

From: Ed DeVilbiss
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To:
Cc:
Subject: Fwd: FW: The Progressive Left and Israel's Right to Exist - Lipson

Friends,

I thought you might find the enclosed interesting. It came from another friend and points out the problems of the progressive left when it fails to recognize those who our are friends and enemies of the USA.

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The Progressive Left and Israel's Right to Exist

By Charles Lipson <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/authors/charles_lipson/> - October 1, 2015

A small incident during Bernie Sanders' recent talk at the University of Chicago reveals how the progressive left has turned against Israel. The venue was the largest on campus, and it was packed with enthusiastic supporters. During a Q&A, one student said that he and his friends liked Bernie's progressive politics but didn't much like his views on the Middle East. Bernie's response, and the crowd's, are worth pondering.

First of all, Bernie said, Israel has a right to exist. It was supposed to be an applause line, but it fell flat. There was only a smattering. That changed when he said he strongly favored a Palestinian state. For that, the applause was loud and sustained.

It's only a small incident, but it captures a movement that has been developing for years at elite universities and is now spreading to cultural and media institutions. Their views are surely encouraged by President Obama's diffidence toward the Jewish state. But he is less a leader than an accurate weather gauge. The left loves Israel about as much as it loves fracking, the Keystone pipeline, Goldman Sachs, voter IDs, Clarence Thomas, and deer hunting.

What has happened on campus, aside from the well-documented suppression of pro-Israel views, is the formation of a durable coalition opposed not only to Benjamin Netanyahu and specific Israeli policies but to Israel itself. The coalition is composed of the two fundamental groups on all elite campuses: the self-professed "victims" and the self-flagellating "guilty." One of the main purposes of orientation week is to sort students into one of these two groups and

to educate them in their assigned roles.

The guilty are all students from comfortable backgrounds, except those from approved minorities. These middle-class students are, by definition, "oppressors." They can expiate their sins by pleading guilty and showing they want to remedy the mess their families have made of America and the world. Their own special movement is environmentalism and "safety" on campus, which goes beyond the legitimate goal of ensuring all students' physical security to include suppressing views they don't like. Those views, they say, make them "feel unsafe." Deans of students, who care not a whit about free speech, happily rush in to protect them. But the main way middle-class students can wash away their sins is to back the movement-du-jour of the "victims' groups."

There is no shortage of opportunities. There are all sorts of self-designated victims on campus, each vying for the coveted position as "the most terribly oppressed by America." Among international students, the undisputed winners are the Palestinians (and Muslim students in general). They are glad to have others' support as long as no one challenges their status as the No. 1 international victims group. Their main political activity is to show up at all public events for Israel, protest them, and, if the university does nothing, disrupt them completely.

This anti-Israel coalition has racked up some impressive victories, largely because their views are shared by faculty in the humanities and social sciences. (Economics is the exception.) They have now completely excluded pro-Israel voices from virtually any subject touching on the Middle East. This goes beyond Middle East centers, which they control completely. It also means there are hardly any pro-Israel specialists in political science or history. It means junior faculty who want tenure keep any pro-Israel views well hidden. (Believe me, they do.) Zionism is a hated word in fields like gender studies, where every single faculty member at Brandeis objected to the university's decision to honor Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the world's most prominent opponent of female genital mutilation. She had said some things critical of Muslims. Bad form. Brandeis surrendered immediately.

At bottom, the bien-pensant view is that (a) Israel is wrong because it's strong; (b) Israel has no right to exist because it is a European state in the Muslim Middle East; and (c) Palestinians and fellow Muslims are not responsible for their fate, or their crimes, because they are oppressed victims.

The left hates Israel's military strength and its willingness to use it for the same reasons it hates American power. As right-thinking cosmopolitans, they would never approve such brutality. Obama captured this perspective in a Freudian slip. "Whether we like it or not," he explained, "we remain a dominant military superpower." The left doesn't like it. They don't like it in America, and they don't like it in Israel. As for Russia, China, Iran, or North Korea brandishing military threats, well, let's not think about that. The threats may vanish from their minds,

but they still threaten everybody else with working synapses.

Not only is Israel powerful, the left (like the Muslim world) sees Israel as a remnant of Europe's crimes: imperialism and the Holocaust. University faculties are preoccupied with imperialism and post-colonial legacies, which they blame for many of the world's ills. They see Israel through that lens, as a colony of white settlers in an Arab-Muslim region. They blithely ignore the Jewish people's age-old connection to the land, its continuous presence there, and its central religious significance. And they ignore how many Israelis were driven out of Arab countries, which have become virulently anti-Semitic.

The combination of Israel's religious heritage, its nationalism, its prosperity, and its unapologetic self-defense combine virtually everything loathed by secular, cosmopolitan intellectuals. That's why Obama's 2009 Cairo speech offered such a tepid "defense" of Israel's right to exist. Israel was needed, he said, because Jews needed somewhere to go after the Holocaust. That is the view of the average professor of French literature: Israel is the bastard child of Europe's crimes.

In the left's worldview, Palestinians and fellow Muslims are not seen as agents of their own history, for good or ill. They are righteous victims. This condescending view is grounded in Jean Jacques Rousseau's gauzy, romantic vision of "noble savages," not yet cursed by civilization. What can be expected of such people? Their crimes are merely "weapons of the weak." And who are we, the oppressors, to criticize them? That would commit an unforgivable sin, blaming the victim.

For years, this coalition of anti-Zionists has marched across campuses shouting "Palestine, Palestine, must be free, from the Jordan to the sea." The state they demand, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, means Israel should disappear completely. So, when Bernie Sanders says Israel has a right to exist, they sit on their hands. Their shameful silence says Israel's very existence is a no longer a "progressive position."

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