

WHILE YOU MAY HAVE BEEN BUSY ELSEWHERE

For most of us, there is a reflexive tendency to think about anti-Semitism as something propagated by the Alt-right – white supremacy, the KKK, and neo-Nazi groups. That version of anti-Semitism was seen in its most ugly form most recently with the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue. For many of us, the horror in Pittsburgh just as with the violent protests that rocked Charlottesville last year was like muscle memory. We've seen it before and we know exactly what it means.

Unfortunately, we also know this despicable “in your face” anti-Semitism is making a disgusting comeback and has now taken a murderous turn. I am filled with anger and sadness. But this reality is not particularly new. But what this article is about is what is new -- and what truly disturbs me and should disturb all of us – is the way this kind of anti-Semitism has moved beyond the radical fringes and into the mainstream.

The newly minted U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar (D-MN) has called Israel “an apartheid regime.” She also declared in a tweet that “Israel has hypnotized the world; may Allah awaken the world and help them see the evil doings of Israel,” which she then described as “satanic.” Ms. Omar, a Moslem Somali-American politician, will soon represent Minnesota's 5th Congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Then there's the up and coming self-described democratic socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez who in January will be representing New York's 14th Congressional district. When the terrorist organization Hamas launched a six-week campaign this past summer of protests on the Gaza border against Israel, led by members of various Palestinian militant organizations, complete with Molotov cocktails and kites bearing incendiary devices into Israel, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez charged in a tweet that the Israeli military “had committed a massacre.” She then equated Israel's response to what Hamas had inspired to events at Ferguson. Really? Of the 112 Palestinian who died during the uprising, Hamas itself acknowledged that 53 of its own militants had been among the dead.

The Republican side of the ledger has its own roster of like-minded political actors; if not worse. In May, Russell Walker won the GOP primary to run for a seat in North Carolina's statehouse with 65% of the vote. In his campaign, he made many outrageous statements, not the least of which claimed, “God is a white supremacist” and that “all Jews descend from Satan.” Then there is Steve West who won the GOP primary in August for a seat in the Missouri Statehouse by more than 25 points. West hosts a YouTube channel where he has claimed, “Hitler was right,” and “Jewish cabals harvest baby parts from Planned Parenthood.” In California, there's John Fitzgerald, a Republican congressional candidate who received 23 percent of the vote to finish second in the June primary for the Bay-Area's 11th Congressional district. Fitzgerald's public statements include the claim that the Holocaust was “an absolute fabricated lie” and Hitler “the greatest thing that has happened to the Western World.” Fitzgerald is not a lone Holocaust denier in American politics. Arthur Jones, an outspoken anti-Semite and Holocaust denier won the Republican congressional primary for Illinois's 3rd Congressional district. In Wisconsin, the profane anti-Semite Paul Nehlen was on the ballot competing for Speaker Paul Ryan's vacated House seat.

While all of us are disgusted by these recent political developments, and we can take some comfort in knowing that everyone of these anti-Semitic Republican party hate mongers lost in the general election, they no longer seem to create shock and awe. And remember that they did garner sizable support during the primaries in their respective districts. That's because they now fit into a worldview that has been conditioned to identify and process this very recognizable and undisguised form of hatred without much reaction.

To truly recognize the breadth of this dangerous reality, we must dig deeper, and take a harder look at what is going on in our communities, our college campuses, and with some mainstream organizations.

The Chicago Dyke March is one of several events organized by Chicago's LGBT community as part of the city's annual Pride Weekend. Last year, several marchers carrying Pride flags bearing the Star of David were asked to leave the march. That flag seemingly caused a controversy leading event organizers to issue a statement that said The Star of David was "triggering" people, and made others feel "unsafe" and "threatened." The organizers said the expelled Jewish marchers were "disrupting" the event and "were Zionists." At an event, that prides itself for its "tolerance," the organizers had the audacity to ask Jews and only Jews to renounce their symbols. To me, this episode represents a new form of anti-Semitism being propagated by elements of the Alt-left and has a name – "intersectionality."

For those not familiar with the pseudo-academic concept of intersectionality, I believe it is one of the most significant challenges facing our Jewish community today. Intersectionality is the radical academic theory that holds that all forms of social oppression are inexorably linked. In many ways, it has become a code word for anti-American, anti-Western, anti-Israel and anti-Semitic bigotry.

Nowhere has adoption of this radical concept been more pronounced than on college campuses where, in the name of "identity politics" and "solidarity," intersectionality has forced artificial coalitions between causes that have nothing to do with each other except a hatred for their fellow students who are "privileged" because they are white, heterosexual, male and especially Jewish.

The linking of unrelated "victimizations," despite their tenuous connections, is reflective of a broader trend in hard-left politics, whereby increasingly, radical activists demand that the demonization of "Zionists"—often used as a euphemism for Jews – be included, indeed featured, in the package of causes that must be embraced by anyone claiming the label of "progressive."

That's exactly what makes this form of far-left anti-Semitism so dangerous and so insidious – it is cloaked in the language of progressive idealism and far more nuanced than traditional Alt-right anti-Semitism.

There may be no better single example of this cloaked far-left anti-Semitism than the actions of Linda Sarsour, a well-known intersectional feminist and one of the key organizers of the Women's March on Washington. Primarily because of her association with the Women's March and other causes, many view Sarsour, including the New York Times as a legitimate representative of the oppressed and disenfranchised. Dig a little deeper and the truth can be seen for what it really is. Linda often uses the hash tags #BDS and #FreePalestine on her tweets and once tweeted that "Nothing is creepier than Zionism." Sarsour has actually encouraged Muslims not to "humanize" Israelis and charged there's no room in the feminist movement for those who support Israel's right to exist. Imagine if she had made those comments about any other

minority. Sarsour openly supports anti-Israel Muslim groups, has posed with a Hamas terrorist, and yet is celebrated as a heroine of the progressive movement. All the while, Sarsour's fellow Women's March leader, Tamika Mallory shamelessly embraces Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam who recently claimed, "I'm not anti-Semitic; I'm anti-Termite." The truth is that Linda Sarsour and Tamika Mallory are ardent anti-Semites and BDS supporters. Intersectionality at work.

Sarsour is not alone when it comes to the insidious conflating and linking unrelated grievances. Consider the Black Lives Matter activists who visited Gaza to express solidarity with the terrorist group Hamas. While Black Lives Matter claims to disavow violence in securing its political objectives, many of its most prominent members are far more eager to criticize the "Israeli genocide of Palestinians" than to criticize Hamas for using rockets to target Israeli civilians, or even mention the hundreds of Israelis who have been murdered in acts of Hamas terrorism.

The Black Lives Matter movement blindsided its Jewish supporters with the unveiling of its social and political policy agenda, a far-left manifesto that strays well beyond police brutality and accuses Israel of "genocide" and "apartheid." This strong anti-Israel language stunned progressive Jews, many of whom had expressed support for the movement's protests against shootings by police of unarmed black men. Again, intersectionality at work.

But nowhere has the radical paradigm of intersectionality and its connectivity to anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism been more pronounced than on college campuses. Sadly, this phenomenon isn't confined to anti-Israel student groups; it can also be found among faculty.

Joy Karega, a professor at Oberlin College, one of the most prestigious institutes of higher education in the country, shared a series of Facebook posts claiming that Jews or Israelis control much of the world and were responsible for 9/11, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris, as well as the rise of ISIS. One of the posts she shared shortly after the 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting in France included an image of an ISIS terrorist pulling off a mask and under the mask was the face of the Israeli Prime Minister. After a full court press by multiple pro-Israel organizations, Karega was fired and the university's president was forced to resign.

Just last month, University of Michigan Professor John Cheney-Lippold refused to write a letter of recommendation for a student because she would be studying abroad in Israel. Later, Cheney-Lippold spent an entire class period promoting BDS actions against Israel. To the university's credit, disciplinary action was taken against Cheney-Lippold. But because he is tenured, he remains on the faculty.

Reflecting on these complex issues and the real long-term dangers they pose to the Jewish people, I deeply believe that anyone who is truly on the side of human justice should stand and fight against those on the anti-Zionist left who are manipulating well-intentioned people into perpetuating hatred against Jews and Israel. Increasingly, these radical elements are trying to force other progressives to embrace a wide variety of causes, regardless how unrelated they may be – as long as they also condemn Israel.

We still face hate – the hate of the neo-Nazi right and of the anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist Left. That's not new. But this hijacking of progressive ideals by anti-Semites is particularly outrageous. We should all be alarmed that anti-Semitism appears to be no longer a marginal phenomenon on the Left and that candidates espousing such views are climbing the ranks within a political party which, historically, has been the natural political home of Jews.

Allan Myer
Member of Temple Beth Shalom
Co-chair, Israel Affairs Committee