

American Jewry and the College Campus



Best of times or worst of times?

Deborah E. Lipstadt
Samuel G. Freedman
Chaim Seidler-Feller

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Dorothy and Julius Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations of the American Jewish Committee

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- An intensive immersion seminar for American college faculty in the history, politics, culture, and society of modern Israel, conducted by Brandeis University. The goal is to enable college professors to teach courses on their home campuses on modern Israel, in all its complexity, as a Jewish and democratic state.
- Exchange programs over the years bringing Israeli politicians, academicians, civil servants, and educators to the United States to study the diversity of the American Jewish community and its role in American politics and society. Hundreds of Israelis have participated in these dialogue-oriented missions cosponsored by the Institute and its Israeli partners, the Jerusalem Municipality, the Oranim Teacher Training Institute, and Israel's Ministry of Education.
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Harold T. Shapiro, Ph.D.
Chairman

Steven Bayme, Ph.D.
Director

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Foreword

In recent years, Jewish communal leaders have agonized considerably over the image of Israel on the college campus. The American college campus represents the fulfillment of Jewish aspirations for success and acceptance in American society. At the same time, it also represents a weak link in the carefully nurtured pro-Israel consensus within American public opinion. In any case, the campus occupies critical space within the Jewish communal consciousness. Given that the Jews have placed enormous faith in the power of education, the campus has become a unique American expression of the “People of the Book.” Virtually every American Jewish family aspires to send their sons and daughters to leading universities. However, as anti-Israel rhetoric has surfaced in so many of the nation’s campuses, Jews have begun to worry whether the pro-Israel consensus is beginning to rot in the nation’s citadels of higher learning.

Indeed, by the close of the twentieth century, two trends were evident within campus culture. On the one hand, universities constituted a Jewish success story. Less than 2 percent of the population generally, Jews constituted 5 percent of the student population, 10 percent of university faculties, and 20 percent of the faculties on elite campuses. Today, Ivy League universities routinely report over 25 percent Jewish enrollments and have been lead on occasion by Jewish presidents. The most remarkable aspect of these statistics is that the Jewish presence, once sharply restricted on leading campuses, is now taken for granted as a desirable norm. Vanderbilt University went so far in recent years as to announce a special recruiting program designed to *increase* the number of its Jewish students!

Similarly, the maturation of academic Jewish studies programs symbolizes one of the finest chapters in recent American Jewish history. A mere forty years ago, academic Jewish studies appeared sporadic at best, mostly at a very few highly selective campuses. By century’s end, most universities across the country proudly offered impressive Jewish studies programs. These programs signaled the validation of Jewish civilization as an object of inquiry within American elite culture. Indeed, the 2000-01 National Jewish Population Study reported that 40 percent of Jews under age thirty-five, i.e., recent college graduates, had taken at least one course in academic Jewish studies.

Yet a second and more troubling trend was also evident by the dawn of the twenty-first century. The Hillel Foundation, the central address for Jewish campus concerns, had experienced enormous growth and vitality in recent decades, yet was reaching, at a maximum, less than half of the Jewish population. Jewish students’ general

widespread disaffection from matters Jewish, in turn, meant disaffection from Israel as well. A campus climate that underscored the importance of multiculturalism and post-colonial studies often viewed Israel as, at best, no better than the surrounding Arab states, and, at worst, as an oppressive outpost of the West in the Third World. Precisely at a time when American public opinion generally tilted in Israel's favor by 4:1 margins, on college campuses opinion between Israel and the Palestinians was generally split down the middle, although, to be sure, indifference to Israel considerably outweighed hostility.

Moreover, campus hostility to Israel often became magnified in the eyes of Jewish communal observers. Having invested so heavily in the university experience as a universal Jewish communal norm, Jewish leaders were often disappointed by statements critical of Israel. In turn, when things did go wrong on particular campuses, these incidents were taken as emblematic of university life generally. The more widespread and sustained narrative of the integration of Jews and Judaism into university culture was dwarfed by the surfacing of anti-Israel invective or anti-Semitic hostility.

Yet notwithstanding some level of exaggerated fears and sensitivities, the place of Israel within university culture does warrant considerable communal concern. First, when Israel as a subject is taught, it is the Arab-Israeli conflict that dominates the curriculum, and campus culture generally evinces sympathy for the underdog. Israel's military victories, which gave such pride to Jews everywhere in 1967, have now replaced a David vs. Goliath imagery with a portrait of Israel as colonial state and settler society. Secondly, one should not underestimate the influence of those faculty who focus on the region generally with resulting political sympathies, if not outright biases. Nor are Jewish studies programs immune from criticism. Dedicated to demonstrating the centrality of Judaic studies to contemporary academic research, these programs rarely gave adequate treatment to modern Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Great emphasis has been placed upon the study of Jewish philosophy, culture, and even Jewish social science, but very little upon contemporary Jewish sovereignty and statehood. Surprisingly, unlike Holocaust courses, which became central to Jewish studies programs, the history of modern Israel has been often overlooked.

What then should be done to enhance the image of Israel on American campuses? In May 2005, the American Jewish Committee's Koppelman Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations convened a consultation of campus leaders to deliberate this question. A similar consultation convened in December 2002 had recommended the creation of a faculty seminar, enabling faculty to introduce new courses on modern Israel on their respective campuses. Two such summer institutes have been held by Brandeis University, with AJC cooperation and support. At the May 2005 consultation, several of the prepared papers debated specific strategic steps for the Jewish com-

munity to consider in addressing campus situations. The papers by Professors Deborah Lipstadt, Sam Freedman, and Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller are reproduced in this publication.

Underlying the strategic considerations is communal appreciation of the reality of campus culture as very distant from Jewish communal culture. The purpose of a college education is to teach students how to think critically rather than to indoctrinate students with revealed truth. Courses in Jewish studies are meant to examine the Jewish experience rather than necessarily create committed Jews. Academic tenure is meant to protect the articulation of unpopular or politically incorrect thinking that is so critical to the academic enterprise. Courses that challenge students or make them uncomfortable in their convictions constitute enormous assets in the educational process rather than a threat to future Jewish stability and security.

Notwithstanding these differences between Jewish communal culture and campus culture, several common strategies are suggested by these papers. First, academic freedom itself, while clearly central to the educational endeavor, is no excuse for intimidation of either students or faculty. When faculty cross the line and inhibit a student's right to disagree, that professor has violated the very purposes that academic freedom and university education generally were meant to inculcate, and concern should rightly be expressed. Campus culture is about the free exchange of ideas, not the stifling of political opinion.

Secondly, greater consideration needs to be given within the curriculum to the study of modern Israel. Is the Zionist narrative taught? Do courses on modern Israel focus solely on the conflict, or do they engage a broader, holistic portrait of Israel as a nation-state? Is the conflict itself taught fairly and accurately? Again, academic freedom does not connote academic fiction. Professors have every right to air opinions, but they also owe their students a fair and balanced approach to controversial subjects.

Lastly, the Jewish community needs to acknowledge that its primary difficulties on campus emanate from indifference to Israel rather than from hostility. When Jewish students do not care about being Jewish, they cease to care about Israel's safety and security. In that sense, a strong Jewish education that counters indifference and instills love of the Jewish people and appreciation of Jewish history provides the best antidote to contemporary anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

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Strategic Responses to Anti-Israelism and Anti-Semitism on the North American Campus

Deborah E. Lipstadt

Jewish life is alive and well on the North American college campus. In fact, one could rightfully posit, never has it been more intellectually and socially vibrant or as fully integrated into the broader fabric of academic life. Jewish pundits once bemoaned the campus as an inhospitable place where Jewish youth were likely to find their Jewish identity severely challenged. Today it is a locus where Jewish students can reinforce and strengthen their Jewish identity and expand their knowledge of their history and tradition. This situation, particularly when compared to how things were only thirty years ago, is truly remarkable. Yet, the picture is not all rosy.

Positive Factors: The Growth of Jewish Studies and of Hillel

First the good news: I begin here because far too much of the conversation during the past two years about Jewish life on campus—aspects of which are exceptionally troubling—has focused on the negative, in isolation from the positive. (For example, many pundits have spoken about the problems at Columbia University while ignoring, almost willfully, the fact that it is also home to one of the most multifaceted and vibrant Jewish student communities.) Most significantly, however, no situation can be accurately assessed unless one has a full and balanced picture. Furthermore, the positive elements may well offer some tools with which to address the negative.

Any North American university of standing has or knows it should have a Jewish studies program. Whereas not more than two decades ago it was considered sufficient to have a solitary Jewish studies professor—a *kol boynick* or jack-of-all-trades—today such a situation is considered not only insufficient, but a stopgap measure. (It would not be an exaggeration to say that such a situation is generally taken as a sign that the university in question is not really serious about Jewish studies.) Not only has the attitude of the universities changed but so has that of the students. Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies recently examined a broad range of North American campuses. They found that “almost half of all Jewish students (45 percent)

had taken at least one Jewish studies course by the time they were seniors.”¹ The evolution of these programs, the authors of the Brandeis study note, represents a “stunningly dramatic change” on campus. Not only do a high percentage of students take a course in Jewish studies but, after taking an initial course, there is a good chance they will take additional courses. One of the study’s most striking findings was that Jewish studies courses reach “students who are otherwise untouched by formal Jewish life on campus.” Equally noteworthy is the recent finding by the Jewish Outreach Institute that 40 percent of children of intermarried couples have taken Jewish studies courses.²

Some students take these courses to fulfill the university’s general education requirements, while others choose them as a way to satisfy their curiosity, fill the lacunae of their Jewish education, or explore their identity. (The fact that many students choose a Jewish studies course specifically to fill a general education requirement is, in itself, telling, given that there are a myriad of courses from which students might choose.) The Brandeis study considered it particularly significant that students who shy away from attending Jewish social events attend these courses. One could posit that these courses serve as a noncontroversial or safe entrée into Jewish life. In contrast to participation in a Jewish social event, taking such a course does not constitute a statement about one’s ethnic or religious identity.

It should be stressed that, while some students may be motivated to choose these courses as a means of strengthening their Jewish identity, Jewish studies courses *should not be* and, in the vast majority of cases, *are not* structured to fill this purpose. They should be academic enterprises of the highest quality, with the goal of educating, not motivating. If they were designed to do the latter, they would lose academic credibility and be poised on the same slippery slope down which many ethnic studies programs slid when they were first instituted. Of course, how students choose to “use” their experience in such classes is—and should remain—an individual and personal matter. It could be argued that one of the reasons Jewish studies programs were successful from the outset—in contrast to other ethnic studies programs that had a much rockier history—is precisely because Jewish studies professors were exceptionally careful about not engaging in advocacy.

The remarkable growth of Jewish studies results from a confluence of forces too complex to fully delineate in this paper. Among them is the fact that university administrations perceive of Jewish studies not as an “add-on” to other academic offerings, but as an essential, mainstream intellectual component of a complete liberal arts curriculum. From a practical perspective, many universities recognize that Jewish studies programs appeal to donors and constitute a means of reaching out to both Jewish alumni and to individuals in the local Jewish community who might not otherwise feel a connection to the university. These donors consider the presence of a

strong Jewish studies program on the campus of their local university as an asset to the Jewish community at large.

But it is not just in the realm of Jewish studies that we have seen a remarkable change. In fact, equally noteworthy has been the revitalization of Hillel. For years, most Hillels, operating on paltry budgets in dilapidated quarters, were moribund places. On many campuses, only the most affiliated Jewish students, such as those who needed the services Hillel provided, including kosher food and prayer services, frequented its facilities. The staff was highly dedicated, but found itself facing insurmountable odds. The transformation of Hillel's physical plants, the expansion of its staff, and the array of new and creative programming are nothing less than staggering. Among the more notable developments is the close relationship on many campuses between Hillel and the university administration, another potential asset.³

Is It the Best or the Worst of Times?

And yet, despite this seemingly rosy situation, all is not well. A Google search in November 2005 using the key words "anti-Semitism," "North American," "campus," and "2005" yielded 178,000 references. Perusal of some, though certainly not all of these sites, cannot but leave one with the impression of an exceptionally bleak situation. (Hence, my inclination to start with the positive.) Observations, such as the following, typified much of what I found:

Anti-Semitism has become commonplace once more in mainstream academic settings in classrooms and extracurricular affairs with tacit approval from many university officials, who assert that such discourse is protected as academic freedom and need not be treated as hate speech.

Ruth Contreras, Judith R. Jacobson, Edward S. Beck⁴

The situation I encountered on many of the campuses in North America and Canada was horrifying. I was not as shocked by the Arab questioners as I was with the personal threats, and the severe apathy of the majority of Jewish students. In my years of speaking to people, I've never received threats or personal attacks like I did speaking on campuses. There were threatening incidents at both the University of Florida and at California State University. Both were chilling. The crowd in Florida was one full of anger and hatred, yet I had to stand before them unsure of the enemy who had sent threats earlier that day. In California I spoke facing a young student who wore a T-shirt with a swastika on it, chewing on a piece of paper as some sort of protest against my talk.

Ismail Khald⁵

The reality is that the Intifada has gone global, and that master propagandists have hijacked both the world media and the western academy.

Phyllis Chesler ⁶

U.S. college students have become like Russian Jews who kept silent because they feared state retaliation if they spoke out about being persecuted. That was the view expressed Saturday night by Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs Minister Natan Shtrasky.

Ha'aretz ⁷

A group of Senate Republicans convened a meeting with representatives of various Jewish organizations to discuss the situation. Also present was a deputy secretary from the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education. The senators at the gathering, including those from states with a miniscule Jewish population such as Utah, proposed offering legislation to form a commission to investigate anti-Semitic incidents on campuses.⁸ In an apparent attempt to place the situation in perspective, an executive vice president of Hillel, the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, who was present at the meeting, cautioned the senators that, despite the 24 percent rise in anti-Semitic campus incidents reported by the Anti-Defamation League, most Jewish students do not face intimidation.

Some students have complained that local newspapers, not generally Jewish ones, have exaggerated a few incidents of anti-Semitism to falsify the appearance of the local campus as an overtly hostile site. On occasion, students note, a judgment is made about a campus based on a single incident. On the other hand, on some campuses students have complained that their local papers, including campus publications, have been “conspicuously silent on the serious issue of anti-Israel incidents that are presented in an anti-Semitic and vengeful manner.”⁹

What then is the reality? Was this yet another example of what Simon Rawidowicz described in his seminal essay, “Israel: The Ever-Dying People”: “The world has many images of Israel, but Israel has only one image of itself: that of an expiring people, forever on the verge of ceasing to be.” Rawidowicz pointed out that in virtually every generation since the time of the Mishna, the people Israel has considered itself “the final link in Israel’s chain. Each always saw before it the abyss ready to swallow it up.... Often it seems as if the overwhelming majority of our people go about driven by the panic of being the last.”¹⁰ This essay, written in the aftermath of the Holocaust, was a response to the overwhelming pessimism in the Jewish community at that time. Are we once again being unduly pessimistic? Or is it, indeed, a *sha’at dehak*, an ominous moment, as concerns the campus?

The most fitting answer to these questions might well be the punch line from the old Jewish joke: “You’re right, and you’re right too.” It is, indeed, the best of times. Never have Jewish students had so many opportunities for enjoying a vibrant Jewish life. Never have Jewish learning and Jewish living been so fully integrated into the American higher education experience. At the same time, when it comes to Israel-related activities and education about the contemporary situation in the Middle East, there are serious problems on the campus. These problems have spilled over, on occasion, into overt anti-Semitism and have made some students wary about openly expressing their Jewish identity.

The New Escalation in Hostility

Beginning in 2002, there was a serious escalation of overt hostility toward Israel and its defenders on some campuses. At San Francisco State University pro-Palestinian demonstrators confronted supporters of Israel attending a pro-Israel rally with catcalls and signs reading, “Go back to Russia,” “Get out or we will kill you,” and “Hitler did not finish the job.” In order to ensure their safety, campus police had to escort out the students attending the pro-Israel rally. Most chilling was the fact that, despite the entreaties of Prof. Laurie Zoloth, then director of Jewish studies at SFSU, “not one administrator came to stand” with the students. In a widely circulated e-mail sent on the day after the riot to SFSU faculty and administrators, Zoloth observed that “if a crowd of Palestinian or black students had been there, surrounded by a crowd of white racists screaming racist threats, shielded by police, the faculty and staff would have no trouble deciding which side to stand on.”¹¹ Zoloth’s description of events, which was probably one of the most widely forwarded e-mails on a topic of Jewish interest, sent a shudder through the Jewish community. This, after all, was not happening in France or Belgium but in the United States. Moreover, it was happening in San Francisco, whose Jewish community prides itself on its history of acceptance and total integration into the general community.

In September 2002 demonstrators at Montreal’s Concordia University smashed windows and hurled furniture to protest a scheduled speech by former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They burned Israeli flags, compared the Magen David to the swastika, and forced the speech to be cancelled. Around the same time at the student union of Wayne State University in Detroit, exhibits set up by those sympathetic to the Palestinian cause declared that “Israelis are the murderers of innocents” and “U.S. taxes to massacre Palestinians must stop.” During the summer of 2002, Colorado College made a rather strange choice to invite Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi to be the keynote speaker at an event commemorating 9/11.

While some observers are inclined to characterize places such as SFSU and Concordia as home to a decidedly leftist/extremist political weltanschauung, the same cannot be said of Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. In February 2005 the university was the site of a series of speakers about the “thirty-seven-year-old occupation” of Palestine. Among them was Malik Zulu Shabazz, leader of the New Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Though ostensibly present on campus to talk about “black empowerment in education,” he addressed black victimization, the crimes of white America, and the perfidy of the Jews. He was accompanied by several “security guards,” members of his own delegation, who, according to participants at the meeting, were dressed in paramilitary jumpsuits with berets and acted as if they were carrying out military drills. “They marched up and down the aisles, chanting and shouting.” Shabazz asserted that Moses “lifted” the Ten Commandments from the ancient Egyptians, the Anti-Defamation League was established by gangster Meyer Lansky to bring “illegal alcohol, dope and drugs” into America, blacks and not Israeli Jews are true Semites, Israel is a “terrorist” state, and Theodor Herzl has “blood on his hands.”

Shabazz seemed to have violated the university’s own by-laws, which prohibit incitement and intimidation, overt racism and threats, when he asked Jews in the audience—about a third of which was white—to identify themselves. When several raised their hands, he asked if they believed in Jesus, and when they said no, asked, “See, how can we accept you?” One young CMU faculty member described it as “the most terrifying thing I have ever experienced.” Some of the students were in tears.¹² The university’s director of student affairs denied that the Shabazz speech rose to the level of incitement, though he did call it “ugly.” He contended that the lecture series, as envisioned, “is committed to bringing in other perspectives and people of different views.” He then added, in a very ambiguous—if not outright distasteful—statement, that the Jewish community “must do the same.” In the view of this university administrator, the victims seemed to be at least partially guilty.

It was not only Jews who were disturbed by the events at CMU. Apparently some members of SPIRIT, the campus organization that brought Shabazz to the university, appeared at a campus Shabbat dinner and at a town hall meeting following the incident to apologize. (It is unclear how many students actually participated in this mea culpa, since SPIRIT has reportedly grown in size since this event.) In an apparent attempt to keep people from getting a misguided impression of the situation at CMU, the Hillel director stressed that this incident should not be used to characterize Jewish student life at the school. The event, he observed, occurred at the same time that CMU was becoming “a more attractive place” for Jews. It was, he said, an aberration from a normally warm climate.¹³ The CMU incident illustrates how easily a small group of activist students and a visitor with a vile modus operandi can hijack and alter

the atmosphere on a campus. It also demonstrates, as does the incident at SFU, that the locus of anti-Israelism on campus need not be in the classroom.

Another effort in the campus battle has been the Palestinian Solidarity Movement meetings, which have been held on various campuses since 2002, including Ohio State University, Michigan, Duke, and Rutgers. These meetings were marked by deeply anti-Israel, anti-Semitic speakers, and calls for violence.

The Divestiture from Israel Campaign

In addition to these violent outbreaks, there was an effort on a number of large campuses to compel the administration to divest their financial investments from Israel. This movement was clearly part of a larger strategy to depict Israel as an apartheid state. The petitioners, in an attempt to isolate Israel politically, socially, academically, and financially, utilized the same tactics that had prevailed during the campus campaign against South Africa, a campaign, analysts agree, that was a significant factor in helping to bring down the apartheid regime.¹⁴

While the campus campaign for divestiture from South Africa was successful, the Israel divestiture campaign has not had any successes thus far. As of this writing, no campus has agreed to divest and, generally, petitions against divestiture have garnered far more signatures than those for it.¹⁵ (It is possible that, if certain mainline churches that are considering divestiture adopt this position, the campus campaign will be greatly revitalized.) University and college presidents have spoken out in opposition to the campaign, identifying it as not only unfair but inherently anti-Semitic. In September 2002, shortly after the Concordia event and while the debate over divestiture was raging on his campus, Harvard president Larry Summers, observed that “profoundly anti-Israel views are increasingly finding support in progressive intellectual communities. Serious and thoughtful people are advocating and taking actions that are anti-Semitic in their effect if not their intent.” Summers added an important observation about the evolution of his own feelings, which caused some people, including those who were not inclined to pay too much attention to developments on campus, to reassess their conclusions.

I have always throughout my life been put off by those who heard the sound of breaking glass, in every insult or slight, and conjured up images of Hitler’s Kristallnacht at any disagreement with Israel. Such views have always seemed to me alarmist if not slightly hysterical. But I have to say that while they still seem to me unwarranted, they seem rather less alarmist in the world of today than they did a year ago.¹⁶

When the president of Harvard expresses such alarm and acknowledges how recent events have made him change his assessment, it is worth taking notice. Echoing Summers, Columbia president Lee Bollinger announced that Columbia would “not lend any support to this proposal” that it divest from Israel. He also described the Israel-South Africa comparison as “both grotesque and offensive.” In an independent statement, Barnard president Judith Shapiro voiced similar sentiments.¹⁷ Though the campus campaign for divestiture has not succeeded in its ostensive goal, some astute observers have noted that the effort need not be successful in order to succeed. It has helped create the illusion that Israel and apartheid-era South Africa are morally equivalent. (This perception is buttressed by the fact that critics of Israel, both within the classroom and outside of it, are often inclined to use the term “apartheid” in connection with the Jewish state.) That the divestiture campaign has been picked up by mainline liberal Christian churches indicates that it may have already succeeded.

Efforts to Delegitimize Israel in the Classroom

These various public protests and outbreaks of violence have received the lion’s share of public attention. Far less notice has been focused on the classroom situation, at least until the release last year of *Columbia Unbecoming*, a film on Columbia University. In fact, it could be argued that what goes on in the classroom should be a matter of far greater concern than what happens in extra-curricular settings. The recent campus-based campaign to delegitimize Israel may well be a spillover, at least in part, from what has been going on inside the classroom for years. People close to the situation, including many Jewish studies professors on campus, have long known that courses taught on their campuses about the Middle East have often been overtly slanted against the Israeli position. (For example, the imbalance of the materials and activities of the Middle East Center at the University of Washington was already a problem when I was on the faculty there in the late 1970s.) Instructors in some, though certainly not all, Middle East departments and centers have introduced blatantly anti-Israel material into their courses and have used the courses as a means of indoctrination as opposed to education.

Sometimes an imbalanced critique of Israel seeps into courses whose main focus is not the Middle East or the Arab-Israeli crisis. For example, in an international relations course at a large Southern public university, a study sheet declared that America’s relationship with Israel was a “major reason” for the September 11 attacks.¹⁸ Jewish students who are enrolled in classes that discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict often find themselves not only on the defensive, feeling unwelcome and beset, but encountering terms such as “racist,” “apartheid,” and “ethnic cleansing” in relation to Israel. (It

should be noted, however, that some of their discomfort may emanate from the fact that this is the first time they have been exposed to views critical of Israel from a teacher or lecturer, and they are simply unprepared to respond.)

This situation provides an important caveat to my earlier observation about the campus being a locus of various opportunities for the strengthening and reinforcement of students' Jewish identity. Students at schools such as Columbia and Berkeley find those campuses easy places to be Jewish. They can choose from a myriad of Jewish studies classes, varieties of kosher food options, and a vast array of films, lectures, and performances related to Jewish topics. However, students on these same campuses have observed that when they openly proclaim themselves to be Zionists or express strong support of Israel, the comfortable atmosphere can evaporate or markedly lessen, and they will encounter hostility.

Arab interests with a seemingly anti-Semitic and anti-Israel agenda have tried in various ways to have an impact on the campus. This broke out into the open a few years ago when a group of Harvard Divinity School students demanded that Harvard return a \$2.5 million gift from Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, ruler of the United Arab Emirates, because of activities funded by a think tank established in the sheikh's name and funded by him. The Zayed Centre had published a book claiming that the American government masterminded the September 11 attacks, featured a lecture by a Saudi professor who claimed that Jews use gentile blood for holiday pastries, and hosted Holocaust deniers. The *Los Angeles Times* quoted the Centre's director as saying "Jews are the enemies of all nations." Zayed and his wife financed the defense of Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy. Harvard finally returned the money. Columbia University, which also had received a substantial gift from the United Arab Emirates, of which Zayed is officially the president, for the funding of the Edward Said Chair, has not done so.

Arab governments, the Saudis in particular, have exerted a sometimes subtle influence on how material relating to the Middle East is taught.¹⁹ The Saudis have been particularly effective in introducing curricular materials into not only university but elementary and secondary school classrooms. Under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, select universities are declared national resource centers for the study of places and languages that the American government considers to be vital for the country's security and welfare. These centers disseminate teaching materials to schools in their region. Many of the materials disseminated come directly from the Saudi government and, according to those who have studied them, not only denigrate democratic institutions, but clearly favor Islam over Christianity and Judaism.

An example of slanted curricular materials is the *Arab World Studies Notebook*, a high school teachers guide that, according to those who created it, is designed to cor-

rect misperceptions about Islam and the Arab world. But, in fact, it does the opposite, referring to Israel as Palestine, and denying Jewish historic ties to Jerusalem. Sandra Stotsky, a former senior associate commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Education, examined these materials and concluded that the *Notebook* was not a scholarly work, but “a piece of propaganda.” According to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency article, the publication is still being used at teacher-training seminars coordinated by some of the national resource centers, including those at Georgetown, Harvard, and Yale.²⁰

Even in classes having nothing to do with the Middle East, the prevailing consensus seems to be that Israel is wrong; the question is precisely how wrong. Political views on most American campuses tend toward the left. On occasion not just Israel’s policies are criticized—something done daily in the pages of *Ha’aretz*—but Israel itself is subjected to vitriolic criticism and depicted as an oppressor of indigenous peoples and an opponent of freedom. It is often lumped together with the most diabolical regimes.

Let me stress, once again, that, as the Hillel representative told the senators, this kind of browbeating is not the experience of the vast majority of Jewish students on campus. Most are not activists, particularly on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and most do not take a course on the topic. (Of course, they may choose not to take such courses because they have been told by their peers that these courses are inhospitable settings for students with a sympathetic view of Israel.) But they are exposed to a general consensus on the campus that Israel is in the wrong.

To be intellectually honest and rigorous, any course relating to the politics of the Middle East and/or the Arab-Israeli conflict should include a wide range of material, including some that is highly critical of Israel. If, however, that type of material is included, the course should also include material from a diametrically opposed perspective. So, too, if a course teaches about the shortcomings of Israeli society, it should also address the shortcomings of Arab societies.

The Controversy at Columbia

The question of the creation of an atmosphere in the classroom where the student feels frightened and intimidated came to a head this past fall with the release of a film on Columbia University by the David Project. Columbia students in some Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures (MEALAC) courses complained about feeling intimidated in the classroom and fearful about confronting their professors. Some students in MEALAC classes who introduced views that dissented from those of their professors—i.e., a pro-Israel view—felt themselves intellectually intimidated and in

some cases harassed and abused for their views.²¹ The students also felt that there was no place for them to go to seek redress for their objections.

It cannot be stressed strongly enough that students, whether at Columbia or elsewhere, do *not* have a right to a classroom where their views will not be challenged. They do not have a right to be exposed only to views that reaffirm their existing opinions. However, they *do* have a right to learn about a topic in a balanced manner and in an atmosphere that supports open dialogue.

Columbia's response to the public controversy about the situation on its campus has been somewhat clumsy. Most particularly, it gave the committee designated to investigate the situation an exceptionally narrow mandate, one that made the conclusion the committee reached virtually predictable. Even the *New York Times*, a paper that, ironically, many of those critical of the situation at Columbia do not revere, found the mandate given to the panel severely lacking. The *Times* editorialized:

But in the end, the report is deeply unsatisfactory because the panel's mandate was so limited. Most student complaints were not really about intimidation, but about allegations of stridently pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli bias on the part of several professors. The panel had no mandate to examine the quality and fairness of teaching. That leaves the university to follow up on complaints about politicized courses and a lack of scholarly rigor as part of its effort to upgrade the department. One can only hope that Columbia will proceed with more determination and care than it has heretofore.²²

Those who were disturbed by the sometimes hyperbolic criticism of Columbia have argued that, even before this issue became public, the university had put MEALAC into academic receivership, essentially stripping members of the department of any control over its internal affairs. The university was, these observers note, already committed to taking care of the problem through standard channels. Therefore, a broader mandate for the committee would have only created more problems. In addition, in the wake of the controversy, Columbia has announced the creation of a chair in Israel studies and the implementation of a grievance process. Some critics of Columbia have complained about the makeup of the search committee entrusted with finding an occupant for the chair in Israel studies. They have accused members of the committee of having anti-Israel views. In contrast, others—including the provost of Columbia University—have noted, not without some justification, that a candidate chosen by a committee, all of whose members were seen as sympathizers with Israel, would have very little credibility in the broader campus community.

Other Venues of the Campus Wars

Irrespective of how one feels about the Columbia situation, equally egregious incidents have occurred at other universities. In fact, students from the University of California at Irvine to Sarah Lawrence College have complained to their peers about being subjected in the classroom to criticisms of Israel, many of which are blatantly one-sided—that is to say, the Israeli perspective is sorely lacking. Students acknowledge that they feel intellectually intimidated—it is not easy taking on a teacher—and anxious about receiving a bad grade.²³

Though classroom developments are generally shielded from public view, sometimes they inadvertently become public. At the University of California at Berkeley this happened when the description for an English Department reading and composition course, English R1A: “The Politics and Poetics of Palestinian Resistance,” informed students that the class would address “the brutal Israeli military occupation of Palestine that has been ongoing since 1948.” While such a description was one-sided and left no illusions of any balance, the instructor added a shocking addendum to the course description. He warned students contemplating enrolling in the class that “conservative thinkers are encouraged to seek other sections.” The Berkeley Academic Senate Committee on Courses of Instruction, which has authority to take final action on all matters relating to courses, approved this particular course.²⁴

When word of this course became public, a hail of criticism was directed at the university. The university, aware that such a course description violated the most basic notions of the academic code of conduct, which specifies that “courses [must] not exclude or discourage qualified students on grounds other than lack of preparation,” called on the English Department to “immediately revise” the course description. It was rather revealing that when UC Berkeley issued a background statement and fact sheet on this incident, it began by noting that “English R1A is one of 12,700 courses offered annually, including many other courses in Middle Eastern and Jewish studies.” It was unclear whether the university was suggesting that the fact that it offers an array of Jewish studies classes somehow mitigates the egregiousness of this incident or whether it was suggesting that these courses are also imbalanced.²⁵

Chancellor Robert Berdahl, who described the situation as a “failure of oversight,” expressed his satisfaction that the English Department was “acting immediately to remedy it.” The chancellor declared: “[I]t is imperative that our classrooms be free of indoctrination—indoctrination is not education. Classrooms must be places in which an open environment prevails and where students are free to express their views.”²⁶ It is illuminating that the instructor assumed that his original description would pass muster in the department. This could well be indicative of the general

weltanschauung on that campus or, at least in the English Department, concerning Israel.

Ultimately, the description was revised and, in an unusual act, a faculty member, Professor Steven Goldsmith, was assigned to sit in on the class. The revised description was exceptionally long and appeared to be the product of careful negotiations reminiscent of those about the shape of the U.S.-Vietnamese negotiating table in the 1970s. One critic described it as sounding as if it had been written by people who turned themselves into “intellectual pretzels” in order to sound “even-handed.” It read:

This is a course on Palestinian resistance poetry. It takes as its point of departure the Palestinian literature that has developed since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which has displaced, maimed, and killed many Palestinian people. The Israeli military occupation of historic Palestine has caused unspeakable suffering. Since the occupation, Palestinians have been fighting for their right to exist. And yet, from under the weight of this occupation, Palestinians have produced their own culture and poetry of resistance. This class will examine the history of the Palestinian resistance and the way that it is narrated by Palestinians. This class takes as its starting point the right of Palestinians to fight for their own self-determination.

Discussions about the literature will focus on several intersecting themes: how are Palestinian artists able to imagine art under the occupation; what consequences does resistance have on the character of the art that is produced (i.e., why are there so few Palestinian epics and plays and comedies); can one represent the Israeli occupation in art; what is the difference between political art and propaganda and how do the debates about those terms inflect the production of literature; how do poems represent the desire to escape and the longing for home simultaneously (alternatively, how do poems represent the nation without a state); what consequence do political debates have on formal innovations and their reproduction; and what are the obligations of artists in representing the occupation.

This 1A course offers students frequent practice in a variety of forms of discourse leading toward exposition and argumentation in common standard English. The course aims at continuing to develop the students’ practical fluency with sentence, paragraph and thesis-development skills but with increasingly complex applications.²⁷

Apparently, the situation ended there. However, it could legitimately be argued that any instructor who had the temerity to include in a course description a cautionary note that people with particular political views should “seek other sections” was a priori disqualified as an appropriate instructor for this or, for that matter, any other

course. It is hard to imagine that such an individual could maintain the “open environment” for which the chancellor called. In short, the problem was not simply with the course description, but with the instructor, who, it should be noted, spoke no Arabic, the language of the literature that he was going to teach in translation. He seemed to have no specific qualifications for teaching this course except for his political proclivities. This was far more than a “lack of oversight.” Significantly, this episode occurred in the English Department, not a department concerned with the Middle East, indicating the ubiquitous nature of the situation.

At Boston University, a young woman in a political science class on the Middle East was asked by her professor, who had already taken exception to her views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, what school she had attended. When she cited the name of a prominent Jewish day school, he laughed and said, “Oh, a *madrassa*.”²⁸

We do not know just how widespread this situation is. There may be students who believed a teacher was being unbalanced and engaging in propaganda when the teacher was simply expressing a view that the student had never encountered before *panim el panim*, face to face. It may be that the student did not know how to voice an objection or was frightened about doing so. Sometimes, as some Hillel directors have reported, students only recognize long after a class session, when they have come to the director for a reality check, that the material presented was one-sided, if not simply incorrect.

This kind of unbalanced criticism that results in student intimidation can occur in classes that have no connection whatsoever to the Middle East. For example, in a University of Chicago art history class the professor, according to one of the students in the class, frequently engaged in attacks on “colonial oppression,” with particular emphasis on Israel. The student, who wore a *kippa*, said that two Arab students began to sit near him and follow him out of the classroom. Irrespective of their motives, he felt physically intimidated. His father, a professor at a major university, acknowledged that his son “does not panic easily, but he was afraid. He was prepared to engage new and challenging ideas; he was not prepared for threats of physical violence.” The student turned to the university administration and reportedly did find a willingness to address his charges.²⁹

When Criticism Becomes Blatant Anti-Semitism

This campaign extends well beyond Israel’s policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians. It has frequently evolved into an attack on Israel’s very existence and involved blatant anti-Semitism. While both are serious, the latter has a more global impact on students’ lives. Over the past three years increasing numbers of students have reported that they

feel a certain discomfort “simply being who they are.” Some have reported a reluctance to wear *kippot* in public or to build a *sukkah* in a public place on campus. Others have acknowledged feeling a bit uncomfortable attending Jewish functions that are held in open sites, as many campus events are.³⁰

The danger of the ongoing anti-Israel campaign is multifaceted. A generation of young people—both Jews and non-Jews—may well be exposed to slanted views on the Middle East. Another danger is that the campaign against Israel will—as it already has—spilled over into the general community.³¹

There are a number of factors that seem to have combined to produce what might be considered a “perfect storm.” The American college campus is an overwhelmingly liberal venue. Since the collapse of the Oslo accords and the beginning of the second intifada, Israel has been depicted in much of the press as the “oppressor,” the Goliath poised against a miniscule downtrodden David. This is precisely the image that will appeal to faculty and students, many of whom have little knowledge of the Middle East situation. There is a natural sympathy on campus for the putative underdog. Many students—and their teachers—assume that since Israel, a militarily strong nation, is poised against the far weaker Palestinians, it must, ipso facto, be in the wrong. This depiction has a particularly strong resonance on the campus, where there is a general sentiment that the status quo concerning everything from America’s foreign policy to the condition of the environment can be changed for the better.

Moreover, Israel’s close alliance with the American government is seen as a negative. This has become particularly problematic during the administration of George W. Bush, who is generally a reviled figure on campus. (America’s alliance with Israel was less of a problematic factor on campus during the Clinton administration.) The fact that on many campuses anti-globalization sentiments are quite strong contributes to Israel’s negative image, out of the conviction that Israel, as a close ally of the most powerful global power, is in the wrong. A student from the University of Illinois at Urbana observed, “It’s hard to combat the Palestinian message: ‘If you’re with us, you’re for freedom; if you’re against us, you’re for oppression.’”³²

Initial Responses

An important step was taken when former Dartmouth president James O. Freedman and Brandeis president Jehuda Reinharz, concerned by the type of harassment that has manifested itself at places such as SFSU, led an effort to get a broad range of past and current presidents of North American universities to issue a statement affirming the responsibility of university presidents to maintain an intimidation-free campus. They succeeded in getting over 300 presidents to sign.

This, however, is not the entire story of the statement. Kenneth Stern, program specialist in anti-Semitism and extremism for the American Jewish Committee, who helped with the administrative coordination of the statement, described the process of gathering the signatures as an “education in itself.”³³ A number of potential signers refused to do so unless specific mention was made of harassment of Arab and Muslim students. This demand was made, despite the fact that the declaration spoke of the right of “all” students to study in an intimidation-free environment. Moreover, violence—including death threats—was being directed only at Jewish and Zionist students, and it was these incidents that were the impetus for the statement. This demand for “symmetry” or “moral equivalencies” suggested that, for those making the demand, anti-Semitism could only be mentioned if it were contextualized. One could safely posit that, if the harassment in question concerned students of color or gay students, it is doubtful that anyone would have thought it necessary to contextualize “racism.” The statement seemed to suggest a “philosophical hurdle” for some presidents, Stern observed. They were glued to “even-handedness” in the conflict, so much so that they could not decry anti-Semitism without, in the same breath, berating anti-Muslim behavior. Unless anti-Semitism were linked to other hatreds, “it didn’t really matter.” As Stern wrote after the incident: “Why then the reluctance to mention anti-Semitic death threats, uncoupled with any other form of bigotry, as a sufficient reason to articulate a commitment to maintain a campus open to ideas and closed to thuggery?”³⁴

Regarding the Palestine Solidarity Movement’s annual meetings, there has been a shift in strategy. Initially some individuals in the Jewish community called on the host universities to cancel the meetings. There were, however, no grounds for doing so—expressing anti-Semitic views is not illegal—and this is the kind of action that most universities would be highly reluctant to take. Moreover, it would have rendered the PSM a martyr for the cause of free speech.³⁵ When the PSM meeting was held at Duke, opponents came up with a far more constructive strategy. They asked the campus community, including the university leadership, to join them in denouncing expressions of bigotry, condemning the murder of innocent civilians, supporting a two-state solution, and calling for all parties to engage in respectful discourse. It was exactly the kind of statement that people on campus would feel comfortable and positive about signing. It was noteworthy that the PSM refused to support the statement.

In another approach to the issue of what is taught in the classroom about the Middle East, Brandeis University has established a summer seminar to train professors from around the country to introduce courses on modern Israel at their respective campuses. This initiative is sponsored by Brandeis University, with the support of the American Jewish Committee. This NEH-style seminar does not preach a particular political point of view and works within the professors’ respective disciplines.

It is also possible to utilize the strengths that already exist on a campus to educate other educators, sometimes reaching beyond those on the college campus. For example, Emory University's Institute for the Study of Modern Israel has established a summer program for high school and middle school teachers. It provides a foundation for teaching about the entire spectrum of modern Israel—not just the political conflict. The workshop addresses the fact that many students—including Jewish students educated at Jewish schools—arrive on campus with little sophisticated background on Israel.

Strategic Guidelines: Some Preliminary Thoughts

What might these initiatives teach us about how to address this situation? The efforts that have been successful recognize that universities have their own unique modus operandi and rules of engagement. It is important that those seeking to rectify the imbalances on campus be sensitive to them. If they are not, their protests might be not only unsuccessful, but, in fact, counterproductive. When entering into conversation with a university community, a few guidelines are helpful.

1. Protestors must speak in language to which the university resonates. That is why the Duke statement expressing opposition to bigotry, violence, and, of course, murder and in support of respectful dialogue was successful. So, too, a university community will resonate to the notion that professors must refrain from using their classrooms as platforms for advocating particular political views.
2. Do not make demands that violate a university's standard operating procedures, such as asking that a certain professor be fired for what he has said, particularly if he said it outside the classroom.³⁶
3. Do not ask the university to bar a group from meeting on the campus unless it is engaged in illegal activity. In most cases, campus meetings are sponsored or hosted by a local campus student group. Therefore, the university administration, in making such a request, would be telling a student group, your right to free speech is limited.
4. Do, however, ask university presidents or provosts to use that same right of free speech to condemn blatant anti-Semitism or invitations issued to speakers with a history of anti-Semitism, racism, or calls for violence.
5. Recognize that universities are loath to appear as if they are "caving" in to powerful external interest groups and consequently feel compelled, on principle, to stand their ground.

6. Help students understand their right to an intimidation-free environment in the classroom, one that leaves space for the expression of differing views.

7. Help students understand their right to a grievance process when they encounter intimidating situations in the classroom.³⁷

8. Understand that there is a difference between views that students do not like or with which they do not agree and nonscholarly, imbalanced opinions or vitriolic propaganda. Students cannot expect a class to simply reaffirm their preexisting views of a situation.

9. Support the establishment of chairs and programs in Israel studies. Such efforts should not be made to address the issue of imbalance, but because these are topics worth teaching.³⁸

10. Calls for the appointment of pro-Israel professors are not only counterproductive, but contrary to the mission of the university. Should such professors be appointed, they might be seen as political hacks or beholden to “external interests.” Consequently they would have little, if any, credibility on campus.

11. Occupants of chairs in Israel studies should be neither advocates nor spokespersons for a particular point of view. As Professor Ron Zweig, an occupant of a chair in Israeli history at New York University, recently noted: “This job is not about advocacy; it’s about scholarship. I will not justify Israeli policy as part of my job; neither will I criticize it as part of my job. My goal is to make the students think, not tell them what to think. I’m glad when students walk away from my class feeling that I’ve had respect for their views. That’s an obligation of professors. We have a mantle of authority, and it is scandalous for us to exploit this position in order to propagate our own views.”³⁹ This should be the standard for occupants of positions in both Israel and Middle Eastern studies.

12. The optimal locale for positions and chairs on the Middle East conflict is a Middle East department or program. If these chairs and graduate student fellowships are not in the Middle Eastern studies department, the study of Israel is essentially ghettoized. Since Israel as an academic topic is central to much of Jewish history and Jewish studies, it makes sense that these chairs have some connection or affiliation with Jewish studies.

13. University officials must be made aware of curricular imbalance. Doing so might, in turn, help them understand why there is a need for the appointment of more professors who have a balanced view of the situation and who will, in turn, train Ph.D. students with more balanced perspectives.

14. Endowed chairs in Israel studies are far more effective if they are accompanied by funds for graduate fellowships. This will ensure the creation of a new generation of teachers and policymakers.

15. Jewish studies professors (remember the “good news” discussed at the outset of this paper) could be a resource for addressing some of these problems. How best to galvanize them is something that must be very carefully thought out. They will—and rightfully so—object to being “used” to spout what they consider to be a “party line.” All professors are, by their very nature, fiercely independent. Moreover, Jewish studies professors have the same range of political views evident on the rest of the campus. However, they share a fierce commitment to the need for an intimidation-free environment and respond strongly to anti-Semitic aspersions.

16. Most Jewish studies professors have studied at one point or another in Israel. They recognize the vast resources Israel and its universities have to offer in most areas of Jewish studies. They can be important advocates against travel bans imposed by many universities on study in Israel. They can be particularly effective in cases where these bans have been imposed in a selective fashion.

17. Demonstrate how the attacks on Israel and an overtly anti-Israel environment on campus have on occasion morphed into outright anti-Semitism, as was the case at Carnegie Mellon in February 2005.

18. Be careful how your protests are worded. Protests that spread incorrect information—particularly in today’s Internet age—can be counterproductive. A widely circulated e-mail regarding the Palestine Solidarity Movement said that the president of Rutgers had kicked them off campus because of their extremist views. Protestors demanded that other university presidents emulate his actions. The problem was that he did not kick them off campus.

19. Condemnations and protests by people who have no connection to a university can be barriers to solution. For example, when Emory University invited Mary Robinson, former UN high commissioner for human rights, to be its commencement speaker, many students on campus were very disturbed. They circulated a petition condemning this action. The petition was soon all over the Internet. People were urged—by individuals with no connection to Emory—to gather thousands of signatures to “force” the university to cancel the invitation. Upon reviewing the petition, the president of the university immediately noticed that the vast majority of the signers were not connected to Emory. University administrators wondered whether there was real opposition on campus or it was more a matter of outside agitation.⁴⁰

20. Sometimes, public protests and demands made in the media only prompt university administrators to dig in their heels and stand their ground. Quiet diplomacy, based on facts and substantive information which speak to the fact that the classroom must be a propaganda-free environment, is often the most efficacious approach, despite the fact that this is a strategy that many organizations and leaders eschew. (Many Jews dislike this approach because it smacks of the *sha-shtill* Jews of previous generations who were fearful of speaking out.)

21. Ensure that students who wish to engage in this political battle are equipped with more than “romantic,” simplistic notions of Israel and its history. Expose them to the full range of opinions currently voiced in Israel. Do not expect them to engage in *hasbara* (Israeli official public relations).

22. Recognize that even within the Jewish community—and certainly among Israelis—there is a wide variety of political views. Do not let the conversation be limited to those with only one view. In fact, those on the progressive or left end of the spectrum often have more credibility on the campus at large and can build bridges to other groups.⁴¹

These are only some preliminary suggestions. The situation must be thought about in a strategic fashion. The stakes of this battle are exceptionally high. As the current debate about divestiture in the mainline churches indicates, campus debates can migrate to the larger community. Finally, the students on campus are not only the next generation of voters. They will be the policymakers and opinion molders in both the Jewish and the general community. They *are* the future.

Notes

1. Amy I. Sales and Leonard Saxe, *Engaging the Intellect: Jewish Studies on the College Campus*, <http://www.cmjs.org/index.cfm?page=229&IDResearch=106>. Synopsis in *Contact*, Winter 2005, pp. 5-6, available at http://www.jewishlife.org/pdf/winter_2005.pdf.

2. For the findings on children of intermarried couples, see Paul Beck, *A Flame Still Burns: The Dimensions and Determinants of Jewish Identity Among Young Adult Children of the Intermarried: Findings and Policy Implications*, Jewish Outreach Institute, June 2005, <http://www.joi.org/bloglinks/Children%20of%20Intermarriage%20Identity%20Study.doc> This study, it should be noted, was extremely limited, and the participants were not chosen at random.

3. University administrators increasingly recognize that the presence of a strong Hillel is an attraction to Jewish applicants. Admissions officers at various universities relate that it has become increasingly common for potential applicants to inquire about Jewish life on campus.

4. Ruth Contreras, Judith Jacobson, Edward S. Beck, “Position Paper on Antisemitism in Academia,”

<http://www.spme.net/antisemitism.html>. This statement was adopted by the board of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East in March 2003.

5. Ismail Khald, "The Bedouin Activist," Oct. 24, 2004, at http://www.aish.com/jewishissues/jewishociety/The_Bedouin_Activist.asp.

6. Phyllis Chesler, "The Global Intifada," *FrontPageMagazine.com*, March 10, 2005, at <http://www.front-pagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=17318>.

7. Feb. 7, 2005, *Ha'aretz*.

8. Ori Nir, "Welcome to Washington," *Forward*, April 4, 2003.

9. Howard Fremeth, "The new antisemitism—and is it really on campus?" *Peak* (student newspaper of Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, B.C.), Nov. 22, 2004.

10. Simon Rawidowicz, in Benjamin Ravid, ed., *Israel: The Ever-Dying People* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 1986).

11. At www.jewishsf.org/israel/crisis/stories/sfsurually-lettermay2002.asp.

12. Steven Vincent, "Jews and Honkeys Need Not Apply," *FrontPageMagazine.com*, April 8, 2005.

13. Lee Chottiner, "Anti-Israel rhetoric is on the rise in Pittsburgh; students are uneasy," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/news/usnews/?disp_feature=y_PUAQ_var.

14. In 1985 Columbia student protests, including a twenty-two-day blockade of Hamilton Hall, resulted in Columbia's divestment from South Africa.

15. At Columbia, the divestiture petition garnered 537 signatures, while the counter-petition received 24,820 signatures, of which, more significantly, 384 were faculty members and 1,429 were students. *Columbia Spectator*, Nov. 11, 2002, at <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2002/11/12/3dd0d124e2648>.

16. Lawrence H. Summers, Address at morning prayers, Memorial Church, Cambridge, Sept. 17, 2002, at <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2002/morningprayers.html>.

17. *Columbia Spectator*, Nov. 11, 2002.

18. Kenneth W. Stein, "Israel Education and the College Campus: Awake ye from ye Slumber, the Call that is Heard, Oh my People," *Agenda: Jewish Education 18* (Winter 2004).

19. Martin S. Kramer, *Ivory Towers in the Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001).

20. "Tainted Teachings," Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 27, 2005; American Jewish Committee, *Propaganda, Proselytizing, and Public Education: A Critique of the Arab World Studies Notebook* (New York: AJC, 2005).

21. Memo from Rachel Fish, Nov. 11, 2005.

22. *New York Times*, April 7, 2005.

23. Rebecca Kahn, "What We Are Facing in the Campus Wars," *New York Jewish Week*, March 11, 2005.

24. It is unclear, however, whether it had seen a description of the course when it approved it.

25. At <http://www.berkeley.edu/news/mideast/classfacts.html>.

26. *Ibid.*

27. The Politics and Poetics of Palestinian Resistance, UC Berkeley, Dept. of English, Course Number: English R1A LEC 4 Units, Fall 2002, Instructor: Shingavi, Snehal, Course Control Number: 28448 at <http://www.ucop.edu/pres/comments/palcourse.pdf>.

28. This incident was related to me, when it occurred, by the student herself.

29. HF: HILLEL-FACULTY, Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2005.

30. Based on a conversation with Kenneth Stern, program specialist on anti-Semitism and extremism for the American Jewish Committee, May 2005.

31. While the divestment campaign has, thus far, failed on campus, it has gained traction in a number of mainline churches. This may well be considered indicative of how a particular position does not have to win in order to nonetheless win.

32. Rebecca Kahn, "What We Are Facing," *op.cit.*

33. Private conversation with Stern.

34. Kenneth Stern, "Jewish Staffer Provides Glimpse into Origins of Recent Campus Ad," *op-ed*, Jewish

Telegraphic Agency, Oct. 14, 2004.

35. In a similar vein, I have long argued against the use of law to silence Holocaust deniers. It only makes them martyrs to the cause of free speech and wins them sympathy from people who would not otherwise sympathize with them.

36. Such was the case when a New York politician “demanded” that Columbia fire Joseph Massad. This accomplished little except make Massad appear to be the victim. It might, however, have satisfied the politician’s constituency.

37. In the early days of the struggle for women’s rights, *Ms.* magazine used to devote a section to small anecdotes describing undeniably sexist behavior. Each incident was accompanied by the word “click.” The aim was to help women recognize sexism, i.e., to make it “click” for them. So, too, students sometimes “miss” the anti-Semitic intent of a remark or statement.

38. To support Israel studies only because of “imbalance” is akin to supporting Holocaust studies only because of deniers.

39. Sam Freedman, “Israel Studies: One Solution to Classroom Bias,” *World Jewish Digest*, Nov. 2005, at http://www.jewishbroadcasting.tv/wjd/current_issue.html.

40. Eventually the university took the initiative to organize a private meeting with Robinson three weeks before graduation. Students and faculty who had expressed reservations about her being honored at graduation were invited to meet with her to express their views of Durban and to challenge her about her failure to prevent the gathering from becoming a hotbed of anti-Semitic expression. The university leadership adroitly worded her honorary degree so that it stressed her many accomplishments other than Durban. At the graduation she condemned the ferocious anti-Semitism that had characterized so much of the Durban meeting and did so without contextualizing or engaging in any form of symmetry.

41. Students should use every opportunity to find conversation partners across the political spectrum. On various campuses, a broad range of student groups and university departments have banded together in relation to the genocide in the Sudan. There may be an opportunity for students involved in this process to find conversation partners.

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Keeping Things in Perspective

Samuel G. Freedman

One night last winter, I attended a reunion of participants in the birthright israel program. The agenda was far from social and sentimental. The hundred or so college students and recent graduates watched a showing of the film *Columbia Unbecoming*, an advocacy documentary alleging that several professors in the Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Culture had used their classes to promote the Palestinian cause, denigrate Israel, and intimidate any students who disagreed. Because I teach at Columbia, in the Graduate School of Journalism, and also perhaps because I am known around the campus community to be an actively affiliated Jew and a Zionist, I had been invited to offer a response after the screening.

I told the audience that, although I had little firsthand knowledge of the incidents described in the film, I had little reason to doubt the essential accuracy of it. I mentioned that I had met one of the key students in the controversy, Ariel Beery, at a purely social Shabbat dinner a few weeks earlier and had been impressed by his background, which included peace work in Gaza with Hashomer Hatzair during the “Oslo” period. He clearly was not a right-wing zealot stirring up a brouhaha for ideological gain. All these comments of mine were respectfully received.

Then I went on to say that it was vital not to view Columbia as inherently hostile to Jews, regardless of the severity of the situation in MEALAC. I spoke about the neighborhood synagogue I attend, Ramath Orah, which is thronged with Columbia and Barnard students for *kabbalat Shabbat* (Friday evening services). I described the strong and visible presence of observant students, many educated in day schools, strolling the campus in *kippot*, doing laps around the indoor running track with *tzitzit* out. These observations of mine were echoed by my fellow speaker and journalism professor, Ari Goldman, and by several Columbia undergrads and alumni in the crowd.

Yet when the time came for questions and answers, members of the audience challenged our perception of the Columbia scene. How could we be so naïve? Didn't we know this was how trouble for Jews started recently in England and France? Wasn't it like this in Germany early in the Nazi era? How could we miss all the warning signs?

When I followed up with several of the skeptics, they acknowledged they were not from Columbia. We had convened just fifty blocks south of the campus, but we might as well have been thousands of miles away. Indeed, I had been fielding lots of

anxious e-mail from Israeli friends and scholars, and was trying with similar futility to persuade them, too, that while the bias at MEALAC seemed to me pernicious and real, we weren't hunched under the table in expectation of a pogrom.

Inflating the Stakes

The inability of many Jews outside Columbia to keep the MEALAC case in proper perspective—the passionate insistence on inflating the risks and the stakes—may have led to a short-term gain, but holds the potential of leading to a longer-term loss. In the immediate moment, it is true, the sheer volume of media attention and advocacy-group pressure ensured that the university would not sweep aside the students' concerns, as it had in the past. After having moved slowly in the earlier stages of the conflict, Columbia's president, Lee Bollinger, acted decisively, however belatedly. He put MEALAC into a kind of academic receivership, emasculating the department by taking away its right to hire faculty. He delivered a bold, eloquent speech to the New York Bar Association articulating what was essentially the contention of Ariel Beery and his fellow students—that just as there is academic freedom for professors not to be censored in expressing their political views, there must be academic freedom for students not to be belittled and humiliated for voicing their own.

Bollinger appointed a faculty committee to investigate the charges made in *Columbia Unbecoming*. And even though the composition of that body seemed to augur for a whitewash—it included several members who had signed petitions for university divestment from Israel and the dissertation adviser for one of the professors at issue, Joseph Massad—the committee in the end confirmed the essence of the allegations. In the obtuse language of academia, a panel of would-be apologists was forced by the weight of evidence to ratify one particular allegation against Massad: that he had threatened to kick out of class a student who disputed his version of Israeli atrocities against Palestinians. Moreover, the committee recommended setting up grievance procedures so that, in the future, wronged students would not be funneled straight to the departmental colleagues of the offending professors, as had been the case with Beery and the others.

When the committee's report was released, a great deal of media coverage and Jewish commentary misguidedly focused on the fact that the document confirmed just a single incident. But any close reading of the report makes it clear that the committee was using that episode to send a broader message. Anything doesn't go anymore. Columbia is sick of having outside groups air its dirty laundry. It is no wonder that Joseph Massad and the pro-Palestinian faction of the Columbia faculty denounced the report; they could very well decipher its encoded meaning. And it is to the credit of the

American Jewish Committee that it embraced the report's findings.

Hijacking the Case

Having said all this, why, then, do I worry about a long-term loss? The reason is that the kind of full frontal assault that worked once is not likely to work again. No institution welcomes being attacked from outside and being falsely maligned, in Columbia's case as a hotbed of anti-Semitism. A defensive backlash is bound to set in. In addition, elements of the Jewish community seized on the MEALAC case, for reasons of their own, so much so that at times it was easy to forget there was one and only one issue at stake: Did professors encroach upon the academic freedom of their students? Period.

Never did the hijacking of the cause become more sadly clear than in a March conference on the affair called by several Israel advocacy groups. After speakers such as the author Phyllis Chesler launched into roundhouse denunciations of Palestinians, or Arabs in general, Ariel Beery took to the microphone to disassociate himself from the statements. He was heckled and booed. Think about that: The young man who endangered his academic career by going public with the charges, and who coalesced and led the student activists on the issue, was shouted down because he would not join in a chorus of anti-Arab bigotry.

A candidate for the Democratic nomination for mayor of New York, Anthony Weiner, basically constructed his campaign around the MEALAC issue. Along with the *New York Sun*, Weiner made a cause célèbre out of the fact that Rashid Khalidi, a MEALAC professor of Palestinian ancestry, led workshops for public school teachers on how to teach about the Middle East conflict. It is no secret that Khalidi is a Palestinian nationalist, but he is also a first-rank scholar, and I can say from personal experience that he is a fair-minded and honorable colleague. He did not even join the Columbia faculty until after virtually all of the episodes recounted in *Columbia Unbecoming* had taken place. The students involved in the MEALAC dispute often cited him as an example of a professor who taught without dogma and welcomed dissent by students. Neither Weiner nor the *Sun* could produce evidence of a single incident in Khalidi's work with the public school teachers that was objectionable, or a single complaint registered against him. Yet, in the froth, the city Department of Education fired Khalidi.

It does not surprise me at all that Khalidi's public posture grew more strident in the aftermath. He had, in fact, become the victim of a McCarthyesque smear. And instead of being able to play a mediating role between pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian forces on the campus, as I believe he had intended to do, Khalidi was pushed into a corner, from which, predictably, he lashed out. It may serve the interests of politicians,

certain advocacy groups, and ideological publications to undermine and polarize Khalidi, but it pollutes the intellectual environment on campus just as much as Joseph Massad's behavior does.

The Broader Question

The broader question here is what American Jews and Zionists want to happen on American campuses. If the goal is an environment of intellectual freedom for students and professors alike, then that is a goal that professors like myself will always endorse. But if the design is to put Middle East studies programs under political oversight, as legislation in Congress would authorize and some critical scholars have recommended, then I will oppose it, because there is no reason to believe that such academic censorship, however couched as the pursuit of fairness and balance, would stay neatly within one discipline.

Activism around the campuses must speak the language of the academy, and there is all the semantic difference in the world between defending the rights of students against the abuse of faculty privilege and making Washington the censor of professors, reading lists, and lectures. The latter will be worse than a failure; it will be a counterproductive blow. It will let the anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, even anti-Semitic demagogues of higher education wrap themselves in cloaks of morality and martyrdom.

That there is a prevailing bias against Israel in many Middle East studies departments seems to me self-evident. Those departments, like many departments outside of quantitative disciplines, are incestuous places, accepting, promoting, and rewarding (with graduate fellowships, doctoral degrees, junior faculty appointments, and finally tenure) those who espouse the favored doctrine. Think of the reign of deconstructionism in English departments, for instance. In Middle East studies, the chosen theory is post-colonialism, or, in Edward Said's formulation, orientalism. Israel is understood purely as a colonial imposition; Arab countries are held to be above scrutiny by racist occidentals.

The best way to redress this imbalance, though, is not with federal commissars, but with the creation or expansion of Israel studies chairs, programs, and departments, so that the dialogue on campuses will be as wide-ranging as the dialogue in the Middle East itself. Jewish studies departments, no matter how flourishing, cannot be the answer. Reflecting the desires of their donors as well as the tastes of their students, they tend to focus heavily on the Holocaust, Jewish antiquity, and American Jewish history. Israel studies must be developed specifically, and it must be developed with academic independence. It cannot be viewed as an outpost of the Israel advocacy

industry. The kind of honest, honorable scholarship personified by professors such as Ronald Zweig at New York University will improve the ideological climate on campuses far more than the presence of a bought-and-paid-for Israeli apologist will.

Such an approach also offers the hope of engaging the many, many Jewish students who are not highly mobilized around Israel. In speaking on dozens of campuses, in addition to teaching for fourteen years at Columbia, I have repeatedly encountered Jewish students who say they feel there is no place for them in the Jewish community unless they adhere to a standard of unflinching, unquestioning support for Israel. They sense they are subjected to loyalty tests, and say that to question Israeli control of occupied territories is impermissible, grounds for expulsion. To be sure, such individuals often overlook Israel's willingness, in the context of the now failed Oslo process, to return over 90 percent of the territories, recognize a Palestinian state, and share sovereignty over Jerusalem. Nonetheless, if advocacy groups appear to be stifling pro-Palestinian professors merely for expounding their beliefs, then we may further alienate exactly the sort of searching, drifting young Jews we should most want to attract. If advocacy groups seek to enlarge and protect a range of opinions on campus, then we may be able to tap into their inchoate longings for some kind of communal identity. Birthright has been successful in doing exactly that, and I say so having been highly skeptical of the program at the outset.

At the same time, we should be encouraging Jewish students to see college as a time and place for vigorous debate and intellectual warfare. Too often, when the annual Palestinian Solidarity Conference is scheduled for a particular campus, prominent Jews or pro-Jewish politicians try to pressure the university into ousting the event. Not only is that a losing strategy from a free-speech perspective, but it is one that breeds passivity among Jewish students. It is their job, not the job of well-heeled and well-connected grown-ups, to fight advocacy with advocacy, argument with argument. I wish every Jewish college student in America could watch *Arguing the World*, Joseph Dorman's superb documentary about the City College intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s. Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, and Nathan Glazer lived for the battle of ideas; it was their mother's milk. So the answer to today's challenges is not quietism but learning how to make the right kind of noise.

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Advocacy and Education as Divergent Strategies in the Effort to Support Israel on Campus

Chaim Seidler-Feller

On the first of the intermediate days of Passover, I arrived at my Hillel office to find an e-mail that had been sent by a colleague on *yom tov*. It read: “Sorry for this message on Pesach, but I just found out a minute ago that a film entitled *Occupation 101* is going to be shown at the university tonight. Can anyone give me any information on this film?” This rabbi obviously felt the situation so urgent that it constituted an emergency warranting the supersession of the holiday. Having internalized the Jewish community’s hysteria regarding Israel’s image on campus, he was clear about his priorities. Sorrowfully, his activities suggest that in our “dire” situation, advocacy on behalf of Israel trumps Judaism.

Perceived Victimhood: The Reality of Campus Anti-Semitism

The reversal of values described above is very serious and has basically gone unnoticed in the present climate. In fact, because of the noise generated about the war against Israel being waged on the college campus, very few analysts have been willing to challenge the common perception. The truth, however, is that the situation is, and has been, relatively quiet in most places. Of course, there have been some significant confrontations and a number of outrageous incidents, but the confrontations must be viewed as part of the normal course of campus politics. To the extent that Jewish students feel besieged, we in the Jewish community must admit that it is largely a function of their lack of political preparation and sophistication, and their inexperience about the need to struggle for political gains.

Contrary to popular opinion, the current epoch is a golden age for Jews on the American campus. The past fifteen years alone have seen the appointment of a score of Jewish university presidents at the most prestigious institutions, some of whom are openly identified with the Jewish community. And apart from the proliferation of Jewish studies, Holocaust courses, and hundreds of scholarly volumes published under academic imprint, twenty new Hillel facilities have been dedicated in the last decade alone. Moreover, fraternities and sororities at major campuses, many of which were known to exclude Jews due to anti-Semitic bias, are now reputed to have a Jewish

membership in excess of 30 percent, while the traditionally Jewish Greek houses are no longer exclusively Jewish.

As for the small number of notorious and outrageous incidents, the fact is that everyone who is concerned with the issue can identify each campus targeted, as well as the particular aspects of the brouhaha. If this is indeed the case, then the supposed widespread orgy of hate unleashed on the campus was actually limited to a few well-publicized events. Instead of being burdened by the perception that the campus is a disaster area for Jews and Israel, which is patently untrue, we should challenge and expose those forces in Jewish life whose self-interest has motivated them to fan the flames of hysterical reaction.

Nevertheless, many Jewish students do report that they feel uncomfortable. We, in turn, must respond supportively to their perceived vulnerability. That is the task of Hillel and of those Jewish professors and administrators who care deeply about Jewish students and about the future of Israel and Judaism. However, the community need not view the healing of hurt pride as a major priority. The students experience uneasiness largely because they hear things for which they are unprepared. So the most appropriate response is more education, strengthening the students by addressing their minds and not just their hearts, and providing an analysis of the complexities of the conflict and not merely propagandizing.

The Source of Distress

Admittedly, there is one campus community group that is a source of almost constant distress: the Muslim Student Association. They tend to be religiously fundamentalist, politically extreme, and openly anti-Semitic. They approach their Jewish peers with an arrogance that not only denies legitimacy to Zionism and the State of Israel, but also challenges the nature of Jewish peoplehood. The thrust of their argument is simple, if not insidious: Jews are not a people but a religion, and, therefore, have no claim to political sovereignty.

In fact, the MSA at UCLA and other campuses nationwide recently sponsored a lecture tour by a Neturei Karta representative—appearing with a beard, *peyot* (side-locks), and black caftan—who denounced Zionism and all efforts at promoting Jewish political independence as an affront to God and Judaism. Ironically, this ultra-Orthodox speaker was playing the role of the medieval apostate hired by the church in the past to disparage Judaism. His presence was intended to confuse and undermine. Looking like a religious Jew who seemed authoritative, voicing opposition to the very idea of a Jewish state on the basis of opinions put forward in rabbinic sources, he raised fundamental doubts as to the authenticity of a Jewish national identity.

This effort on the part of Muslim students violates one of the key principles of interethnic and interreligious dialogue: the right to self-definition. In the current environment of campus diversity, it is essential that different communities learn to listen to one another and respect their particular historical narrative. No one group should boost its narrative by demeaning another's.

What's more, local Muslim Student Association groups regularly invite a cadre of notorious imams who spew raw anti-Semitic sewage, such as the charge that Jews and Zionists control the banks, media, American politics, etc. This fosters a growing distrust between Jews and Muslims and adds more poison to the campus discourse. In most instances, administrators and faculty are unwilling to condemn the vile bigotry, in the process, nurturing a mistaken understanding of free speech. Muslims are indeed free to spout outrageous assertions, but others in positions of responsibility are then obligated to decry the bigoted and hateful nature of their rhetoric—and to acknowledge the sense of abandonment and victimization among Jewish students.

Perhaps the most painful experience for Jews on campus is their encounter with Israeli and American Jewish professors who participate as speakers at anti-Israel rallies and forums. This strikes the students as a resounding betrayal, and a humiliation that adds to their self-perception as victims. How perplexed and confounded they must be by the widely held view among intellectuals and political sophisticates that it is Israel and the Jews who wield the power, and Palestinians who are the victims. The truth is actually more complex, since both Jews and Palestinians manifest the characteristics and behaviors of both victims and victimizers.

Furthermore, the fact that our students are totally unprepared to deal with the reality of Jewish/Israeli power points to a serious lacuna in Zionist education and in Jewish self-understanding. The power issue is, in fact, the most important determinant in the process of the alienation of many Jewish academics and justice-seeking Jewish students from Israel. It is unacceptable to them for a Jewish entity to rule over another minority. By failing to acknowledge our power and our abuses, we expose ourselves to criticism and diminish the credibility of the pro-Israel position. It would be more honest and psychologically balanced, and hence, far more helpful to and supportive of students and faculty, if we were to claim that we are at the same time both victims and a power to reckon with, and that although we have attained dominant status, we are, tragically, still a targeted minority.

The Pitfalls of Israel Advocacy

In response to the widespread impression that the campus is burning with anti-Semitic fever, a variety of Jewish organizations have devoted themselves to constructing a provocative strategy that they have termed "Israel advocacy." Although advocacy train-

ing programs appear to have stirred the troops to assume a more aggressive posture on campus, the detrimental fallout from this approach has attenuated our values and distorted our priorities.

1. Education as the fundamental Jewish instrument for communication and enlightenment has been replaced by advocacy.

As practiced among pro-Israel activists, advocacy is a variety of marketing and propagandizing. Its form resembles a series of debating points. As such, it propels the Israel advocate to always argue that s/he is right. However, a guiding principle of intelligent discourse is that if you are always right, then you're wrong. What has been lost in the pursuit of a plainly defensive maneuver masquerading as an offensive strategy is the honorable and essential value of self-criticism. When, on the contrary, one argues on behalf of Israel while conceding her shortcomings, one is engaging in an effective, self-confident approach. Constantly asserting only Israel's virtues is empty, unconvincing, and, ultimately, self-defeating.

Two situations involving Tom Friedman graphically illustrate my point: In one of his columns last year, Friedman devoted about two-thirds of the space to a scathing dissection of the Palestinian leadership. He then continued with a critique of Israeli settlement policy. Dore Gold, publisher of the *Daily Alert*, which is distributed by the Council of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to hundreds of influential leaders and politicians, chose to summarize and present only the first part of the article, omitting entirely the section that was critical of Israel.

On the other hand, when my daughter entered Reed College in 2001, at the height of the intifada, and was personally stung by her friends' denunciation of the Israeli army, she called me seeking comfort and counsel. I suggested she go to the library and read Tom Friedman's columns. Not only did she read his articles, but she then e-mailed them to her interlocutors. She did not necessarily succeed in changing their minds, but Friedman allowed her to lift her head proudly and confront the issue forthrightly in spite of his criticism of Israel—nay, because of his criticism.

Unfortunately, segments of the Jewish community have demonized Friedman and, in the process, compromised our integrity. In fact, two years ago I was prevented by a representative of the Los Angeles Israeli Consulate from distributing a Friedman column at an Israel advocacy conference. Apparently, honesty is inconsistent with advocacy.

2. We are not providing our students with a political and moral language with which to frame the conversation.

The self-justifying advocacy that emphasizes the justice of the Israeli cause against the corrupt nature of the Palestinian effort has, understandably, created a zero-sum game in which to be pro-Israel translates into being anti-Palestinian.

This polar construct is alienating to many of our best, brightest, most thoughtful and sensitive Jewish students, who have been taught that Israel is distinguished by a nationalism that is tempered by traditional Jewish moral convictions; that Israel is prepared and armed, while simultaneously seeking peace. These students are searching for a more nuanced position that permits them to be pro-Israel, as well as pro-Palestinian; to be able to protest the heinous terror while calling for an end to the occupation; to argue in favor of the security fence and also for diminishing the number of check-points.

Where, indeed, is the pro-Israel Zionist voice that publicly articulates its opposition to the settlement movement? Somehow, we've contracted a unique strain of political laryngitis that causes our students to feel morally compromised and Jewishly embarrassed. As a result, many no longer are comfortable in the Hillel/Jewish community setting and have either abandoned politics in utter frustration or have formed more fruitful alliances, which give expression to their ideals, outside of the normative Jewish community. *We can neither afford to lose these idealists nor abandon our moral principles.* In the end, winning an argument in a debate is far less important than sustaining our values and modeling integrity.

3. The Jewish agenda has been distorted.

The early 90's saw the ascendance of renaissance as the Jewish priority, and the community appeared to coalesce around the primacy of Jewish education. However, the impact of Israel advocacy has brought about the reemergence of survivalism in the form of battling anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism as the centerpiece of the Jewish agenda. Political activism on behalf of Israel has supplanted the promotion of Judaism. In fact, at UCLA, the campaign for the establishment of an Israel studies program is linked to rhetoric that denigrates Jewish studies. But the data are very clear: Passionate and knowledgeable Jews are the most supportive of Israel. If our eyes are focused on the end goal—the renewal of a rich, substantive Judaism—we will fulfill a “double *mitzva*” by educating committed Jews who are also devoted Israel supporters.

The time may even be ripe to reincorporate Zionism into Judaism, to beckon to Zionism to come home to its source. Despite the participation of college students in a flurry of organizational busywork, Israel programs, and missions, anyone who is engaged with the younger generation of Jews recognizes that nationalism is no longer a compelling impetus for Jewish identification. Even birthright is not about Israel, per se, but about deepening the Jewishness of college-age Jews. So, too, must the Israel agenda be folded into a larger Jewish/Judaic framework, accompanied by a reprioritization of Jewish education. Zionism, after all, derives its meaning and inspiration from the wellsprings of Judaism.

4. The advocacy campaign has been coupled with a determined effort to debase and deligitimize the university in general and Jewish intellectuals in particular.

An article in New York's *Jewish Week* classified the professorate as Israel's biggest threat on campus. Whether they are designated as leftists, pro-Palestinian Arabists, or Jewish liberals, university professors as a class are viewed as a source of anti-Israel bias, as a corrupting influence on Jewish students, and as soft on anti-Semitism. One concrete example cited by the "advocates" is the less than enthusiastic reception accorded to Alan Dershowitz's advocacy bible, *The Case for Israel*, by academics in the field, including a vast majority of Jewish studies faculty. The gulf between town and gown over Israel is vast and seemingly unbridgeable, leading to a further marginalization of Jewish academics.

This issue is vitally important and is deserving of separate treatment. However, for the purpose of this essay, let me emphasize that given the enormous resources that the Jewish community has invested in the American university (endowments, alumni gifts, buildings, Hillels, and, most precious of all, our children) and the scholarly achievements of Jewish professors, we dare not villainize the academy. On the contrary, if we accept the premise that Judaism ought to be the framework for our program, then Hillels ought to be actively reaching out to Jewish professors to assist in the creation of a Jewish faculty community that celebrates and studies together and maintains close ties to the Jewish student leadership. These academics are not our enemies. They too possess Jewish *neshamot* (souls). They are simply waiting to be touched.

The Transformation of the Campus

The 2004–05 academic year has been marked by positive developments regarding Israel on campus. As noted in a recent JTA article, "Pro-Israel College Activists Quietly Successful on Campus," sophisticated new strategies are being employed by Jewish political strategists. Adopting the techniques of political lobbyists, they have begun to engage in the art of politics: meeting fellow student leaders for coffee, serving on the campaign staffs of leading candidates, running for elected office, and writing opinion columns for campus newspapers. Quietly and diplomatically—without much fuss or noise—they have succeeded in transforming the climate on campus.

UCLA provides a case study in the process. During recent elections Jewish students, who for the past fifteen years had been pitted against the progressive minority list, played a key role in the formation of a new moderate, centrist slate comprised of Bruin Democrats and Republicans, Jewish students, members of sororities and fraternities, and, unofficially, Armenians and Iranians, as well as students involved with a

variety of independent campus groups. Their platform was liberal, inclusive, and non-ideological. They were supportive of gays and lesbians, and of Israel. And their victory was striking, as they swept seven of nine positions in the student government.

Although four of the winners were Jewish, what impressed me most was that when I called each of the moderate candidates, every one of them, whether Jewish or not, proudly informed me that they had visited Hillel. I was assured that the coming academic year would be distinguished by a decline in the politics of identity that favors the self-proclaimed “oppressed minorities,” and an increase in the politics of mutual respect and cooperation.

Beyond politics, the most significant development on campus has been the focus of constructive Jewish energy on the endowment of chairs and centers in Israel studies. Overtly marking the reinstatement of education as the central ingredient in the Israel agenda, this project addresses an essential educational lacuna at our universities that has been generated, to a large extent, by the chilling impact of Edward Said’s polemics on Middle Eastern studies. There are few institutions that can boast of a Middle East scholar whose sympathies lie with Israel. And, regrettably, there are few available American scholars with proper credentials who could fill these positions. Thus, the search for and appointment of professors in Israel studies will not only engender academic balance, but will also provide a permanent presence on campus of an instructor who will contribute to the public discourse regarding the conflict, and who will function as a resource to colleagues and to students by introducing a positive educational approach to the subject. This is a far more effective utilization of our scarce resources than the rush by survivalists to produce propaganda whose yield is questionable and often alienating. This is the priority!

Strategic Recommendations

What follows are specific suggestions that could improve the campus atmosphere and buttress the image of Israel at the university:

1. Invite liberal speakers whose worldview is more compatible with the campus ethos, and avoid divisive combatants who function as lightning rods that generate controversy.
2. Seek out and nurture moderate Arabs with whom to create coalitions. It is deplorable and extremely revealing that none of the advocacy seminars or institutes promote this objective. Yet my experience has been that when Jewish students cultivate relationships with like-minded Arabs, they succeed in cutting the wind out from under the sails of the rejectionists. And the campus takes notice. Students

always prefer reconciliation to conflict.

3. Limit the confrontation. Rallies, demonstrations, and rabble-rousing may offer a temporary salve to hurt feelings. However, they simply do not work to heal the campus, and generally produce more wounds and negativity.

4. Sponsor forums that feature Arabs and Israelis who can model coexistence and promote a two-state solution.

5. Offer generous graduate fellowships in Israel studies to attract potential scholars.

6. Education, Education, Education: Jewish students, including day school graduates and AIPAC activists, are frighteningly ignorant about Israel and the Middle East. The basic principle is: The first time that a Jewish student hears about Benny Morris's research on the expulsion of the Palestinians should not be from his Arab opponent.

7. Acquaint students with the ideals of Zionism, most especially with the tension at the heart of Zionist ideology between the necessary use of power and the concomitant necessity for moral self-restraint.

The Challenge: To Capture the Imagination of Students

In April 2005, UCLA issued a study of "Spirituality in Higher Education," in the form of a survey of 112,000 entering college freshmen. Among the fascinating data was a glaring statistic: Jews rank lowest among religious groups on the spiritual scale. What's more, they're just average on charitable involvement. And while Jews comprise 2 percent of the U.S. population, and according to responsible estimates, approximately 5 percent of all college students, only 2 percent of entering freshmen indicated a Jewish religious preference. Given the scope of the survey, this means that a disproportionate number of young Jews chose not to identify religiously. (The one area where Jews are champs, almost off the charts, is in their embrace of skeptical attitudes.)

Therefore I can only conclude with a *cri de coeur*—*Gevalt, Yidden!* The issue is not Israel and anti-Zionism, but Judaism and indifference. And the response to the current crisis has got to be more creative educational approaches, formal and informal, that capture the imagination of students and offer them compelling reasons to be passionately Jewish and actively supportive of Israel.

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