

Dr. Seuss is Gornisht

For purveyors of Yiddish or German, *gornisht* generally means “nothing.” However, the vernacular Yiddish would suggest that it means *niftar*, deceased or simply gone.

I remember when we were buying Dr. Seuss books for my kids, feeling some remote objection, given the fairly broad knowledge in the community of those who cared that the well-known author was, among other things, an anti-Semite. So was Walt Disney, Henry Ford, and lots of other well-known American icons.

In the '60s, the rise of the Black Power Movement and its embrace by famous people such as Leonard Bernstein caused an awakening in my community. The Jewish people, just like African-Americans and other minorities, have been subject to discrimination, abuse, crude cultural exclusion and death. The common hurdles faced by both groups made the African-American and Jewish communities both allies and competitors.

Today, once again we see a recognition of harm done to minority groups, but somehow, we do not see a groundswell of support for the Jewish community. Sometimes in America there is confusion between discrimination against the Jewish people and support for Israel. This is not a Hobsonian choice, but rather a matter of confused priorities.

Both the Trump and Biden Administrations have one thing in common, and perhaps a few more as we will see with the passage of time. Both Administrations have adopted the valid position that anti-Israel behavior is frequently a cover for good old-fashioned anti-Semitism.

Unfortunately, both Presidents Obama and Carter were caught with their fingers in the cookie jar of anti-Semitism. Both published books with so many falsehoods and erratic, untruthful rhetoric about Israel that their motives with respect to the Jewish people could easily be questioned. When I wrote President Carter about his book, he answered me with handwritten notes next to the paragraphs of my letter. Not only did he assert the integrity of his views, but he showed a blindness to the facts, which was staggering. Obama's recent book, *A Promised Land*, contains a chapter which is essentially a tirade against Israel. The book, like Jimmy Carter's, follows in the tradition of the most prominent “intellectual” anti-Semites the nation has known. What these former presidents have against such a tiny minority is only a matter of conjecture.

Recently, I learned from a friend that Bob Dylan's “Neighborhood Bully” was removed from YouTube as “hate speech.” YouTube, apparently owned by Google, determined that promoting the achievements and value of the State of Israel is “hate speech.” Perhaps it is easier to understand the views of Carter and Obama in the context of their attempts to turn logic on its head in pursuit of their larger goal, which was to turn Israel into an indefensible pariah state whose likelihood of survival would be greatly diminished in a hostile world.

Oddly, while the current Administration signed on to the important definition of anti-Semitism, it has appointed people to positions within the Administration who have behaved in a way towards the Jewish people that would be unacceptable if any other minority was targeted. Few examples of the alarming appointments by the Administration will suffice. Reema Dodin was appointed Deputy Director of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs. Dodin has expressed sympathy and understanding for suicide bombers. Maher Batar has been a longtime anti-Israel activist, appointed to Senior Director of Intelligence Programs at the National Security Council. President Biden nominated Uzazeya to become Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights. She has used language to describe the Jewish people in a way that is classically anti-Semitic. Perhaps the Biden Administration believes that the positions to which it is appointing these people are unimportant or simply to satisfy an extremist element within the party. If so, the embrace of racists, regardless of the group targeted, is never good for America in the long term.

Racists come in all shapes, colors and sizes. In Africa, Arabs from the north practice genocide against non-Muslim Blacks and the world says little or nothing. A particularly egregious case of racism directed towards Black African communities has occurred in Somalia, the home of an elected American Congresswoman. One of the few countries in the world that has sought to take Black Africans within its borders is Israel. Virtually the entire population of highland Ethiopian Black African Jews have been repatriated to the land of Israel. Never in the history of the world has a nation brought Black Africans to its shores as heroes rather than slaves.

The agenda of the current Administration may be to create a broad tent, including some fine and upstanding Jewish nominees alongside some nominees who maintain a racist past. Where is the sense of equal outrage, when bigots and racists are placed in government positions to fulfill the notion that our national government should represent all points of view? In the post-Civil War period, our nation was torn asunder by the progressively softening Republican attitude towards racist southern Democrats. Republicans, originally champions of Black rights, gradually and unwittingly became allies of their southern compatriots, thus reimposing a form of slavery over America's Black population until the Civil Rights era beginning in the 1960s.

In this country, we have our own history of discrimination directed to the Jewish community. Never mind General Grant's infamous exclusion of the Jews from the western territory he conquered during the Civil War. Grant attempted to make up for that terrible deed by helping to create a "Golden Age" for the Jewish community during his presidency. It did not last long. Quotas against Jews, exclusion from universities and outright violence against the Jewish community was reinstated long before Henry Ford helped to finance his well-known hate against the Jewish people. He was joined in his efforts with such notables as Joseph Kennedy, father of John Kennedy, whose green light to the Germans in World War II helped destroy what was left of European Jewry.

So much for history. The past is only prologue, and the question is how does Joe Biden think that he is going to control those whose anti-Israel behavior is based upon ancient notions of anti-Semitism? How will he prevent the Administration from being tainted by their racism? The answer is that Joe Biden believes there are few enough of

these “deplorables” that he is bringing into his Administration so that their efforts and energies will be diluted.

Bigotry will only be banished when we embrace the view that all forms of stereotyping and dishonorable assumptions must be eradicated. Dr. Seuss is not our biggest problem.

CAR/srb