

The Fake Science of Anthropology

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The question, “How did Jews become white folks?”, was posed by Karen B. Brodtkin, a retired college professor who was billed as a “feminist anthropologist”. Among her “accomplishments” is listed “counter-hegemonic movements”. She has written widely about “white public space” in anthropology. A chapter in her screed was recently sent to me as a sample of what young people are learning in college.

Reading the former UCLA and Rutgers Professor’s chapter 46, essentially disparaging the Jewish community in America, one is reminded of the infamous Margaret Mead. In college, I was required to read *Coming of Age in Samoa*. I questioned the book and its legitimacy, only to receive a good grade, but great criticism from my professor who, like everyone else at that time, looked at Margaret Mead as the absolute icon of truth. It turned out that Margaret Mead’s book was later unmasked by the anthropological community as “poorly written, unscientific and misleading”. In essence, the book was a product of Margaret Mead’s beliefs and desires, rather than anything based on reality.

Enter Karen Brodtkin, who does not even have the reputation of Margaret Mead, relies upon her own personal history in order to support her view that Jews are just ordinary white folks, racist like everyone else in America.

Professor Brodtkin’s opening salvo is that others, including Jews, were exposed to xenophobia and racism in America. That is absolutely true. None, however, faced the non-Christian “otherness” that represented the Jewish experience in America. The failure of Ms. Brodtkin to note that what made Jews different was their religion, never broadly accepted in America, shows the vacuousness of her mindset. The now retired Professor speaks of her own parents, who were first generation U.S. born Eastern European Jews. She spends her entire chapter, and perhaps the book, trying to run away from that fact.

The rambling narrative is a compendium of prior anthropological work, some of which is accepted and some of which the Professor distorts to support her conclusions. Writing about anti-Semitism in elite schools, the Professor completely misses the fact that quotas against Jews began in 1911 at New York University and spread throughout the academic community. She also fails to note that, after the United States Supreme Court declared race quotas unconstitutional, unless there was a history of racism at the particular institution, universities imposed geographic quotas which had the same effect in terms of excluding Jewish students.

The professor lectures concerning “elite schools”, apparently not appreciating that quotas against Jews, whether particular to the religion or geographic, was common at all schools and not merely those that she labels “elite”.

The Professor’s life work is to critique “whites” and anyone else she can label as whites. She states, “By the time I was an adolescent, Jews were just as white as the next white person.” She apparently resented the fact that where she lived: “Everyone on Avenue Z in Sheepshead Bay was Jewish.” She was clearly troubled by that, even though she mentions that her neighborhood was full of other ethnicities.

Perhaps most interesting, the Professor reveals that religion was not part of her family’s Judaism. That is probably why the Professor has no comprehension or understanding of how Jews are different, ethnic, and yes, people of color in many varieties. She bragged about attending school on Rosh Hashanah. She then moved to Valley Stream, Long Island, which was Protestant and Republican. She seems not to have been any happier there either.

The Professor’s self-psychoanalysis continues with how she saw herself growing up not conscious of race or racism. That is interesting, because I grew up in Great Neck where we fought for the rights of Soviet Jews, African-Americans, and were active participants in seeing that the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed. My father grew up in Harlem and spoke frequently of the interaction between Blacks and Jews. He told me about the pogroms against the Jewish community that took place in 1936, and in the ‘40s which drove them out of Harlem. I was one of those specifically told by a college dean that although I should easily be admitted to any Ivy League law school, 10% of the places were reserved for African-American students and I would be placed on a waiting list.

The Professor, in typical monodimensional form, starts off with the conclusion that Jews and “other Euro ethnics” became “white”. There, of course, is no support in her paper for that occurrence. What does it mean to “become white”? Apparently, in the twisted terms of this Professor, “becoming white” means working hard to be successful. The Professor does not know, and probably does not care about my father’s experience in starting Hatzilu, an organization in New York City, when he found out that 25% of the Jews in Brooklyn neighborhoods lived below the poverty line.

The Professor claims that “anti-Semitism and anti-European races have lost respectability”. In whose world? The college campuses where she has taught are full of anti-Semitism. Jewish students, particularly those who support Israel, are shamed and excluded.

I would love to tell Ms. Brodtkin about the anti-Semitism I have encountered as a lawyer in my career; the judges who threatened me when I would not show up on Jewish holidays; remarks made by witnesses in testimony and opposing counsel in closings; inappropriate remarks by judges. In essence, Ms. Brodtkin is writing about her experience as an individual who was born a Jew but apparently does not practice Judaism and has no regard for it as anything more than yet another white ethnicity in her world of demon whites.

The Professor writes about the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided educational opportunities for everyone who fought in the great war. While the military was fully integrated after World War II, colleges, universities and many big corporations still denied access and upward mobility to Jews, Blacks, women, and many other groups. The G.I. Bill did not equalize the nation.

More time would allow me to discuss all of the many misstatements in the article, but the bottom line is that this author believes that because many Jews have been successful in the United States, they became white and therefore unacceptable. Ms. Brodtkin states that VA mortgages allowed Jews and other Euro-American men to become suburban homeowners. VA mortgages empowered a generation of African-Americans in virtually every major American city, and continues to do so today. Whether African-Americans have fared as well under the various social utility programs that have been enacted in the United States is fair game. However, Ms. Brodtkin's attempt to lump Jews into a category of those who have their knee on the neck of the Black citizen, is untruthful; knowingly so.

Perhaps Ms. Brodtkin's problem is that she has so little knowledge of or relationship to the Jewish community, what Judaism is, what kind of people make up Judaism today, that she simply writes out of ignorance. Like Margaret Mead, disgraced for her pseudoscience, Professor Brodtkin is more interested in her conclusions concerning white dominance than any factual basis for her claims.

Being a professional Jew in America today still means watching your back, not being too Jewish, blending into a cultural milieu best represented by people like Professor Brodtkin, and, heaven forbid, not being observant of your religious tradition. If you are a Professor Brodtkin-type of Jew, you are entitled to no respect and you are an oppressor like other European whites; but if you are a knowledgeable observant Jew, you must be a right-wing oppressor. Either way, in Ms. Brodtkin's world the Jews are *non-compos mentis*.

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