

Isn't it a Shame?



They whose guilt within their bosom lies, imagine every eye beholds their blame. And bitter shame has spoiled the sweet world's taste.

This is a moment to review interpretations of American national identity, as well as historical facts, to assess the founding of America, extent of racism, whether the U.S. was founded, at least in part, to secure slavery. This year is the 400th anniversary of what is considered the first Thanksgiving Holiday. Regretfully, it is also the year of some shameful episodes

The original Pilgrims had created a village at Plymouth where they were taught by Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe, to cultivate the area, and helped to form an alliance with the Wampanoag tribe. After the first, successful, corn harvest, a feast was organized by the Wampanoag tribe and the Pilgrims to

celebrate the event in November 1621. Following this, annual thanks were offered by individual colonies and states until 1789 when George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation by the national government, in gratitude for the end of the War of Independence and for the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln in 1863 proclaimed national Thanksgiving Day to be celebrated every November, "to overcome the lamentable civil strife and to heal the wounds of the nation."

Today, Thanksgiving is largely talking turkey and has little religious and political significance. But the dilemma is whether to recall the happy relations between the original Pilgrims and the Native Americans or to remember the bloody periods between Natives and frontiersmen, from the Jamestown massacre in March 1622 on until the Wounded Knee Massacre in December 1890.

A different interpretation of American history comes from the New York Times *1619 Project*, proposed in August 2019, named for the date of the first arrival of Africans on American soil, which places the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the American national narrative.

Whether this 1619 interpretation of history is seen as repugnant or not is disputable and a part of the debate over slavery and the BLM movement, but what is undeniably shameful are the attacks on the celebrated actress Helen Mirren for playing, in a new biopic production, the role of Golda Meir, the iron lady, the first female prime minister of Israel, 1969-1974, who resigned in 1974 and died in 1978, aged 80. The film *Golda* is set in 1973 when a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, October 6, 1973, a day when the country was silent, which was defeated with some difficulty and ended on October 25, 1973.

In view of the ignominious nature and extent of the Arab attack, it is ironic that Palestinians should call the production, "fascism and sick." Mirren has been subjected on social media to multiple attacks for playing the role and called a racist and an Israeli worshipper. Attackers said her performance was a "slap in the face of all the people of Palestine," and some said she should lose her honor of a Damehood which she obtained in 2003.

Helen Mirren, who may have been born Jewish though this is uncertain, has been an admirer of Israel, "an extraordinary country filled with very, very, extraordinary people," and opposed the BDS movement. She called Meir, "a formidable, intransigent, powerful leader," and that it was a great challenge to portray her at a difficult moment in her life in the Yom Kippur War.

It is disgraceful for Palestinians and antisemites to attack Mirren, who has won acting awards, and an Oscar, in both the U.S. and UK, who is in the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and has a renowned career of playing queens, Cleopatra, both Queen Elizabeths of England, and Queen Charlotte, and a variety of roles, detectives, assassins, Mossad agent, for playing a heroic woman.

Mirren is not the only performer shamefully attacked. There appears to be a systematic campaign to target celebrities and influential individuals who mention Israel in any positive way. Social media are being used to manipulate public opinion and influence it against Israel.

In July 2021 the 19 year old LA based popular singer-songwriter Billie Eilish promoted her new album to Israelis on Tik Tok. As a result, she received thousands of negative comments consisting of Palestinian flags and other Palestine solidarity-themed comments, on Instagram. Her offensive words were not a political declaration nor a statement of any intellectual substance, but simply, "Hi Israel, I'm so excited

that a new album of mine is now out.” Rarely have such harmless words caused hundreds of critical comments, accompanied with displays of Palestinian flags.

Educators and parents nationwide in the U.S. are clashing over what can be taught and what cannot be taught in the classroom. Much has focused on the teaching of history, LGBTQ issues, and race, especially critical race theory and systemic racism. In Texas the state has required educators to explore these controversial issues from diverse and contending perspectives without giving preference to any one perspective. An educator cannot teach the idea that one race or sex is inherently superior to another, or that someone is inherently racist, sexist or oppressive based on their race or sex.

Yet, the Indianapolis School District science coordinator, Tony Kinnett, was punished for issuing on November 4, 2021, a video explaining how the school district pushes critical race theory, which in his view suggests that western civilization is built on racism.

He said “when we tell you that schools aren’t teaching critical race theory, that’s misdirection.” As a result, he was put on leave and his access to various work accounts were taken away, and he was barred from district school buildings or hosting professional development sessions. Kinnett’s argument is that critical race theory reduces people to categories of privileged or oppressed based on skin color.

Shameful or questionable episodes can be mentioned in a few other matters.

The Royal Ballet in Britain has altered its Nutcracker dance. It has dropped the harem scene which is said by the company to be out step with modern audiences. It also claims to make the ballet a more fresh and “inclusive” environment by replacing the usual three females and one male dancer by a duet. The company in October 2021 had already made changes in

its Arabian and Chinese sections that were thought to proliferate racial stereotypes and had racial artistic content. It continues to make subtle but important changes to some of the characters, customs, and choreography to remove from the performance of outdated and racial artistic content. Ballet lovers may perhaps be surprised that the most important concerns for the Royal Ballet is officially stated to be diversity, race, gender.

A more shameful political event concerned an anti-racism trainer, Mizanur Rahman, who ran the inclusivity workshop programs for civil servants in the British cabinet office. On media he has proposed death on Zionists, compared Israel to Nazi Germany, and labelled Israel as a country of white supremacy. Among his beliefs are that Israel has no right to exist, that it was founded on terrorism, ethnic cleansing, and, in a paradoxical remark, argues that Israel practices antisemitism since Palestinians are "semitic." In addition he said that the nonsensical statement of Ken Livingstone, the left-wing member of the British Labour Party, that Adolf Hitler supported Zionism was historically accurate.

News outlets should be honest, impartial, and transparent. The British media watchdog Ofcom reported in November 2021 on the BBC that historic failings this year have damaged its reputation. If so this is shameful. The report advised the BBC to be more transparent and to appeal to more diverse viewers. Yet in a poll, 58% of UK, and 64% of Londoners have favorable views, though the BBC got 5,500 complaints this year. The report comments that the BBC needs to improve how it represents and portrays "less satisfied groups" and must ensure that its workforce is more representative of people from different backgrounds,

Yes, there is a slight halt to insanity. Students of the University of Florida at the Gainesville campus first wanted the name Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, to be renamed because it discriminated against blacks. When

informed that. though the origin of the term is widely debated, it has nothing to do with black people, they withdrew the demand for change when it was pointed out the name had nothing to do with race. No shame on them.