

Protest without Prejudice

by Michael Curtis



Antisemitism is not be borne with a patient shrug. Confront evil words and deeds with the fear of posterity's denunciations.

In recent months peaceful protests resulting from the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis have aimed at social change and united against racism, inequality and injustice, though the exact focus has shifted. Regrettably, some of the protests have degenerated into violence, looting, and disregard for public property. But in general they may have stemmed from attitudes of despair and helplessness. It is reasonable to argue that BLM protests do not reflect antisemitism, and that antisemitism has no place in the BLM movement. The history of Jews liberating themselves from slavery under Egyptian

oppression with the cry, "Let my People Go" is still a valid metaphor for Black liberation.

However, the actions of a minority of the BLM protestors, young extremists, some sponsoring the rhetoric of Lois Farrakhan, have exhibited prejudice of their own, particularly towards Jews

Seemingly forgotten by them is the common history of oppression, and the long bond between Jews and African Americans, including the significant role played by Jewish individuals in the development of the U.S. civil rights movement. Instead, this minority spreads prejudices, and anti-Western and antisemitic fantasies of Jewish world domination.

This prejudice is evident in an unintended consequence, and one barely noticed, of a recent event in Britain. On August 1, 2020 a group of protestors under the banner of *Forever Family Force*, dressed in paramilitary black military style uniforms, anti-stab vests, balaclavas, marched with clenched fist through the main street in the borough of Brixton in south London, like trained soldiers. The march, purportedly to protest against racism was on Afrikan (African) Emancipation Day, marking the anniversary of the abolition by Britain of slavery throughout the British Colonies by the Act of 1833, that came into force on August 1, 1834. The Act dealt with the more than 800,000 enslaved Africans in British colonies. The Act was repealed in 1997 and replaced with other statutes on the subject.

The objective of the march was to shut down the major road in the center of Brixton in protest against the lack of official action on the issue of reparations for slavery. Though the march was largely peaceful, various petitions were presented, calling for opposition to "Maangamizi," the Swahii word for Holocaust, against African people. The underlying complaint was that the immoral and inhuman treatment inflicted by the European elite on blacks had never been addressed. It claimed

to be part of the campaign for the UK to make amends for the enslavement of generations of African people.

The uniforms and style of the participants resembled that of the Black Panthers in the U.S. By coincidence, part of the march in Brixton was to Max Roach Park, named for the renowned nonpolitical American drummer, pioneer of the jazz style of bebop and the most imaginative percussion player in modern jazz.

The march was under the banner of the group called Forever Family Force but contained representatives from a variety of other groups, Extinction Rebellion, Afrikan Emancipation Day Reparations Committee, Black Lives Matter, Rmfall. Stop the Maangamizi, and the ubiquitous Rhodes Must Fall. Mockingly, one slogan exhibited was "You are lucky, we only want reparations, not revenge."

Two comments may be made about the march. The first is that the participants were reminiscent not only of the U.S. Black Panther, but also of the BUF, British Union of Fascists of the 1930s who, dressed in military uniforms as Black Shirts, sought to march through the streets of the London East End, a largely Jewish area. The BUF was led in dictatorial fashion by Oswald Mosley, a wealthy, gifted, orator who inherited a baronetcy, giving him the title Sir. He had a meteoric political career, starting as a Conservative, then left in 1922 for the Labour Party in which he had a prominent position, then founder of the New Party in 1931, replaced a year later by the British Union of Fascists. The BUF held a mass rally at the Olympia Stadium on June 1934 which held 10,000 people and at which the Black Shirts attacked a number of antifascist protestors.

In 1936, Mosley planned to send thousands of marchers all dressed as Black Shirts to march through the East End. The Home Secretary, Sir John Simon, refused to ban the march but instead sent a police escort to prevent antifascist protestors

from disrupting the march which took place on October 4 1936 in the East End. A large crowd of about 250,000, a mixture of communists, socialists, independents, local Jews, Irish laborers and dockers, using barricades, paving stones, timber, overturned trucks, opposed the marchers who withdrew. This victory, popularly remembered as the Battle of Cable Street, a narrow street near Commercial Road, had as its cry the slogan "they shall not pass," a slogan first used to defend Verdun in World War I, but most memorable and influentially declaimed in the speech on July 18, 1936 by the anti-fascist Dolores Gomez against General Franco in the Spanish civil war.

A second comment is the fact that the Brixton march was allowed to defy the law. As a result of the Battle of Cable Street the UK passed the Public Order Act in 1936 to control extremist political movements. The Act bans the wearing of political uniforms in any public place or public meeting. It also said that political marches must obtain official consent to take place. The Act was used against the IRA and Sinn Fein demonstrations in the 1970s and against members of a far-right group Britain First in 2016. But it was not used in Brixton

The most disturbing aspect of the events and personnel connected to the march was the role of some in engaging in activities irrelevant to the cause of racial justice, and exhibiting unjustified attacks and conspiracy theories. One such attack was on Bill Gates who was pictured as exploiting the Covid-19 epidemic to force mandatory vaccinations on the world. The conspiracy theory proposes the idea that Gates, believing that vaccines kill people who take them, endorsed them in order to reduce the global population. It held that Gates' polio vaccine "paralyzed" thousands of children in India. A more stereotypical attack was the accusation that Jews own the banking system through the "Rothschild bloodline." Jews were painted as hook-nosed imposters and bloodsuckers of the poor who profit from the black community.

An identifiable figure, though apparently not the leader of

the FFF group, is a man named Khari McKenzie, a 28 year old rap artist who performs under the stage name Respect. He is active in a community group called "Gang" which aims to encourage locals to "reclaim the space." He has photographed himself wearing military clothes at BLM protests in London. McKenzie is blatantly antisemitic. He has asserted that the technique of police of kneeling on the neck, in the manner that killed George Floyd in Minneapolis, was learnt from secret seminars with Israeli security forces. He posted images of the Israel Defense Forces, training police in the U.S. and the UK how to put "their legs on our necks."

McKenzie continues as a historian, if hypocritically apologetic: "If I look in my history book and see there were people with Zionist blood that were heavily involved in the transatlantic slave trade, my pointing that out doesn't make me antisemitic." More precisely, Jews are responsible for the slavery of blacks, the original Holocaust. They are also in control of international finance.

McKenzie publicly defended Willy, a key figure in the creation of grime music, the genre of electronic music that began in London in the early 2000s, who in a broadcast described the Jewish people as cowards and snakes, compared the power of the Jewish community to that of the KKK, and declared that the world Jews should "hold some corn," that is be shot. Curiously, Willy got an MBE, Medal of the Order of the British Empire, for services to music in 2018.

Willy is like fellow black entertainers, Ice Cube, Diddy, Nick Cannon, Desean Jackson, among others, guilty of emotionally charged, hateful antisemitic rhetoric, all of whom assert the usual antisemitic tropes, that Jews control the media and the banks, and who hold that Jews have stolen the Black identity as true Hebrews.

These utterances, intolerant and ignorant, have no place in any valid liberation movement. The leaders of the BLM peaceful

protests have understood this and realize that antisemitism not be used in protests against racism. It was unfortunate that the Brixton marchers resembled, by their uniforms, the British fascists of the 1930s who were prevented from marching through the streets of London where Jews lived.