

The New Anti-Semitism at the New School

Hatred gets a respectable cap and gown

by Phyllis Chesler



In 1969, I received my doctoral degree from the New School. In those days, few did. The expectations, the standards, were notoriously high.

Founded by John Dewey and Thorstein Veblen, The New School [Creative Publishing and Critical Journalism faculty](#) who have officially invited the infamous Linda Sarsour and Rebecca Vilkomerson, the executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace to [James Miller](#) directs this program, assisted by Associate Director Rachel Rosenfeld. Robert Boyers, Juliette Cezzar, Mark Greif, Noah Isenberg, Melissa Monroe, Jed Perl, and Hugh Raffles all teach for this program. They are professors, not unlettered, illiterate, grassroots activists. Eighty-five

years after Adolf Hitler fired Jewish professors from German universities and burned and banned Jewish books, the academics are leading the pack against Israel, Jews, intellectual diversity, and truth. Only such academics could have invited Sarsour and Vilkomerson to speak on campus, to make a mockery of the very real hate that threatens actual, live Jews, whether in Charlottesville or in Paris or in Tel Aviv.

The description of the panel tells us: "Antisemitism is harmful and real. But when Antisemitism is redefined as *criticism* of Israel, critics of Israeli policy become accused and targeted more than the growing far-right. Join us for a discussion on how to combat Antisemitism today."

More targeted than the far-right? Really? Poor babies. Words almost fail me given their self-serving bid for victim status even as they themselves are the aggressors who maliciously conflate anti-Semitism, which they practice, with "criticism of Israel," as if the all-powerful Jewish Lobby is now threatening to shut down even the most innocent "criticism" of its actions. The canard is so transparent that it's amazing to think that educated people believe it. But being educated has never proved to be a bar against being anti-Semitic, or being a camp follower or appeaser of haters.

The non-Muslim panelists claim that, like Muslims, they, too, are being persecuted in America, although the statistics assure us that the rise in Jew-hatred/anti-Semitism is far more significant (up 67 percent in 2017). While it's important for Jew-haters to voice their hatred at the New School, under the guise of discussing "anti-Semitism"—welcome, David Duke, to the discussion of racism, and right this way, Harvey Weinstein, to the panel on rape—it is also important never to discuss the crimes against women perpetrated by the denizens of Muslim societies who are steeped in medieval bigotry and hatred of the other. Yes, the fear of collective punishment, white guilt over the historical evils of slavery in America, and the conflation of Arabs with discrimination against

African-Americans in today's society has led to a comprehensive chilling of speech and the kind of muddled, inflammatory thinking that appears to explain how the New School got to where it is today.

It is ironic: Even as charges of "appropriation" are leveled at men who write about women, whites who write about non-whites, non-gays who write about gays—that the single exception is that of allowing a non-Jew like Sarsour to actually hold forth in an academic setting as an "expert" on a subject about which she knows absolutely nothing.

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The New School panel is political theater, meant to intimidate, appease, and entertain, not to educate. It is possible because Jew-hatred is in fashion on the left these days, and because academics are in denial about Islamist violence, whether it targets Jews, women, gays, or other minorities. Therefore, they seek to appease such violence by siding with it against permissible scapegoats, beginning with the Jews and Israel. Academics who should have more-nuanced views of geopolitical conflicts instead view the jihadi aggressors as "victims" and their true victims, including civilians, as guilty perpetrators. Those presumably most dedicated to truth-finding and truth-telling are repressing and perverting the truth and indoctrinating students to do likewise.

The New School panel is co-sponsored by [Jacobin Magazine](#).

Haymarket Books is named after the 1886 Chicago Square incident in which workers demonstrated for an eight-hour workday. A bomb exploded, police officers were killed, anarchists were tried, and anarchists were hung. The bomber was never found. Haymarket publishes Ali Abunimah (Electronic Intifada); Omar Barghouti (the Qatari-born, Egypt-reared,

educated-in-America professor who teaches at Tel Aviv University—and who is also the founder of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel and the co-founder of the BDS campaign); Angela Y. Davis (Communist, black nationalist, alleged feminist icon); Noam Chomsky (far left Anti-Zionist); Ilan Pappé (Israeli Jewish anti-Zionist); the late Howard Zinn, leftist historian and author of *A People's History of American Empire*—as well as Leon Trotsky, Alexandra Kollantai, and Rosa Luxembourg. Once, long, long ago, I was quite fond of these last three.

Times change, thinking people ought to change with them, but that is rarely the case. The phrase “one-sided” does not do justice to Haymarket’s lineup of books. But, hey, it’s a free country.

Jacobin Magazine? Lauded by Chomsky and Chris Hayes, they describe themselves as “a leading voice of the American left.” Now, who were the Jacobins? In 1789, after the French Revolution, which was a much romanticized but relentlessly bloody uprising, the Jacobins, in alliance with Robespierre, were the most radical and violent of the groups. They instituted the Terror of 1793-1794.

The New School panel takes place tomorrow night, Nov. 28, at 7:30 p.m. It is also being live-streamed via Facebook at *Jacobin Magazine*.

Perhaps the New School has learned the hard way that it is better to appease the foxes. In 1997, the New School allowed itself to be ground right down into a weeks-long standstill because one professor of “Caribbean descent,” M. Jacqui Alexander, whose résumé was very thin, played the race card to protest the fact that she had not been granted tenure. Thereafter, this same professor took her show on the road to other universities (or so I’ve been told), where she repeated her performance. Apparently, she is now emeritus at the Women’s and Gender Studies Institute at Canada’s University of

Toronto.

I knew nothing about this until last year when a Jew, who was caught up in that fracas, called me, and whom I then interviewed. He was so traumatized by the overt and underlying anti-Semitism of the aggressive and shaming mob that conducted the sit-in and hunger fast that he dropped out of graduate school and never again found his footing in the academic world. Today's mobs form on social media rather than in the streets, but their effects on people's lives can be every bit as profound.

Here's the story, as reported in 1997, in *Lingua Franca* by Eyal Press, titled "[James Miller](#)—perhaps the same James Miller, apparently, who has now invited Linda Sarsour and Rebecca Vilkomerson into the henhouse. Perhaps he has had second thoughts about the wisdom of making himself a target for nutcases. Perhaps he does not view Jew-hatred as a form of "racism." Most professors don't; most textbooks on prejudice fail to include it.

The "Zioness Movement" has launched a [Change.org](#) for signatures in a letter to New School President David E. Van Zandt. They note:

This panel appears to conflate legitimate criticism of Israel—like legitimate criticism of any other state—with the belief that Israel should not exist as a state and should be replaced. ... These panelists actively work to prevent Zionists from engaging on the left, despite Israel's leftist roots. Lina Morales has publicly posted on social media that she aims to "drive a wedge between Zionists and the left, between Zionists and the queer community, between Zionists and poc communities." Rebecca Vilkomerson has said JVP's role is to drive a wedge between Judaism and Zionism. Linda Sarsour has said "nothing is creepier than Zionism," and declared that Zionists cannot be feminists.

Will Jews and our friends show up *en masse* at the New School on Nov. 28 with signs and numbers (if not wonders) to confront the Jew-haters all dressed up as respectable academics?

I hope so.

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