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It's Not Just Name Calling

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The JSA 2013 London Sunday Symposium*

Welcoming Remarks

Steven K. Baum, David Hirsh, Winston Pickett, Neal E. Rosenberg

Panel 1—Defining the New Antisemitism

Chair, Kenneth Marcus; Richard Landes, Winston Pickett, Bat Ye'or

Panel 2—Mapping the Rise of Contemporary Antisemitism

*Chair, Steven K. Baum; Mark Gardner, Manfred Gerstenfeld,
Robert Wistrich*

Panel 3—Antisemitism on Campus

Chair, Kenneth Lasson; Clemens Heni, Dave Rich, Ronnie Fraser

Gloria Z. Greenfield's film *Unmasked Judeophobia*

Panel 4—Assessing Current Approaches

*Chair, Matthias Küntzel; David Feldman, Gunther Jikeli,
Hagai van der Horst*

Panel 5—The Politics of Fighting Antisemitism

Chair, Irwin Cotler; Ben Cohen, Paul Iganski, Denis MacShane

Panel 6—What Can Be Done? Strategic Interventions

*Chair, Ruth Klein; Francisco de Almeida Garrett, Julian Hunt,
Philip Spencer*

Closing Remarks

Robert S. Wistrich

* *Dedicated to the memories of Maggi Eastwood and David G. Littman. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Jeff and Evy Diamond, Mitch Knisbacher, Daniel Pipes, and Friends of the JSA.*

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Righteous Persons Who Fight Antisemitism

RL Hon. Denis MacShane

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Jabotinsky Award

Shimon T. Samuels

It's Not Just Name-Calling

Kenneth Lasson*

I'm afraid that universities, which like to perceive themselves as places of culture in a chaotic world, are not quite that wonderful. Of course, some are better than others; not all of them are hotbeds of radical turmoil, but a disturbing number have come to be focal points of loud and strident opposition to the state of Israel.

Although the volume of overt antisemitic acts may have in fact declined over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in anti-Zionist rhetoric and activity on campuses around the country and around the world. The two concepts are not always identical, but in today's world they are virtually synonymous.

Antisemitism is not just name-calling, but something much more corrosive. My recent article "In an Academic Voice" ([http://www.jsantisemitism.org/articles/LassonJSA225\(6\).pdf](http://www.jsantisemitism.org/articles/LassonJSA225(6).pdf)) examines the relationship between antisemitic and anti-Zionist speech and conduct and how they both play out on contemporary university campuses, and suggests ways in which such rhetoric and conduct can be constitutionally confronted.

In any event, my article looks at the historical backdrop, examining the seeds of Marxism, the use of big lies as opposed to facts, and the so-called "occupation" in modern Israel.

Then I present statistics and narratives about antisemitism and anti-Zionism on American campuses, among both students and faculty. Included in the discussion and analysis are academic boycotts of Israel, divestment campaigns, the old canards about Israel being an "apartheid state," and modern-day Holocaust denial and minimalization. I focus on the loud voices of Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, Ilan Pappé, and others. I try to counter exaggerations and revisionist history with facts that are difficult to deny.

Finally, I suggest responses and remedies that are consonant with the principles embodied and ennobled by the First Amendment. The problem is that few people read law review articles, and even fewer are persuaded by them. Thus, the importance of taking a principled stand in other public and private forums—such as the recent conference at Yale on global antisemitism, where I spoke about this very subject.

I cannot forbear from adding a thought that many share about such exercises—including my wife and daughter, both of whom played devil's advocate about my participation in the Yale conference, as well as about several other talks I've given over the past few months.

Antisemitism has been around for a long time—as the rabbis pointed out many centuries ago, it’s a fact that Esau hated Jacob and his descendants always will. Throughout history, we haven’t been able to eliminate such bigotry, and we never will. The thing to do is to batten down the hatches—perhaps gather all Jews in one homeland and fight to exist.

Well, I’m not ready to leave just yet. I still truly believe in the American ideals of justice, equality, and tolerance of different cultures. We can be sure that the rabidly antisemitic radical Islamists are vigilant. The Yale conference was quickly condemned by them as shamefully one sided (e.g., they called Elie Wiesel a “rabid Zionist.”)

So our task is not just to combat antisemitism, but hopelessness as well. I think we have largely done that in America, but I tend to be an optimist, and of course we must always be vigilant.

But if antisemitism in the academic voice is a new and growing phenomenon, is there anything we can do about it? After all, not only is unpopular speech and thought protected by the First Amendment, but those of us in higher education also (and justifiably) invoke long-established principles of academic freedom.

Nevertheless, we all understand that words matter: they can cause damage; they have consequences. And while freedom of speech is broadly protected, the Constitution does have limits. Defamation is punishable, for example, as is speech that incites to violence. Moreover, protecting First Amendment freedoms carries with it a responsibility—to condemn obnoxious utterances—and at least to subject them to a broad and bustling marketplace of ideas.

Likewise, academic freedom. I believe we have an obligation to confront antisemitism in the academy. As with any kind of hate speech or disruptive behavior, the responses should be firm, immediate, and consequential. To put it in non-academic terms, just as those who spout antisemitic rhetoric are not bashful in doing so, neither must *we* be in confronting them.

As always, the problem with regulating *any* kind of speech is where to draw the line. While an academic institution should not allow itself to become a forum for bigotry, neither should freedom of expression be limited. My own feeling is that of a traditional civil libertarian: it is better to err on the side of liberty; an excess of tolerance is still preferable to censorship.

In the context of antisemitism, the quest for “balance” in the curriculum raises problems of its own: for example, must traditional Holocaust studies be balanced by Holocaust revisionism or denial? Does the obligation toward balance cover every point taught in a course, or only major disputes? Who is to enforce the norm? With that in mind, I’d like to give a

brief synopsis of my current article, in the hope that I might add something to the discussion. First, the theoretical and historical backdrop.

Antisemitism in the academy is not a new phenomenon. Much of it can be traced to Karl Marx, whose essay on the Jewish question was an early reflection of modern leftist thought. “What is the profane basis of Judaism?” asked Marx. His answer: “practical need, self-interest.” And—“What is the worldly cult of the Jews? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money. Very well: then in emancipating itself from huckstering and money, and thus from real and practical Judaism, our age would emancipate itself . . . the emancipation of the Jews is the emancipation of mankind from Judaism.”

Marx was a classic antisemite, not unlike those who fabricated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—those who viewed civilization as having been or about to be destroyed by Jewish conspiracies. Let the world be rid of the Jews was (and is) the message, and all will be well. But Marxism was not the only early antecedent to modern Jewish antisemitism. Much academic “scholarship” in Germany during the Third Reich served to legitimize and endorse the Nazis’ worldview. Through it all, ample use was made of the *big lie*, in the best tradition of which propaganda is promulgated as fact.

The evolution of such bigotry has continued unabated on American campuses in the first decade of the 21st century, especially at elite universities in California and the Ivy League. In my article I supply details, but even they are merely illustrative of many such cases of antisemitism on campus. So today we have repeated assertions by academics that Israel is the primary stumbling block to achieving a “two-state solution”; or a nuclear power that presents the greatest threat to peace and stability in the Middle East; or is an apartheid state deserving of international boycotts, divestment campaigns, and sanctions; or plans to “Judaize” Jerusalem by building thousands of new homes in the eastern part of the holy city; or adopts policies that, besides endangering US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, are the root cause of worldwide antisemitism; or is primarily responsible for a “humanitarian catastrophe” in Gaza, against whose citizens it has committed war crimes.

Trumpeting these claims loudly and often enough has allowed them to take on the character of unassailable truths. Were they subjected to the same objective scrutiny that academic historians and political scientists traditionally require of their disciplines, many if not all of them would prove meritless.

It has become increasingly difficult to separate statement criticizing Israel from antisemitic ones, the former often thinly veiled versions of the latter. Just a few of many examples:

- Earlier this year, Israeli ambassador Michael Oren was hounded off the stage at the University of California in Irvine by a well-orchestrated group of Palestinian students, who one by one, several minutes apart, shouted racist epithets at him before they were ushered out.
- Similar groups operate on campuses around the world. At the Oxford Student Union in the UK, for example, Israeli deputy foreign minister Danny Ayalon's speech was interrupted by demonstrators carrying Palestinian flags and chanting "War criminal" and "Slaughter the Jews!"
- At Toronto's York University, members of the Palestinian Students Association shouted down guest speaker Natan Sharansky, yelling "get off our campus, you genocidal racist." Earlier, police had to usher Jewish students to safety after 100 Palestinian students barricaded them inside the campus' Hillel offices.

All too often, antisemitism in the academy goes beyond the student body and emanates from faculty. From behind their lecterns or under the cover of their "scholarship," statements that in other venues would be considered outright bigotry are viewed as part of honest debate in the ivory tower—all part of the respectable "marketplace of ideas." The idea of an academic boycott against Israel was born in Great Britain, whose largest faculty association has voted several times in the past five years to encourage a boycott of Israeli universities and professors over what it views as Israel's "apartheid" policies toward Palestinians—advocating that union members refuse to cooperate with Israeli academics who do not "disassociate themselves from such policies."

These boycotts likewise have antecedents in Nazi Germany. During Hitler's rise to power, some of his staunchest supporters were university professors—many of whom were drawn into the higher echelons of the Nazi party and participated in its more gruesome excesses. Mussolini too had a large following of intellectuals, and not all of them Italian. So did Stalin, as well as such postwar dictators as Castro, Nasser, and Mao Tse-tung.

Over 700 academics signed the original boycott petition, most of them British, but a considerable number of scholars hailed from a host of other European countries as well. In 2009, following Israel's military campaign into Gaza to stop Hamas rocket fire that had barraged the country for six years, a group of American professors joined the call for an academic boycott. The group recommended divestment initiatives modeled on those used against apartheid South Africa. Here again, the big lie comes into play. Each of the various arguments put forth to justify divestment—that Israel is responsible for the "humanitarian catastrophe" in Gaza, that it is "Judaiz-

ing” the holy city of Jerusalem, that its policies endanger US troops in Afghanistan and Iraq—are but preludes to others: that the only hope for peace in the Middle East is a single, bi-national state, and that Israel itself is the root cause of worldwide antisemitism.

Again, all of these arguments can be refuted by insistent reference to history and facts on the ground. More than a few campuses celebrate “Israel Apartheid Week.” That event has been held every year since 2006, and in growing numbers on campuses in the United States and Canada. The aim of such events, according to their organizers, is “to contribute to the chorus of international opposition to Israeli apartheid . . . [and] an end to the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands,” likening Israel to segregated South Africa during the latter part of the twentieth century. The truth is that Israel is a democratic state. Its 20% Arab minority enjoys all the political, economic, and religious rights and freedoms of citizenship—including electing members of their choice to the Knesset. In stark contradistinction to apartheid South Africa, Israeli Arabs and Palestinians have standing before Israel’s supreme court. In contrast, Jews may not own property in Jordan, and neither Christian nor Jews can visit Islam’s holiest sites in Saudi Arabia.

As Martin Luther King, Jr., observed, “When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You are talking antisemitism.” What would Rev. King have said about the comparisons made between modern Israel and the apartheid South Africa of the late twentieth century?

Holocaust denial, of course, is a form of antisemitism. The deniers say they are merely seeking to uncover the truth behind what they term as the largest hoax of the twentieth century. They need not convince students that the Holocaust is a myth; they score propaganda points merely by convincing them that the Holocaust is debatable.

Particularly troubling are the professors who draw “politically correct” inferences from the Holocaust and conclude that, whatever happens in world events, Jews should always conduct themselves as humane, progressive, and peace-loving—in other words, beyond reproach. When viewed this way, however, Jews become acceptable only as victims. Former Depaul University professor Norman Finkelstein goes further, arguing that Israel “inappropriately invokes the Holocaust as a moral defense for mistreating Palestinians.”

MIT’s Noam Chomsky has strongly criticized the United States’ support of the Israeli government and Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians. Chomsky embraced Hezbollah leader sheik Hassan Nasrallah, who refers to Jews as the “grandsons of apes and pigs.” Indeed, Chomsky describes the United States as “one of the leading terrorist states.” It is of course necessary to recognize that Chomsky is entitled to his say. (As he himself has

pointed out, “If we don’t believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don’t believe in it at all.”) It is equally necessary, however, to challenge him forcefully on the facts

The same process occurs with respected scholars Steven Walt and John Mearsheimer in their book *The Israel Lobby*. This is a book that has been especially damaging to both Israel and the concept of honest intellectual inquiry. It presents a wholly conspiratorial view of history, in which the so-called “Israel lobby” has a “stranglehold” on American foreign policy, the American media, think tanks, and academia. Three of the book’s major weaknesses were identified and analyzed by Alan Dershowitz: quotations wrenched out of context, important facts misstated or omitted, embarrassingly poor logic. Needless to say, the work has been trumpeted on extremist websites.

So what legal remedies can we bring to bear in the fight against modern campus antisemitism? Although freedom of speech is guaranteed by the First Amendment, and should protect both the individual as well as the idea of academic freedom on university campuses, constitutional remedies are nevertheless available to address the problems of antisemitism. Principal among them is the right (if not the obligation) to recognize antisemitism when it occurs, to present the facts clearly and accurately, and to condemn it vociferously.

Failure to speak out, on the other hand, sends a message that such hatred is tolerable and acceptable. Indeed, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) specifically endorses the condemnation of hateful and bigoted speech from, and conduct by, college and university faculty and administrators.

In recent years, there has been increasing debate over the question of whether it is permissible for the government to curb “hate speech,” understood to mean whatever demeans or expresses hostility or contempt toward target groups based on their race, religion, ethnic background, sexual orientation, or other identifying characteristics. The Supreme Court has never specifically adjudicated the constitutionality of a campus hate speech code. Several lower courts have struck down such codes as unconstitutional restrictions on freedom of speech.

Every Western democracy except the United States regulates hate speech. Many particularly prohibit and punish Holocaust denial. But comparing the American approach to others is inherently problematic. For the most part, our system has served us well. So how can hecklers seeking to disrupt speakers at university forums be handled? Here’s one way: When controversial speakers appear on campus, in advance of the event clearly announce to and notify students that they will have an opportunity to question or challenge or make comments—but that interruptions will not be tol-

erated. Moreover, students who engage in disruptive speech or behavior will be firmly sanctioned, either with suspensions or expulsions. If such a policy were firmly enforced, I think it would go far to deter both bully pulpits and hostile audiences. Other remedies that have been proposed range from simply lodging a complaint with the authorities to imposing boycotts of alumni funding programs. The problem with the former is that it is difficult to draw a line between censuring intimidation and restricting free speech or academic freedom. Boycotts, on the other hand, cut both ways, and can cause more harm than good. There are some legislative remedies available as well, such as Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires recipients of federal funding to ensure that their programs are free from harassment, intimidation, and discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin. I submit, however, that direct confrontation remains the best remedy.

I conclude where I started. It is the obligation of all academics either to recognize or refute claims that have no basis in fact or logic—and not to ignore them.

Not only can offensive speech and conduct be constitutionally confronted and condemned, but responsible administrators, faculty, and students have a moral imperative to do so.

Not only should scholars shoulder their responsibility to be informed and aware, but they should also recognize their obligation to respond when they see logic and common sense gone awry and objective fact and documented history either ignored or denied.

Antisemites and anti-Zionists have a right to their opinion (something I would fight to protect under principles of academic freedom and the first amendment). But we are also entitled to ours. Just as it is our obligation to protect freedom of speech, it is our duty—and responsibility—to expose the gross intolerance and racism of radical Islam. “*Sha* – still” just doesn’t work. Let me mince no words, though: we should forcefully point out that—from Bali to Fort Hood, from Times Square to London, from Madrid to Mumbai, from Ground Zero to Gaza—that the barbarians, the murderers, the inhumanly intolerant are the radical Islamists. When we are challenged by those who in the name of human rights charge Israel with gross abuse of the Palestinians, we should ask if they feel the same way about the abuse of Palestinians by the Arabs themselves. We should ask why the world press declines to report such abuses, or for that matter the new shopping malls and bustling food markets in Gaza. We should demand perspective and context—and supply them if they are not forthcoming and apparent. We should agree that human rights are important for everyone—including why people like Gilad Shalit, who is denied even the most basic humanitarian right required by the Geneva Conventions, is entitled to visits by the Interna-

tional Red Cross. Of course we could go on and would be delighted if anyone reads law-review articles—but happier still if we continue to speak out. I hope that we will.

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