any student who believes that the university is an ‘unsafe,’ racially hostile environment is unlikely to take full advantage of its resources.” But every student and professor must suffer in an environment so forbidding that speech is chilled to permafrost, making it doubtful that any worthy discussion can take root.

“Implicit bias”—another concept of dubious empirical validity—is a scythe dangled over the necks of department heads lest the result of a hiring process not be deemed sufficiently “diverse.” This, despite the fact that department heads are demonstrably stretching to admit minority candidates at every opportunity. Mac Donald writes: “From 2013 to 2016, medical schools nationally admitted 57 percent of blacks with low MCATs of 24 to 26 but only 8 percent of whites and 6 percent of Asians with those same low scores.”

There is also the “campus rape myth”—the oft-repeated claim by administrators that one-fifth to one-quarter of all college girls will be raped or be the targets of attempted rape during their time in college. (In fact, Mac Donald argues persuasively, very few rapes occur on campus.) “No crime, much less one as serious as rape, has a victimization rate remotely approaching 20 percent or 25 percent, even over many years,” writes Mac Donald. “The one-in-five to one-in-four statistic would mean that every year, hundreds of
thousands of young women graduate who have suffered the most terrifying assault, short of murder, that a woman can experience. Such a crime wave would require nothing less than a state of emergency—Take Back the Night rallies and twenty-four-hour hotlines would hardly be adequate to counter this tsunami of sexual violence."

But as Mac Donald wryly notes, very few truly believe this. “Highly educated mothers in New York City pay $200 an hour to prep their female tots for nursery school admissions tests, all in the hope of winning a spot for their little darlings in the Ivy League thirteen years later,” she writes. “Yet we are to believe that these ambitious mothers are deliberately packing off their daughters to a hellhole of sexual predation.”

One might think that universities would encourage abstinence, or at least sexual conservatism in the face of this alleged threat. Instead, they remain spiritedly libertine, encouraging all manner of sexual experimentation, while simultaneously narrowing the array of behaviors that qualify as “consent.” As Mac Donald details, even a young woman who asks if her male partner has a condom, announces to her friend that she intends to have sex, voluntarily shows up at his dorm room, and is a willing participant in the sex through no coercion or force on the male’s part may be deemed not to have consented if she later regrets the act; one young man in question was expelled from Occidental College in 2013 in exactly this way.

Nonetheless, Mac Donald argues that conservatives should welcome the “burgeoning sex regulations” as “the only upside to the whole sordid situation.” And it is here that she steps onto shaky ground. “Unlike the overregulation of natural gas production, say, which results in less of a valuable commodity,” she writes, “there is no cost to an overregulation-induced decrease in campus sex.”

No cost to making young people so frightened of even welcome sexual advances that they resort to—what? Xbox and pornography? Students are unlikely to use all of their wakeful hours for the studying and chaste conversation Mac Donald seems to have in mind.

In fact, millennials and members of Generation Z are having less sex than any previous generation in 60 years. Pornography consumption is on the rise, as is the phenomenon of the “solo sexual”—those who prefer masturbation to sex with others. Against these elitist alternatives, a return to normal dating and sexuality would be a positive development in America, and this seems all but impossible when the thrill of touching a girl you’re dating meets the unholy terror of being branded a rapist.

Conservatism has no legitimate interest in extirpating sexual pleasure from society. Its power and broad appeal come in asking adults to take responsibility for the choices they make and insisting they honestly examine the consequences. One of those choices might be to partake in a normal dating life in college, and this might reasonably include engaging in consensual sexual acts with a person you like very much. Another might be to drink oneself into blackout and hope for the best. If Mac Donald hopes to return to a world where even petting is something college coeds dare not try, then she will have to dial us back to a point so far before the sexual revolution, it seems doubtful we could get back there, even if we wanted to.

This quibble notwithstanding, Mac Donald’s book is an essential addition to the canon on our culture, not only because it elucidates the horrors of the contemporary university, but because it provides critical insight into the dystopia that the left hopes to hand us upon its return to power. Janet Napolitano, the former governor of Arizona and secretary of homeland security, now presides over the California university system. She has required all deans and department chairs to undergo training to overcome their “implicit biases” toward women and minorities. According to this doctrine, all those outside a protected class are a priori guilty of racism. By definition, such bias can neither be gainsaid nor disproved. Statements as anodyne as “America is the land of opportunity” or “decisions should be made on the basis of merit” have already been deemed hostile microaggressions at the University of California.

Far from the vaunted transmitter of civilization and science it once was, the American university is now little more than the left’s

**Commentary**

Mac Donald argues that conservatives should welcome the ‘burgeoning sex regulations’ as ‘the only upside to the whole sordid situation.’ And it is here that she steps onto shaky ground.
A Hollow Man

Reagan: An American Journey
By Bob Spitz
Penguin, 880 pages

Reviewed by
Kevin D. Williamson

Ronald Reagan is inaccurately remembered as a warm man,” biographer Edmund Morris wrote in the New Yorker in 2004, but he was something closer to the opposite—closed, cool, self-contained. “Sooner or later, every would-be intimate (including his four children, Maureen, Michael, Patti, and Ron) discovered that the only human being Reagan truly cared about (after his mother died) was Nancy. For [Senator Paul] Laxalt, disillusionment came when the president called to thank him for his campaign help in 1984, only to pause in midsentence and audibly turn over a page of typescript...For Michael Reagan, it was the high-school graduation day his father greeted him with ‘My name is Ronald Reagan. What’s yours?’...He trusted [Nancy’s] superior judgment of people but hardly ever asked her political advice; he did not even consult her about running for the presidency.”

Morris’s essay is titled “The Unknowable,” and now the difficult task of trying to know Ronald Reagan and to help others to know him has been taken up by Bob Spitz, a biographer of celebrities including Julia Child, the Beatles, and Bob Dylan. He is also the author of a book about the Woodstock festival. Which is to say, he is a man who has spent many years and much effort documenting the middle-ish part of the 20th century from the opposite side of the cultural divide that separated Ronald Reagan, the erstwhile New Deal Democrat, from the increasingly radicalized Democratic Party that began to emerge in the 1960s, a story told by Reagan in his habitual form—the one-liner: “I didn’t leave the Democratic Party; the Democratic Party left me.”

One can see the appeal for Spitz of a man such as Reagan, who operated at the intersection of celebrity and politics, making him an almost irresistible subject for a biography. Spitz should give some thought to writing one.

His book is packaged like a biography, with a biography’s title—Reagan: An American Journey—and a biography’s cover, with a black-and-white photograph of Reagan posing cinematically, broad-shouldered in a white T-shirt, leaning against a fence under a cloudless sky. Reagan is on the book, but Reagan is not in the book—the man simply is not there. Instead of a biography, Spitz has written a work of history, or rather a series of works of history, extraordinarily detailed and sometimes interesting accounts of a number of 20th-century episodes that had Ronald Reagan at their center.

Some of these are quite good. I cannot remember having read an account of the 1980 primary and general-election campaign quite so rollicking or engaging. Spitz has a perdurable interest in and tolerance for gossip and back-biting—score-settling among figures who already have been forgotten by almost everyone outside of the world of political nerdery or who are on their way toward it—which invests the work with the character sometimes described as “dishy.” Which is not to say that these data and observations are trivial; Ronald Reagan was one of the most consequential men of his time, and within all this he-said/she-said (the principal she being Mrs. Reagan), there are bits that are new and interesting, the sum of which will contribute meaningfully toward the project of bringing...
the remote Ronald Reagan a little closer to our understanding.

If Spitz is incapable of comprehending President Reagan, it is because he does not comprehend why Reagan desired to enter politics in the first place or what he hoped to accomplish—which is a severe disability for the would-be biographer. Spitz has Jonathan Franzen’s problem, the one revealed so plainly in the novel *Freedom*: He wants to write about conservatives and conservatism, but he is unwilling or unable to do the work of learning about them. In the same way that Franzen failed in his fiction, Spitz offers up to his readers a risible, cartoonish version of Reagan’s thinking, that of a man who began with nothing (or worse than nothing, in the case of Reagan, who was cursed with a deadbeat father) and made something of himself, largely through his own effort. And Spitz comes to believe that bootstraps are the beginning and the end of the story. “His own up-from-the-bootstraps story had left him with disdain for those who couldn’t manage the same feat.”

Of course that isn’t the case: Reagan was not convicted of welfare fraud. Spitz notes, Reagan was not convicted of welfare fraud. Spitz assumes *the failure of Reaganomics*, meaning that the economic record of the Reagan years is not only one of failure but one of obvious failure, which is contrary to the data.

gan to reclaim its self-respect; the Great Society, and Lyndon Johnson’s broader agenda, coincided with the unpopular misadventure in Vietnam, a period during which the nation grew to doubt itself and when patriotism was held up for ridicule. That the welfare initiatives and the wars were largely separate phenomena is immaterial to the way their respective eras sit on the national mind historically.

As Spitz notes, Reagan was not much of a historian and was not inclined toward heavy analytical thinking, but there was a great deal more to his thought than generalizing from his own personal experience. He was a dedicated reader of the conservative political journalism of his time and of libertarian-oriented political essays, and he understood Communism abroad and statism at home to be expressions of the same tendency toward centralization and regimentation at the expense of the individual.

For Spitz, this is just the impressionable Reagan getting “fired up with a fervent ideology that was informing every aspect of his life.” He writes: “Conservative journals like *National Review*, the *Freeman*, and *Human Events* fed his groaning prejudice against government bloat and excessive regulations.”

The stupidity of these sentences is remarkable to see in print. Surely an opposition to *bloat* in government and a distaste for *excessive* regulation is something other than “groaning prejudice,” whatever that participle and noun together hope to mean. Spitz goes on to argue on the next page that Reagan “opposed JFK’s beneficence,” though it seems unlikely that Reagan would have opposed it if he had thought it was beneficence and not something else. He repeats the myth that Reagan’s “welfare queens” were the product of his imagination rather than actual people involved in actual welfare fraud. In fact, Reagan’s anecdotal Cadillac-driving welfare fraudster was named Linda Taylor; she lived in Chicago, was charged with fraud, was involved in some kidnappings, and may also have been mixed up in a murder. Recent inspector-general estimates of “improper payments” in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program run as high as 40 percent, though many of those improper payments are bureaucratic errors rather than intentional fraud.

Worse than Spitz’s shallowness is his mind-reading. He catalogues Reagan’s purported sins: “His lack of empathy for those in desperate financial straits and for AIDS victims, the supply-side Reaganomics, the punitive ‘war on drugs,’ the reckless spending on the military, stratospheric budget deficits, the implausibility of the Strategic Defense Initiative, Bitburg…”

“Empathy” is of course a literary device rather than an actual human experience (I suppose
Spitz means “sympathy,” or that he does not know the difference), but knowing whether Reagan felt something for the destitute or for those stricken with AIDS requires knowing things that are: 1) not obviously knowable, having to do with the internal condition of the man’s soul, and 2) contrary to the public record, as Peter Huber’s reporting in City Journal on the Reagan administration’s actual response to AIDS demonstrates. Spitz assumes facts not in evidence, apparently in order to pad out a thin paragraph.

As for the rest of it, Spitz assumes “the failure of Reagonomics,” that the economic record of the Reagan years is not only one of failure but one of obvious failure, which is contrary to the data. Up for debate? Of course. But with 40 percent real GDP growth, the Reagan years saw what amounted to the addition of a second California to the U.S. economy. The Strategic Defense Initiative that he calls “implausible” laid the foundations for what is—right now—a national missile-defense system of “demonstrated capability,” in the words of the Pentagon’s chief weapons tester. This is shallow stuff and by far the worst part of the book. It is sloppy writing, sloppy research, and sloppy thinking.

The book is at its best when it sticks to straightforward reporting. A chapter called “The Big Mo,” in which Spitz follows Reagan through the primaries, offers interesting perspectives on the sundry pissing contests within the campaign and the role of the West Coast money men who had been trying to figure out what to make of Reagan—and how to make use of him—since 1968, when Reagan and the country were spared a candidacy for which he was not yet prepared. Reagan’s odd relationship with Gerald Ford is also discussed to some interest, with Reagan’s attempt to make nice being hilariously misconstrued by the former president, who apparently thought that Reagan was serious about bringing him back into the White House as a vice president and “co-president.”

It is mysterious why Spitz would put in so much obvious labor to produce a book that, while full of anecdote and detail, is hollow at its core. There is a great deal of stuff in this supposed portrait of this “American journey,” but very little of Reagan, either the man or his ideals.

Crazy Brash Asians

The Souls of Yellow Folk

BY WESLEY YANG
W.W. Norton & Co., 256 pages

Reviewed by ELLIOTT KAUFMAN

AN “UNDERCURRENT of racial panic” lurks in American discussions of Asians, reports Wesley Yang in his National Magazine Award-winning essay, “Paper Tigers.” It’s not just the rise of China. Every Prize Day at your kid’s school, you hear the names that are called, and you fear their Tiger Moms and Dads have outclassed you. But more important, what of their children, the impassive faces that rise to collect the awards? “What of the Asian American who obeyed everything his parents told him?” Yang asks. “Does this person really scare anyone?”

No, and neither did the Chinese kids who knocked me out of competitive chess in middle school. But now that I’m a writer, Wesley Yang strikes fear into my heart. Yang, a columnist for Tablet, places “Paper Tigers” as the second essay in his stunning collection, The Souls of Yellow Folks. Like many of the other essays and articles, it is doubly bold: a cold shower of analysis that will jolt readers out of sentimentalism, and an arresting personal testimony that must arouse sympathy. It is part sociological investigation of the end of Asian “immigrant forbearance” and part manifesto. It begins with an accusation:

Here is what I sometimes suspect my face signifies to other Americans: an invisible person, barely distinguishable from a mass of faces that resemble it. A conspicuous person standing apart from the crowd and yet devoid of any individuality. An icon of so much that the culture pretends to honor but that it in fact patronizes and exploits. Not just people “who are good at math” and play the violin, but a mass of stifled, repressed, abused, conformist quasi-robots who simply do not matter, socially or culturally.

Asians are not white enough to be treated as true individuals, Yang
explains in the book’s introduction, but they are also denied the right to feel aggrieved, unlike other minority groups. Their material and educational success is used to waive that away. Held back by a white corporate culture on one side and affirmative action on the other, they know some of the resentments of both minorities and whites.

This lends Asians a unique role in America. Marginal, to be sure, but also central, and maybe even universal, Yang speculates. It is here that Yang’s title becomes more than cute. Similar to W.E.B. Du Bois regarding black Americans, Yang believes the Asian experience—and even “Asian,” Yang argues persuasively, is not a particular enough term—can offer a window into the American experience, and broaden it, making it more humane. But “that lies at the end of a cultural project that has scarcely even begun,” he sighs.

Yang departs from Du Bois in his ambivalence toward the obligations of the minority artist to his group. He can use the Asian “we” with force and credibility, but more commonly he goes with “I.” Though estranged, Yang does not abandon his people. Rather, he calls on them to be individuals, bold and his people. Rather, he calls on group. He can use the Asian “we” more humane. But “that lies at the end of a cultural project that has scarcely even begun,” he sighs.

Yang departs from Du Bois in his ambivalence toward the obligations of the minority artist to his group. He can use the Asian “we” with force and credibility, but more commonly he goes with “I.” Though estranged, Yang does not abandon his people. Rather, he calls on them to be individuals, bold and unbounded. Yang celebrates colorful troublemakers who are done waiting and now punch through the “bamboo ceiling” that allows them to succeed as Asians in America, but only so far. What is to be done? Wesley Yang has an answer: Asians must assert themselves and “dare to be interesting.”

The Souls of Yellow Folk also tackles the interaction of sexual liberation with Internet technology, as well as the escalation of social-justice rhetoric. In addressing both, he treats the challenges of the marginal “loser”—to be recognized, to be equal, or to get a date—with sympathy and urgency.

Ever watchful for soothing lies, Yang wonders if our societies have anything to offer these people, anything at all.

Take the Asian Virginia Tech shooter, whom Yang analyzes in his essay, “The Face of Seung-Hui Cho.” Instead of turning to rancorous identity politics, which would have channelled his pain and narcissism in a way that our society increasingly accommodates, Cho chose an “impossible” class consciousness, prefiguring the alright. He saw himself, in Yang’s words, “as a warrior on behalf of every lonely invisible human being in America.”

Impossible, Yang thinks, because from pornography to drug addiction, our society endlessly distracts the “undernourished human soul.” Amid sexual freedom—which didn’t bring a level of sexual hierarchies but rationalized the way these suffering people cannot organize without self-incriminating. Many of the ones who shamelessly organized anyway were vicious and full of hate.

Maybe we’ve all become shameless. Yang’s incisive review of the anonymous “sex diaries” published on New York magazine’s website diagnoses the casual trauma of dating. “There is a certain pride in understanding the limits of a transaction,” he observes, and “a certain callousness toward the merchandise is an unavoidable side effect of entering a marketplace as both buyer and seller.” In our struggle to never run out of options and to never be made to look naive—to stay in control—we no longer notice that we treat our temporary partners like something less than human beings; after all, we’ve been treated that way ourselves.

Yang extends that analysis in my favorite of his essays, “Game Theory.” Reviewing “seduction” books, he reaches a shocking conclusion: The pickup artists are on to something.

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STATED OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

“The Game players made explicit the workings of a new sexual economy,” he writes. By formally disaggregating sex from love, family, and feeling, these Lotharios “disclosed with unusual clarity the nature of the larger game we all play: one in which each player gives what he must and takes what he can.”

When relationships become rational calculations in which partners expect to stay together only until they get better offers, it is hurt-or-be-hurt, Yang explains. The pick-up artists, who started off harmless nerds, had to teach themselves to become cold, commitment-averse, manipulating self-maximizers—in short, monstrous—in order to win. So don’t hate the players or the Game, but instead “the world for which it is a useful guide.”

Here Yang sounds most like New York Times columnist Ross Douthat, the type of conservative who admires Christopher Lasch. One suspects that Yang was a conservative of the left, like Lasch, and is now one of the center. Either way, it doesn’t matter. He is one of the most interesting writers in America today.

ID Canard

The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity
By Kwame Anthony Appiah
Liveright, 256 pages

Reviewed by Nicholas Clairmont

Identity issues are now firmly at the center of American life. For the left, everything you say, you say “as a…” At magazines and newspapers, identity is now a coverage area that demands a whole section, usually with a growing staff. Universities have created majors specializing in identity and staffed diversity offices with their graduates. On the twisted version of a right promulgated by the likes of Steve Bannon and Richard Spencer, we find the same obsession with identity in photo-negative. Ethno-nationalists and their fellow travelers disagree with the left about the details of who needs to be afforded protection from oppression. But they agree about the principle that there is something real and important to the idea of group demographic identities—that “at the core of each identity there is some deep similarity that binds people of that identity together.”

That quote is a description of identity essentialism from the new book The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity, by New York University professor of philosophy and law Kwame Anthony Appiah. “I’ve set myself the task in this book of discussing some of the ideas that have shaped the modern rise of identity and trying to see some of the mistakes we regularly make about identities more clearly,” writes Appiah. Essentialism, he finds, is the worst and most common of these mistakes.

It’s a timely project, with the left retreating ever further behind identitarian slogans and leading debates that yield more polarization than persuasion. It is promising, then, that Appiah is addressing the identity politickers of the left from within their own tribe. “The intellectual temptations I am trying to combat are temptations I have experienced regularly myself,” he writes. Fans of identity politics often dismiss prominent critics as a cast of conservative reactionaries tacitly defending their own identities’ interests. This argument can’t be leveled at Appiah, a gay man of color, a self-described cosmopolitan, a left-winger, and an immigrant. Of course, nobody using a sane standard to judge ideas should require certain identities of their author as a kind of credential. But then, if everyone were using a sane standard, we wouldn’t need books like this.

Appiah begins by laying out a theory of how people get identity classifications wrong. In each category of identity, he says, there is a view that what defines the groups is something real, something out there. Naive critics of religions think that it is scripture that makes up what a religion is about, but this misunderstands the role of ritual and community in creeds and what creeds are actually for. Nationalists are convinced that their nation is a real historical group tied to some territory, though in many cases, that history is recent and that territory changes. In our thinking about what makes races different, Appiah says, “too many of us remain captive to a perilous cartography of color.”

This brings Appiah to his positive theory of identity. He argues that even though science and history have no hard and true facts to point to when questioned about what makes someone Serbian or black or Hindu, two things remain. No. 1 is the labels themselves. If people agree enough about what they intend to convey by using the word “Serbian,” that in itself grants power to Serbian identity, even
The book is really a battle cry for the moral superiority of liberalism, internationalism, and universal humanity. But the battle cry is disguised, and it cannot be.

if the semantics of the word have some technical problems. No. 2 is that identities “matter to people.” This can have its benefits. “Having an identity can give you a sense of how you fit into the social world,” Appiah writes. But it also has consequences. It’s all well and good to know that scientific racism is nonsense, but that doesn’t matter much when a racist is assaulting a black person he’s convinced is his inferior.

After this initial theorizing that identities are as linguistically and socially important as they are philosophically shaky, Appiah takes to the specifics. With one chapter for each of five types of identity—creed, country, color, class, and culture—he intersperses examples from his own background and from poetry and literature to tell a story about what the prevailing view is and how it is wrong. And here the book stalls. It is so caveated, so self-consciously subtle, so couched in charming anecdotes and high-brow literary references that it’s hard to imagine anyone changing his thinking after putting it down. A leftist identitarian could easily read the whole book without quite assembling a stylish sentence. And he is being attacked save for in one short section that criticizes the notion of cultural appropriation.

Appiah’s own background is a genuinely interesting and richly examined one, but he leans on it too much. It often feels as if he is reminding his leftist readers that he is Ghanaian in order to head off any offense that they might take—which isn’t questioning identity politics; it’s acceding to it. And if personal narrative is laid on thick, the philosophical criticism of identity discourse is ultimately quite thin. Take his discussion of nationalism: “A nation is a group of people who think of themselves as sharing ancestry and also care about the fact that they have that supposed ancestry in common,” Appiah tells us, addressing the question about the relationship between ethnicity and nationhood raised by the fact that, say, Ireland is a nation but Greater Celtland is not. And, he adds soon after, “what others outside the group think is important, too. Identity...is negotiated between insiders and outsiders.” Can Appiah’s whole point really be “look, these are dumb ideas, but they’re dumb ideas people have”?

Still, Appiah does know how to assemble a stylish sentence. And he does a much better job than most academics at avoiding technical jargon. When a phrase like “establish some normative significance for the shared label” slips through, the reason you notice is that most of the other prose is so good. And the closing section, in which he drops some of the pretense and simply argues for the center to hold against identity radicalism, shines.

Still, the book makes only the lightest attack on the ideas that push people toward tribalism and away from liberal individualism. And what he leaves unquestioned is the most important stuff: Should identities matter? What, if anything, conceptually links different kinds of demographic group identities, such as “Pakistani” and “male” and “Roman Catholic”? What separates these demographic group identities from other meaningful classifications for types of people, such as “orphan” or “philosopher” or “believer in UFOs”? Are some identities (such as gay) worth celebrating, while others (such as Aryan) are not? Is the distinction between the genders different or somehow more real than the distinction between races? Is political affiliation a matter of identity, and was it always so? Do people take part in identity groups primarily in order to place themselves inside a group, or in order to place others outside the group?

These are just some of the timely, important, and intellectually interesting questions about identity that Appiah doesn’t get around to rethinking.

The book is really a battle cry for the moral superiority of liberalism, internationalism, and universal humanity. But the battle cry is disguised, and it cannot be. Appiah seems to want to fight the identitarian mode of thinking and arguing, but only so far as fighting it doesn’t take him uncomfortably out of the bounds of acceptable discourse in the worlds of NYU and the New York Times. That isn’t very far, so he pulls punches. Which tells you everything you need to know about the book, and everything you need to know about its media-savvy author. This in turn tells you everything you need to know about the self-censorious workings of today’s incendiary discourse on identity. »
How Should We Think about the Candidacy and Presidency of Donald Trump? What trends and concepts are important for understanding them? In How Fascism Works, Jason Stanley attempts to make a scholarly argument that, given the history of fascist tactics, the past three years make up a moment of fascist politics. The book is not intended to reflect and capitalize on popular hysteria about Trump. Whether or not it ultimately distinguishes itself in this way is another matter.

Stanley, a professor of philosophy at Yale, provides a highly general account of what fascist politics entails. He aims to paint a picture that’s vivid enough to be helpful in identifying fascist moments but abstract enough to be applicable across changing historical conditions, which he says ultimately determine “the regimes [that fascists] enact.”

The book breaks fascism down into 10 political tactics: appeal to a mythic past, propaganda, anti-intellectualism, unreality, hierarchy, victimhood, law and order, sexual anxiety, appeals to the heartland, and a dismantling of public welfare and unity. The second of these, propaganda, seems to be Stanley’s true area of expertise. Just three years ago, he wrote a book entitled How Propaganda Works. His thesis was that everyone involved in politics engages in propaganda, and that what differentiates good propaganda from bad propaganda is whether it is being used for good or bad ends—to promote liberal democracy or to promote some other “dysfunctional ideology.”

For the other nine tactics, Stanley distinguishes the good from the bad by what he describes vaguely as “understanding the dynamics of power.” He writes, “Oppression is a powerful motivation for action, but the questions of who is wielding it when, under what context and against whom, remain eternally crucial.” This framework is reminiscent of the Bolshevist slogan “Who, whom?” which implied that politics is not about principles but about group struggles for dominance. Among Stanley’s insights about fascism are that it is rooted in nations, not states, and that it builds from a sense of victimhood. At the same time, he writes, “the nationalism that arises from oppression, is not fascist in origin…despite appearances to the contrary, equality is its goal.” We also read that “fascist politics targets expertise, mocking and devaluing it.” It is easy to see how the Trump phenomenon might fit into Stanley’s working definition of fascist politics.

In fact, it’s too easy.

Stanley relies heavily on evidence from social psychology, a field currently going through an epistemic crisis in which results often fail to replicate. So when he claims that “there already is a strong in-built bias toward forgetting and minimizing problematic acts one’s in-group committed in the past,” or that “those who benefit from inequalities are often burdened by certain illusions that prevent them from recognizing the contingency of their privilege,” it’s hard to know whether he himself is engaging in “manipulative expertise,” a charge he levels at his opponents.

The chapter on the fascist love for the heartland and its concomitant hatred of urbanites closes with survey data: When faced with the question of whether poverty is more often the result of an individual’s lack of effort or of external circumstances, 49 percent of country-dwellers and 37 percent of city-dwellers choose the former, while 46 percent of country-dwellers and 56 percent of city-dwellers choose the latter. Stanley takes this to be “a particularly large gulf” of opinion. But it’s patently not. It’s a small gap. And in making it out to be larger than it is, doesn’t Stanley himself fall into an “us versus them” trap—turning a statistical proclivity into a regional essence, a reason to treat ruralites as “other”?

There is a larger problem with Stanley’s book. It’s that his theories have little to do with fascism. The tactics he describes are common to all political movements, even explicitly anti-fascist ones, and the dangers he perceives in these tactics are precisely what we see in the current “everything is po-
political” culture. Ultimately, Stanley has written a book about politics, not about fascism. He draws on a wide range of examples, allowing in only enough detail to make his argument and eschewing what does not fit. In this way, he makes sure that the political movements he endorses are excluded from the charge of fascism and the political movements he despises are included in the charge.

Stanley sometimes goes to bizarre lengths to associate Trumpism with fascism. In the book’s introduction, he castigates Steve Bannon for his remark about the era to come: “‘It will be as exciting as the 1930s.’ In short, the era when the United States had the most sympathy for fascism.” Here is some of the surrounding context of Bannon’s comment, from a *Hollywood Reporter* interview: “I’m the guy pushing a trillion-dollar infrastructure plan....Shipyards, ironworks...Conservatives, plus populists, in an economic nationalist movement.” Bannon is clearly referring to Roosevelt-style projects like the Works Progress Administration. Is Stanley calling the progressive hero Roosevelt a fascist? No. But just what he is doing is not quite clear.

Also troubling is Stanley’s analysis of truth and debate. In criticizing the “marketplace of ideas” argument for free speech, he notes that “the utopian assumption is that conversation works by exchange of reasons...until the truth ultimately emerges.” He continues: “But conversation is not just used to communicate information. Conversation is also used to shut out perspectives, raise fears, and heighten prejudice.” Maybe so, but if all we hear in disagreement is these malign purposes we ascribe to our political enemies, we will end up having no conversations at all. He concludes: “Attempting to counter such rhetoric with reason is akin to using a pamphlet against a pistol.” But, of course, it is simply using one pamphlet against another.

Despite all his charges that fascist politics threatens reasoned discourse, Stanley thinks that some beliefs are per se so ridiculous that instead of engaging with the believers in a reasonable way, we should diagnose them and offer psychological theories. So it’s fascist when someone threatens reasoned discourse about your own beliefs, and it is fascist to entertain reasoned discourse about someone else’s beliefs? That’s quite a paradox. And the psychological theories on offer are not particularly coherent. For instance, Stanley writes that “conspiracy theories are effective...because they provide simple explanations for otherwise irrational emotions, such as resentment or xenophobic fear in the face of perceived threats,” but also that “conspiracy theories [are] often so outlandish that they can hardly be expected to be literally believed.” His explanatory theory about their effectiveness requires that they be believed, but his descriptive theory about what they actually are requires that they not be believed. On closer examination, his own theory looks like the outlandish one.

As the book nears its end, Stanley broadens the scope of his “fascism” charge. He writes: “The fascist vision of individual freedom is similar to the libertarian notion of individual rights...When voters in a democratic society yearn for a CEO as president, they are responding to their own implicit fascist impulses.” This is ridiculous, and the idea of “implicit fascist impulses” that must be constantly searched out, interrogated, and catalogued has itself the feel of totalitarianism—the feel of a Communist “struggle session.” But it’s also a shift from Stanley’s stated purpose of investigating fascist political tactics rather than fascist policies.

*How Fascism Works* is fascinating because it enacts what it describes: the difficulty of engaging politically without demonizing one’s opponents. Stanley writes passionately about injustices throughout history, especially injustices that took place in Nazi Germany and those that he perceives to be taking place in the United States today. But it is easy to extend his outline to the movements he takes such great pains to distinguish from fascism. Politics is ugly, and it has the power to make us ugly, too, if we don’t watch very closely. Under a certain interpretation, *How Fascism Works* manages to show us just how ugly it can get.
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**The Swinging Star**

**Why is Bing Crosby forgotten?**

*By Terry Teachout*

IN THE 41 YEARS since he dropped dead on a golf course at the age of 74, Bing Crosby has become the forgotten giant of American popular culture. Among millennials, he is barely even a name, even though he was the most successful and influential pop singer of the first half of the 20th century. Crosby recorded 396 hit singles, 41 of which topped the charts—yet only one, his 1942 “creator recording” of Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas,” the best-selling record of all time, continues to be heard regularly. He was also the most popular movie star in the world for five consecutive years between 1944 and 1948, a record topped only by Tom Cruise—yet few of the four dozen feature films in which he starred are still shown with any frequency on TV, and most of those, like *Holiday Inn* (1942) and *High Society* (1956), are mainly remembered for the presence of such co-stars as Fred Astaire and Frank Sinatra.

The jazz critic Gary Giddins sought to change this by publishing in 2001 the first installment of a multivolume primary-source biography whose purpose was to reintroduce Crosby to modern listeners and make the case for his permanent significance as an artist. Despite certain shortcomings, *A Pocketful of Dreams: The Early Years, 1903–1940* was generally and, for the most part, justly praised. Had Giddins brought out a second volume with sufficient promptness, he might well have accomplished his goal. But as the years went by without a sequel, Crosby’s reputation all but vanished into the grave along with the last living veterans of World War II, among whom he was so admired that it was no exaggeration that his otherwise modest tombstone describes him as “beloved by all.”

Even so, Giddins persevered, and he has now given us *Swinging on a Star: The War Years, 1940–1946*, which will presumably be followed at some unknown point in the future by a third volume.* But

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* Little, Brown, 736 pages
While *A Pocketful of Dreams* covered a 37-year span, *Swinging on a Star* devotes a like amount of space to the next six years of Crosby's life—eventful ones, to be sure, but not so much so that it would have been impossible to tell their tale far more concisely.

The fact that Crosby had three simultaneous careers—as pop singer, movie star, and host of a weekly radio series—and an eventful private life makes his story difficult to tell in a coherent way. And while it is a tribute to Giddins's literary skill that *A Pocketful of Dreams* and *Swinging on a Star* are consistently readable, it is no less true that he has a tendency to let the piling of fact upon fact obscure the main line of his 700-page narrative.

Still, readers who want to know as much about Crosby as Gary Giddins wishes to tell us—among whom I count myself—will find *Swinging on a Star* a compelling study of the middle years of a popular artist who by the end of the Second World War was so closely identified with the American national character that he seemed to embody it.

In his youth, as Giddins explains in *A Pocketful of Dreams*, Bing Crosby had been a jazz singer, one of the very first—and very best. As a member of Paul Whiteman's orchestra, with which he performed from 1926 to 1930, Crosby listened closely and comprehendingly to Bix Beiderbecke and other noted white jazzmen, and he was also profoundly influenced by Louis Armstrong, who was as important a vocalist as he was a trumpeter. Even when Crosby sang the ballads that his fans increasingly favored, his still-developing style was notable for its light-footed rhythmic swing and improvisational freedom, as can be heard on the records of Jerome Kern's "Ol' Man River" and "Make Believe" (both from Show Boat) that he cut with Whiteman in 1928. In addition, his microphone-amplified baritone voice was unabashedly masculine at a time when most male pop singers were, like Rudy Vallée, effete-sounding tenors.

This combination of traits electrified his listeners. By 1931, Crosby was America's biggest singing sensation, adored by the public and admired by musicians. In that same year, CBS gave him his own radio show, and for most of the next quarter-century he would be heard weekly from coast to coast. At the same time, he began to appear in movies, revealing himself to be a natural screen presence with a flair for comedy that compensated for his undistinguished physical appearance (he had a dumpy figure and a receding hairline that forced him to wear hats or a toupee in front of the camera). He became so successful as a recording artist and a star of film and radio that in 1933 he stopped performing in front of live audiences, thereafter concentrating on his burgeoning career in the electronic media.

Throughout the '30s, Crosby's on-screen persona was that of a likable but unscrupulous scapegrace whose casual charm made him irresistible to women. But there had always been more to his artistry—as well as to his off-stage personality. Classically educated by Jesuits, he was intelligent, well-read, and devoutly religious, and his intense, expansive 1932 recording of E.Y. Harburg's "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" is one of many performances from the '30s that do far more than hint at the passion that underlay his deceptive nonchalance. He also had an iron will that gave him what he described in *Call Me Lucky*, his 1953 memoir, as "the habit of facing whatever fate set in my path, squarely, with a cold blue eye." This coldness was invariably mentioned by those who, having met Crosby, were startled by how distant he was in person. As for his will, it was so strong, he was able to bring under unaided control the taste for liquor that had pushed him as a young man to the brink of alcoholism.

None of these qualities, however, are apparent in Crosby's work as an actor prior to World War II, by which time he had starred in two dozen feature films, all of them fluffy comedies. And while he also became the host of NBC's *Kraft Music Hall* in 1936, that hugely popular weekly radio series was a music-oriented program that is of interest today mainly because he performed many songs on the air that he did not record commercially. It was in the recording studio that he made his most persuasive claims on the attention of posterity—and that he first came into his...
own as a mature artist.

In 1934, Crosby signed with Decca, a new record label launched by Jack Kapp, a producer with an uncanny knack for gauging mass taste. Kapp believed that Crosby, popular as he already was, could become even more so if he downplayed the jazzy side of his singing, opting instead for a simpler, more lyrical style and embarking on what Crosby later described as a “diversified record program...that embraced every type of music.” Trusting in the sureness of Kapp's instincts, he put his recording career in the producer's hands. It was a decision he would never regret.*

Along with the usual film, show, and Tin Pan Alley tunes, Crosby recorded an astonishingly wide variety of other songs for Decca during the next two decades, among them “Blue Hawaii,” “Deep in the Heart of Texas,” “Pistol Packin’ Mama,” “Silent Night,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Roo-Ral (That's an Irish Lullaby)” and “Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie.” In addition to recording countless solo performances, he was teamed in the studio with a similarly wide range of partners, including Armstrong, the Andrews Sisters, Connie Boswell, Eddie Condon, Xavier Cugat, Judy Garland, Louis Jordan, Mary Martin, Johnny Mercer, and Les Paul. He became a one-man musical melting pot, one whose distinctively American combination of versatility and instant recognizability was a major source of his fame. More than any other popular artist before or since, he was all things to all men, yet he resembled no one but himself.

*Most of Crosby's biggest hits for Decca are included in Bing: His Legendary Years 1933–57 (Geffen, four CDs). A representative selection of earlier sides can be found on Bing Crosby: 1926–1932 (Timeless). His rarely reissued 1944 performance of “Out of This World,” mentioned below, can be heard on YouTube.

Even though Crosby sang well all the way to the end of his life, his film career dried up in the mid-’50s and he came to be seen as a nostalgia merchant, still beloved but now irrelevant.

While jazz would always remain part of Crosby's singing style, his voice grew deeper in the mid-’30s (in part as a direct result of vocal strain caused by overwork earlier in the decade) as well as darker in tonal color, causing him to sound less like a teen idol of the Jazz Age and more like an adult singing for other Depression-era adults. Accordingly, he now took care to steer clear of overt emotionalism—he famously preferred not to sing songs whose lyrics contained the phrase I love you—opting instead for a quiet, contained understatement that mirrored his natural reticence.

Unusually for pop singers of the period, this combination of qualities was as attractive to men as it was to women. In Swinging on a Star, Giddins cites a passage from W.R. Burnett’s 1940 crime novel High Sierra in which Roy Earle, a hard-boiled gangster portrayed on the screen by Humphrey Bogart, explains why he favors Crosby’s “mellow baritone voice”:

He's about the only singer I like. I hate singers. They ought to have on skirts. But not that guy. He's got a real voice and I hear he's right all the way.

It was for a similar reason that Crosby was welcomed so wholeheartedly by the frontline soldiers for whom he performed throughout World War II, not infrequently at real risk to his personal safety. In Giddins's astute assessment, “Bing expressed inborn virility, secure and stoic...restraint carried more weight [with the troops] than amorous histrionics.” When those same soldiers returned home after the war, they remained loyal to the man who had done so much to assuage their longing for the world they had left behind.

While Crosby's wartime balladry occasionally flirted with blandness, it was just as often elegant and satisfyingly unmannered. Nowhere is the appeal of his new approach displayed to more persuasive effect than on his 1944 studio recording of “Out of This World,” a Harold Arlen–Johnny Mercer ballad, which is at once strikingly unsentimental and singularly beautiful. While his rich, solid tone and chiseled diction “present” the song exactly as written, he floats each successive phrase atop the beat with a subtle rubato reminiscent of the playing of a great jazz instrumentalist like Armstrong or Lester Young.

This style, as Kapp predicted, appealed even more powerfully to Crosby’s contemporaries than the unbuttoned singing of his youth. But it took longer, as Giddins chronicles in Swinging on a Star, for him to develop a screen persona consistent with the newfound maturity of his singing. On the eve of World War II, his most popular films were the frivolous “Road”

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comedies that Crosby had inaugurated with Bob Hope in 1940, for which he embodied yet another variation on the same insouciant character he had been portraying on screen since 1931.

It was not until he teamed up with the director Leo McCarey to make Going My Way (1944), in which he played a genial but serious-minded priest who rescues a foundering urban parish from bankruptcy, that he was given the opportunity to play a fully developed screen character who was as mature as Crosby himself. In the words of the film critic James Agee, Father O’Malley was “a wise young priest whose arresting resemblance to Bing Crosby never obscures his essential power.” The result was a performance which disclosed for the first time that Crosby had real acting talent, a revelation to which Hollywood paid well-deserved tribute the following year by awarding him an Oscar as the best actor of 1944.

No popular artist stays at the top of the heap forever. After the war, Crosby’s popularity finally started to fade, in large part because of the simultaneous rise of Frank Sinatra. Rock ‘n’ roll finished what Sinatra began, and even though Crosby sang well all the way to the end of his life, his film career dried up in the mid-’50s and he came to be seen as a nostalgia merchant, still beloved but now irrelevant.

Unlike Sinatra, who remains an icon two decades after his death, Crosby can sound on first glance unreachably distant from us today. Not only do most listeners prefer the “confessional” approach of Sinatra to his subdued restraint, but Crosby’s records of the ’30s and ’40s often lack the immediacy and punch of Sinatra’s classic albums of the ’50s and ’60s, mainly because he (and Jack Kapp) usually favored the bland backing of radio-style studio orchestras instead of the vibrant big-band-with-strings accompaniments that were later crafted for Sinatra by Nelson Riddle.

Yet anyone prepared to listen through the old-fashioned sound of Crosby’s Decca recordings and focus on the singer himself is more than likely to be astonished by his unique blend of emotional delicacy and rhythmic poise. While many of the records themselves, like most of his films, have become period pieces, Crosby the artist remains as accessible and vital as ever, so much so as to put the attentive listener in mind of Artie Shaw’s oft-quoted 1992 remark: “The thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States.” So he was—and that hipness, like Sinatra’s, remains undiminished by the passing of time.\footnote{Halakhah not only succeeds wonderfully as an introductory text but brims with ideas, formulations, interpretations, and perspectives that will stimulate, enrich, and catalyze scholars as well. Saiman’s smart, comprehensive, and regularly brilliant book will stand as a significant contribution for some while to come.”—Yehudah Mirsky, Brandeis University}
Commentary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 56 at the party,” they wrote. “The magazine contacted several dozen classmates of Ramirez and Kavanaugh regarding the incident. Many did not respond to interview requests; others declined to comment, or said they did not attend or remember the party.” The exception was an unnamed source who “said that he is ‘one-hundred-percent sure’ that he was told at the time that Kavanaugh was the student who exposed himself to Ramirez.” If one of my Free Beacon writers had come to me with these caveats, I would have told her she had zilch.

Just how weak was this story? The evening it was published, in the 16th paragraph of an article about Ford’s agreement to testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Nicholas Fandos wrote the following in the New York Times:

The Times had interviewed several dozen people over the past week in an attempt to corroborate her [Ramirez’s] story, and could find no one with firsthand knowledge. Ms. Ramirez herself contacted former Yale classmates asking if they recalled the incident and told some of them that she could not be certain Mr. Kavanaugh was the one who exposed himself.

That sound you hear is the Gray Lady telling Eustace Tilley to talk to the hand.

Of course, after Republicans pointed out that the New Yorker was the sole publication to run Ramirez’s story, the journalist guild closed ranks and lauded Farrow and Mayer for admitting they had no supporting evidence. “I gather some people thought we were trying to knock down her [Ramirez’s] account, but that’s not what we were doing. I’m not questioning their story. We’ve been competing against Ronan Farrow for a year and he’s terrific,” Dean Baquet told Erik Wemple of the Washington Post.

On September 24, Paul Farhi of the Washington Post wrote an article headlined, “The conservative conspiracy theory about the media and the Kavanaugh nomination has a few holes.” Farhi admitted, “To be sure, Ramirez’s allegations have some inherent weaknesses, most of which are acknowledged in the New Yorker article.” Memo to aspiring journalists: Acknowledging the weaknesses and lack of corroboration in your story doesn’t make it stronger.

Once the New Yorker published its story, the Times felt no compunction about printing Ramirez’s allegations and deriving larger sociological meaning from them. On September 25, came an article with four bylined names and six contributors noted at its conclusion entitled “In a Culture of Privilege and Alcohol at Yale, Her World Converged with Kavanaugh’s.” The lead: “Last week, more than 30 years after they graduated from Yale, Deborah Ramirez contacted her old friend James Roche. Something bad had happened to her during a night of drinking in the residence hall their freshman year, she said, and she wondered if he recalled her mentioning it at the time.”

And guess what: He didn’t. No one else did, either.

In an October 3 follow-up headlined, “The FBI Probe Ignored Testimonies from Former Classmates of Kavanaugh,” Mayer and Farrow identified the anonymous source who had recalled hearing of the incident after it had happened. He is Kenneth G. Appold, the James Hastings Nichols Professor of Reformation History at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Appold said that he initially asked to remain anonymous because he hoped to make contact first with the classmate who, to the best of his recollection, told him about the party and was an eyewitness to the incident. He said that he had not been able to get any response from that person, despite multiple attempts to do so. The New Yorker reached the classmate, but he said that he had no memory of the incident.

Care to revise that “one-hundred-percent” certainty, Professor Appold?

Mayer and Farrow continue to defend their piece. “We try to be fair, accurate, and tough on all sides,” Mayer told the Washington Post. For his part, Farrow told George Stephanopoulos, “We take reporting of this type extremely seriously. The evidentiary basis for this, and the number of witnesses who were told at the time, is strong.” If you want to know why the Fake News charge levied by Trump is sticking, you need only look to the New Yorker. Yes, the New Yorker.
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ET’S PRETEND YOU are the editor of a magazine. Two of your reporters say they’ve learned of a woman who alleges that a prominent man exposed himself to her while the two were at a party in a college dorm more than 30 years ago. Her story isn’t ironclad: Her recollection is hazy because she had been drinking that night. She has been asking longtime friends if they have any memory of the event and has come up short. The man in question denies the allegation. No one seems to have any direct knowledge of what the accuser is talking about. There is one gentleman who refuses to go on the record who says he heard about the incident from another person sometime after it happened. Question: Do you run a piece without corroborating evidence, or do you tell your reporters to keep digging?

If you chose the second option, congratulations! You have better judgment than the editor of the New Yorker. Yes, as the old ad campaign had it: Yes, the New Yorker.

The nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court was already in jeopardy on Sunday, September 23, when the Drudge Report began teasing “a new twist” in the story from Ronan Farrow and Jane Mayer of the New Yorker. Christine Blasey Ford, the California psychologist who had accused Kavanaugh of sexual misconduct while they were teenagers, had agreed to testify in public before the Senate Judiciary Committee. While there were gaps and inconsistencies in Ford’s account, and all the individuals she identified as witnesses either denied or did not recall her charges, several Republican senators were growing leery of Kavanaugh. A second accuser might have defeated him altogether. Conservatives fretted as they awaited the New Yorker report.

Then they read the article and anxiety turned into outrage. “Senate Democrats Investigate a New Allegation of Sexual Misconduct, from Brett Kavanaugh’s College Years” led with news that “at least two” Democratic senators were investigating the charges of Deborah Ramirez, a registered Democrat living in Colorado who “spent years working for an organization that supports victims of domestic violence” and had attended Yale at the same time as Kavanaugh. “After six days of carefully assessing her memories and consulting with her attorney,” Farrow and Mayer wrote, “Ramirez said she felt confident enough of her recollections to say that she remembers Kavanaugh had exposed himself at a drunken dormitory party, thrust his penis in her face, and caused her to touch it without her consent as she pushed him away.”

The New Yorker piece had all the signs of a hit job. Co-author Mayer, a notorious lefty, had previously targeted Vice President Mike Pence, Charles and David Koch, Dick Cheney, and Clarence Thomas. Hawaii Senator Mazie “Shut Up, Men” Hirono was quoted early on, calling Ramirez’s allegations “credible” and adding, “We’re taking them very seriously.” Nor did it take long for other Democratic senators to group Ramirez with Ford and another woman, Julie Swetnick, as Kavanaugh’s “three credible accusers” whose lurid charges disqualified him from the bench.

Farrow and Mayer were up-front about the fact that they lacked corroboration. “The New Yorker has not confirmed with other eyewitnesses that Kavanaugh was present...”

Matthew Continetti is the editor in chief of the Washington Free Beacon.

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Culture & Civilization : November 2018
Palestinian Mythology

Palestinian Arabs claim full ownership of the Holy Land, denying any Jewish connection or rights—all based on deceptive lies, all easily proven false.

In this era of “fake news,” it’s often hard to tell truth from fiction. Indeed, Palestinian Arab leaders have constructed an elaborate false mythology to justify their war against Israel and the Jewish people. It’s time to lift the curtain on these myths—to separate truth from fabrication.

What are the facts?

Every ethnic group has the right to create its own narrative—but such a narrative should be based on truth, especially when it denies the rights of others. We may disagree on interpretation, but at least we should agree on the facts. So, let us consider five cornerstones of the Palestinian narrative and judge their moral strength by adherence to the truth. We soon find that modern Palestinian myths are unfair attempts to disenfranchise the Jewish people from Israel—their ancestral homeland.

1. Palestinians are indigenous to the Holy Land: False. President Mahmoud Abbas often claims Palestinians are related to the Canaanites, a group that vanished 2,300 years ago. This claim has no basis in archeological or genetic research. Nearly all Palestinians trace their lineage to Arab lands. What’s more, unlike the Jews, Palestinians have no unique language, culture or religion—essential markers of indigenous peoples. Indeed, historians, archeologists, biblical records, and the Koran itself affirm conclusively that Jews founded a kingdom in the Holy Land some 3,000 years ago—before arrival of the Arabs—and have lived in the lands of present day Israel, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) ever since.

2. Israel occupies Palestinian land: False. Mr. Abbas and even mainstream media frequently refer to “Palestinian land.” In truth, the Palestinians have never had a state, nor have they had sovereignty over any land in the Middle East. Aside from individual private holdings, there is no defined public Palestinian land in the disputed territories. Nonetheless, Israel has many times offered to turn over most of land it won after its defensive war against Jordan in 1967 in exchange for peace, but the Palestinians have refused all those offers.

3. Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian people. False. Palestinian leaders commonly herald Jerusalem as a Muslim and Christian capital—unfairly excluding 3,000 years of Jewish history and Jerusalem’s centrality to Judaism. Indeed, history shows King David founded Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish kingdom around 1000 BCE, before the advent of Islam. Jerusalem is cited 669 times in the Hebrew bible and not a single time in the Koran. Moreover, Jerusalem has never been an Arab capital, and for most of the city’s history, Jews have been the majority population.

4. Palestinians have a right of return to Israel: False. Among approximately 700,000 Arabs who left Israel in 1948, when five Arab armies attacked, only about 30,000 are still alive today. Some live in the disputed territories of Judea and Samaria, and many over the 70 years have made homes in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Nonetheless, the Palestinians claim that 5.5 million descendants of these refugees—children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren—are also refugees. No other descendants in history have ever been considered refugees. Indeed, no displaced refugees, let alone descendants, have inherent legal rights to return to their original homes after a war. Any such returns have always been negotiated among the parties—and so they will be in a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

5. Israel is guilty of apartheid against the Palestinians: False. Palestinian leaders frequently accuse Israel of committing genocide, ethnic cleansing and apartheid. In fact, Israel’s two million Arab citizens enjoy full civil rights and benefits—greater than those in Arab nations. Palestinians in the West Bank, on the other hand, are largely self-governing, have increased dramatically in number over the decades, and enjoy a higher standard of living than any of their Arab neighbors. Limitations on Palestinian movement within the West Bank exist only when necessary to prevent Arab terrorism against Israelis, which continues to this day. In short, accusations of discriminatory subjugation of Palestinians by Israel are false and malign.

Peace between Israel and the Palestinians must be based on good faith and the truth.

The Nazis continuously repeated “the Big Lie” to convince the people to wage an imperialistic, genocidal war. Today, Palestinians repeat falsehoods to convince the world that Jews are evil, colonial usurpers. Until the Palestinians agree to negotiate peace with Israel—in good faith and based on truth—they are sadly condemned to bitterness and thwarted aspirations for independence.

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