

# Museums are the latest battleground in the anti-Israel crusade

Rafael Medoff writing in [The Times of Israel](#)

Museums are fast becoming the latest battleground in the campaign to turn Americans against Israel. Hamas supporters recently occupied parts of the Brooklyn Museum, defaced a sculpture, damaged artwork, and harassed staff members. In the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art, protesters unfurled “From the River to the Sea” banners. Extremists tried to disrupt the annual gala of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by hurling smoke bombs and flares at the museum’s entrance.

Perhaps the most ominous development has been the growing ability of Hamas backers to actually shut down museums. In February, they forced a month-long closure of the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, in San Francisco, and brought about the resignation of its chief executive by inundating her with what she described as “vitriolic and antisemitic” hate mail.

The anti-Israel forces are also crowing about the month-long shutdown of the [Wing Luke Museum in Seattle](#).

It happens that my latest book is a history of that anti-racism initiative. *Cartoonists Against Racism: The Secret Jewish War on Bigotry* (coauthored with comics historian Craig Yoe) chronicles the story of how the American Jewish Committee enlisted cartoonists and comic book artists in the battle against antisemitism and other forms of racism during and after World War II.

The Committee allocated an initial budget of \$400,000 to the campaign. That soon expanded to an average of \$3 million

annually over a period of two decades – the equivalent of more than \$63 million in 2024 dollars

Their strategy was to discredit all forms of bigotry, through the dramatic medium of cartoon illustration. They flooded schools and union halls with anti-racist posters, arranged for newspapers to publish political cartoons mocking prejudice, and convinced some comic book publishers to run stories with anti-bigotry themes. An issue of *True Comics*, which had a circulation of 500,000 monthly, featured a memorable anti-scapegoating story called “They Got the Blame.”

Museums are fast becoming the latest battleground in the campaign to turn Americans against Israel. Hamas supporters recently occupied parts of the Brooklyn Museum, defaced a sculpture, damaged artwork, and harassed staff members. In the atrium of the Museum of Modern Art, protesters unfurled “From the River to the Sea” banners. Extremists tried to disrupt the annual gala of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by hurling smoke bombs and flares at the museum’s entrance.

Perhaps the most ominous development has been the growing ability of Hamas backers to actually shut down museums. In February, they forced a month-long closure of the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, in San Francisco, and brought about the resignation of its chief executive by inundating her with what she described as “vitriolic and antisemitic” hate mail.

The anti-Israel forces are also crowing about the month-long shutdown of the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle. The closure was engineered by pro-Hamas staff members of the museum, who walked out in protest over some of the wording in an exhibit concerning an anti-racism campaign by American Jews in the 1940s and 1950s.

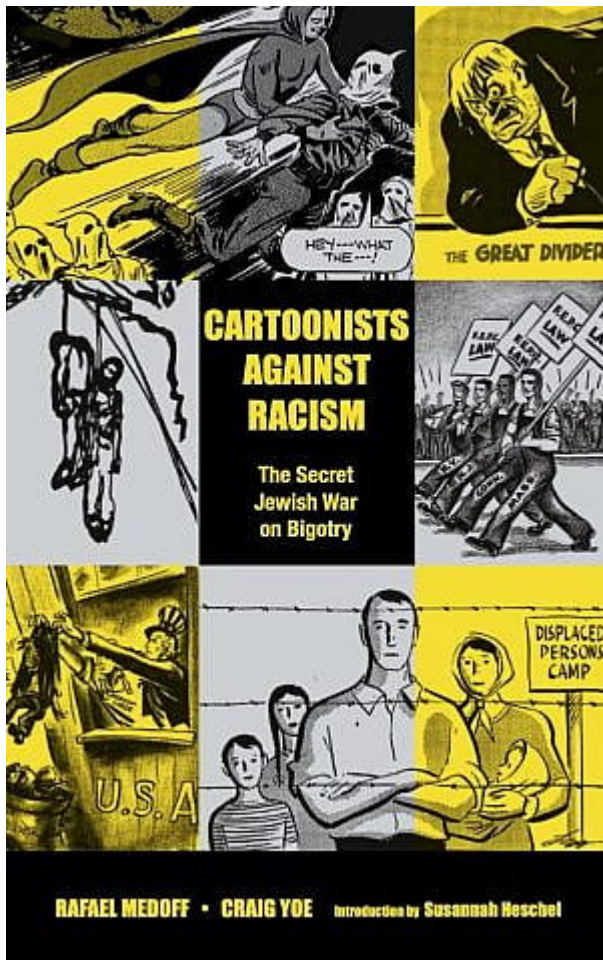
It happens that my latest book is a history of that anti-racism initiative. *Cartoonists Against Racism: The Secret Jewish War*

*on Bigotry* (coauthored with comics historian Craig Yoe) chronicles the story of how the American Jewish Committee enlisted cartoonists and comic book artists in the battle against antisemitism and other forms of racism during and after World War II.

The Committee allocated an initial budget of \$400,000 to the campaign. That soon expanded to an average of \$3 million annually over a period of two decades – the equivalent of more than \$63 million in 2024 dollars.

Their strategy was to discredit all forms of bigotry, through the dramatic medium of cartoon illustration. They flooded schools and union halls with anti-racist posters, arranged for newspapers to publish political cartoons mocking prejudice, and convinced some comic book publishers to run stories with anti-bigotry themes. An issue of *True Comics*, which had a circulation of 500,000 monthly, featured a memorable anti-scapegoating story called “They Got the Blame.”

Used by permission from  
'Cartoonists Against Racism: The  
Secret Jewish War on Bigotry'



Some other Jewish groups joined the campaign. The Anti-Defamation League persuaded the writers of the popular "Superman" radio show to create a storyline in which the Man of Steel battled the Ku Klux Klan. This Jewish anti-bigotry effort was driven by a noble motive: the belief that discrimination against any minority group is bad for all groups and tramples America's most cherished principles.

Richard C. Rothschild, the advertising executive who ran the campaign, was convinced that the cartoonists he enlisted had a real impact. Looking back at the effort years later, he noted that in the aftermath of World War II, there was a reduction in antisemitism "to a bare whisper," anti-Jewish quotas at major universities were eliminated, and there was a new public atmosphere, in which "it is unfashionable, if not downright disreputable, to be anti-Semitic."

Surely the introduction of millions of Americans, especially children, to anti-racist comic book stories and other

educational efforts helped encourage the emergence of more tolerant attitudes. The widespread rejection of racist ideas in America today – as compared to the 1950s – represents significant progress.

Yet despite those gains, America is now witnessing a massive resurgence of anti-Jewish hatred. The fact that some of it is thinly disguised as hatred of Israel or Zionism cannot obscure the truth. When anti-Israel protesters talk about “Zionists controlling the media,” they obviously mean Jews. The same is true of phrases such as “dirty Zionists,” and “Zionists keep out,” and so many other ugly slurs that have been chanted or displayed at recent anti-Israel protests.

The staff members who have shut down the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle are focusing their ire on a sentence in the anti-racism exhibit that states a simple fact: “Today, antisemitism is often disguised as anti-Zionism.”

The leaders of the Wing Luke Museum, and the officials of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society who helped create the anti-racism exhibit, now say they are working on changes to the exhibit and will re-open it after a month-long hiatus. One can only hope that the changes will not involve capitulating to the strikers’ demands. Because if extremists can intimidate museums into altering historically accurate exhibits, a precious aspect of free society will be gravely threatened.

[Read it all](#)