

The Company Elle Keeps: Linda Sarsour Is “A Woman To Watch”

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Online and in print, lazy journalists, members of chambers of commerce, self-satisfied captains of industry, local business boosters, sexual orientation activists, in short, the whole comical crew of American life today, like to compile idiotic lists: “Fifty Discoveries That Have Changed The World Overnight,” “Forty Under Forty Who Are Making A Difference,” “Thirty Business Leaders Under Thirty,” “Twenty Realtors In The Billion Dollar Club,” “Fifteen Schools That Are Making Students Into Activists,” “Ten Immigrants Who Are Changing Silicon Valley,” “Nine African Leaders Who Are Transforming the Continent,” “Eight Colleges That Are Taking On Tuition,” “Seven Senators Who Are Tackling Global Warming,” “Six Muslim Leaders Who Are Battling Islamophobia,” “Five Halfbacks Who Are Changing the Game,” “Four Foundation Heads Who Are Facing

the Challenge of Change,” “Three British Royals Who Don’t Stand on Ceremony,” “Two Chinese Companies That Will Eat Google’s Lunch” – and a partridge in a pear tree.

On December 17, Elle Magazine, with its deeply philosophical bent – **“Want that hot new show, beauty trend, or celebrity meme explained? We’ve got you.”** – that purveyor to the stars and housewives alike, of clothes, perfumes, shampoos, offered an end-of-year list that attracted my attention. It was entitled “20 Women of Color in Politics to Watch in 2020.” One of those women of color to watch in 2020 was none other than Linda Sarsour. When some readers complained about her inclusion, Elle magazine tried to distance itself by claiming that the list had been compiled not by its fastidious editors, but by a group called “She The People,” for whose choices Elle claimed no responsibility. Here is what Elle posted on its website:

The below list was compiled by She the People, a national non-profit network of women of color committed to social justice and voter mobilization. A previous version of this story did not make clear that the list was compiled by She the People and not ELLE magazine.

The “below list”? How much suffering must our English language endure? Can’t Elle’s editors take the time from their busy schedule of filling us in on that hot new show, beauty trend, or celebrity meme, to write correct English?

But I digress.

Here are sample bits taken from the descriptions of these “20 women of color”:

A is one of those “tireless leaders who draw inspiration”; B is “passionate about women having a seat at the table”; C wants women to take “leadership positions”; D wants women to take “ a leadership role”; E hopes to “create the kind of

democracy where everyone is valued and everyone belongs”; F is all about “honoring the integrity of trans people” and will “focus on trans people of color”; G’s “work comes from a place of love, where people and their needs come first.” H is a “champion for underserved communities”: I wants “to make a positive impact on people’s lives”; J “embodies a profound love and sense of responsibility to Indigenous people”; K “works with communities of color and young people to find out what’s important to them”; for L through T (remember, there are “20 women of color to watch in 2020”), it’s more of the same. So very much more. And so very much the same.

Yes, I know, it’s painful to read, but just imagine if you actually had to write this stuff.

Here’s the entry written by She The People celebrating the life and incredible achievements of Linda Sarsour:

An activist and community leader for nearly two decades, Linda says she’s guided by a radical love for her community and the belief that we are deserving of a democracy that works for all of us. She has been part of some of the most visible national movements in the last several years. A former board member of Women’s March, Linda joined a lawsuit filed by the Council on American-Islamic Relations against Donald Trump to stop the Muslim ban and was arrested last year while protesting the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

Linda is the executive director of MPower Change, a digital advocacy organization made up of diverse Muslim communities around the country. In 2020, she will be working with partner organizations to build the power of Muslim voters and get them excited about voting in seven states that could determine the outcome of the presidential election. Through the My Muslim Vote campaign, they will work to educate and engage Muslim voters and make sure their voices are heard. Linda’s book about her experiences as a Palestinian-Muslim

American organizer and justice seeker, We Are Not Here to Be Bystanders: A Memoir of Love and Resistance, will be released in March 2020."

I must inform She The People, the group that compiled this list of "20 Women of Color," that Linda Sarsour is not a "person of color." Not even close. Take a look [here](#). She is certainly the whitest of the "20 women of color" celebrated in Elle; she is whiter than many people who call themselves white. She is about as white as Joe Biden or Bernie Sanders or Pete Buttigieg. When did Linda Sarsour decide that she would describe herself as a "woman of color" and reap all the political, economic, and societal benefits that such a designation now brings with it? And how did so many people decide to take part in this farce?

But that is the least of the problems with including Linda Sarsour as one of the "20 women of color to watch in 2020." The other problem is her antisemitism – or does Elle not think that is a problem?

She supports the BDS Movement, an extreme anti-Israel group that, among other activities, shouts down pro-Israel speakers on campuses everywhere, pressures businesses to cut ties with Israel, and bullies investors, public and private, into divesting themselves of any stock they may hold in Israeli companies. The BDS has been declared antisemitic, and denounced by, Manuel Valls, Emanuel Macron, Stephen Harper, Angela Merkel, David Cameron, Justin Trudeau, Hillary Clinton, Germany's CDU Party, and many others – but Linda Sarsour, "a woman of color to watch in 2020," thinks the BDS movement is just what Israel deserves.

A former aide to Linda Sarsour, Asmi Fathelbab, reported to her that a man – a Muslim – had repeatedly rubbed his crotch against her while she worked for Sarsour in 2009. But when Fathelbab reported the abuse, Sarsour – a self-proclaimed

feminist and co-founder of the Women's March organization – threatened to blacklist her from political jobs if she continued to make a fuss about what she had endured. Other employees confirmed both Fathelbab's account of sexual molestation, and her charge that Sarsour threatened her unless she kept quiet.

“She oversaw an environment unsafe and abusive to women,” said Fathelbab. “Women who put [Sarsour] on a pedestal for women’s rights and empowerment deserve to know how she really treats us.”

Although she was a founder of the Women's March, Linda Sarsour has never spoken about the misogyny in Islam. Not a word about Qur'an 4:34, which allows a husband to “beat” his wife if he suspects she is disobedient. Nothing about the Qur'anic passage that declares that men should handle the affairs of their women, for they are “superior” to them in intellect. Nor has she said anything about the fact that Muslim husbands can divorce their wives merely by reciting the triple-talaq, while Muslim wives go through a much more complicated procedure to obtain a divorce. She has said nothing – this supposed icon of “women's empowerment,” about the fact that a Muslim daughter receives only half of what a son inherits. Nor has she discussed the fact that in Islam a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man, and that the reason for this, according to Muhammad himself in a famous hadith, is “because of the deficiency of her intelligence.”

Linda Sarsour's role in the Women's March organization ended this past September because of the well-founded charges against her of antisemitism, based on numerous statements. She continues to be a strong supporter of Louis Farrakhan, the antisemitic leader of the Nation of Islam. Here's just a taste of Farrakhan's rhetoric that Linda Sarsour has never condemned: **“The powerful Jews are my enemy,” “Don't you forget when it's God who puts you in the ovens, it's forever” and “It's the wicked Jews, the false Jews, that are promoting**

lesbianism, homosexuality. It's the wicked Jews, false Jews, that make it a crime for you to preach the word of God, then they call you homophobic."

Most recently, Linda Sarsour said during an American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) conference on Nov. 28 that Israel "is built on the idea that Jews are supreme to everyone else."

Israel is a tiny country, built not on the idea that Jews are "supreme to everyone else," but that Jews, like all other peoples, deserve to have a state of their own. It is equality, not supremacy, that the Jews sought in resurrecting their ancient homeland. And within Israel, there is no manifestation of Jewish "supremacy." Arabs are equal citizens with Jews; they serve in the Knesset, sit on the Supreme Court, hold high diplomatic posts, and serve – if they wish – in the army, where some Arabs have risen high in the officer corps. Israeli Arabs live, study, and work beside Jews; there is no second-class citizenship or apartheid.

If Linda Sarsour were to look at the twenty-two Arab states, she would find they are all "built on the idea that Muslim Arabs are supreme (sic for "superior") to everyone else." The Arabs are superior both to non-Arab Muslims, and as Muslims, to all non-Muslims. Let's first consider the non-Arab Muslims. Whether it is the Berbers in North Africa, the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, or the black African Muslims in the Sudan or West Africa (Mali, Mauritania, Niger), they have been mistreated by the Arabs who dominate them. In Algeria, the Berbers have had to struggle to finally win the right just to use their own Berber language, Tamazight; Berber culture is scanted in the Algerian schools, Berber history largely ignored. The Kurds have been suppressed by Arab governments both in Syria and Iraq; their dreams of autonomy continuously crushed. Saddam Hussein's Arab army murdered 182,000 Kurds in Operation Anfal and moved Arabs into Kurdish lands; not a single Arab government protested that mass murder and forced Arabization. Black Africans in the Sudan have been persecuted by northern

Arabs for decades, hundreds of thousands have been killed or enslaved; especially murderous have been the Arab militias known as the Janjaweed, who raped, pillaged, and murdered black Africans in Darfur.

The creation of a new state, South Sudan, has provided greater security for the black Africans – Christian and animist – living there, but the mistreatment of the black Africans by Arabs in the Sudan itself continues. The oppression in Sudan is based more on ethnicity – the Arabs deem themselves superior to blacks – and less on religion, since most of the blacks in Sudan itself are also Muslims. We might also note that Muslim Arabs still keep nearly a million Muslim black Africans as slaves in Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

It's not hard to see why the Arabs consider themselves to be superior to all other Muslims. The Qur'an was delivered to a 7th century Arab, and in his language. The Qur'an should ideally be read in Arabic. Muslims prostrate themselves in prayer five times a day, turned toward Mecca in Arabia. If a Muslim can afford it, he should make the Hajj at least once in his life, again to Mecca in Arabia. Converts to Islam often adopt Arab names, so great is the prestige of the Arabs within Islam. Some non-Arab Muslims even add "Sayyid" to their names, thereby claiming descent from the Arab tribe of Muhammad. The late scholar of Islam Anwar Shaikh insisted that "Islam is a vehicle for Arab supremacism."

Within Islam, the Arabs are superior to non-Arab Muslims; but all Muslims are superior to non-Muslims. The Qur'an tells Believers that they are "the best of peoples" (3:110), while Unbelievers are "the most vile of created beings." What, one wonders, does Linda Sarsour make of those verses? So far, she has managed to escape being asked about them. Instead she ludicrously claims that Israel "is built on the idea that Jews are supreme [sic for "superior"] to everyone else," when it is Islam that is "built on the idea that Muslims are supreme [superior] to everyone else."

Defender of the antisemitic BDS, admirer of the virulent antisemite Louis Farrakhan, hypocritical protector of a Muslim male sexual predator, promoter of the idea that Jews believe themselves to be “supreme” when it is, rather, the Muslims themselves who in the Qur’an are instructed – it bears repeating a third time – that they are the “best of peoples” and all non-Muslims are “the most vile of created beings,” Linda Sarsour may be “a woman of color to watch in 2020,” but not in the way that She The People, or Elle magazine, seem to think. She bears watching, all right, in just the same way that David Duke, or Louis Farrakhan, two of her soulmates, bear watching. So train those binoculars, turn on those recording devices, and see what more outrages this Defender of the Faith commits in 2020, in the performance of her Islamic duty.

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