

Another “Magnum Opus” by Mark LeVine (UC Irvine)



by Gary Fouse

Back on January 19, 2024, University of California at Irvine comedian, part-time rocker, and history teacher, Mark LeVine, penned yet another one of his side-splitter [op-eds](#) for *Al Jazeera*, the Qatar-based propaganda outlet. As usual, the topic was Israel, LeVine’s favorite boogie man, and as always, his wording is overblown, self-important, and full of nonsense disguised as academic discourse.

In this silly piece, LeVine focuses, if that is the right word, on the disastrous December 5 testimonies of the three university presidents of Harvard, MIT, and UPenn (two of whom are now former university presidents) before Congress following the horrific October 7 attack upon Israel by the

terrorist organization, Hamas. I should note here that in the entire op-ed by LeVine, the words, October 7 and Hamas are not mentioned one time-even in passing. Aside from Israel, LeVine attacks Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, whose questions to the three presidents caused such an uproar. LeVine characterizes Stefanik's questions as fascistic, a curious accusation since the issue at hand was campus anti-Semitism, which has been plaguing all three schools as well as countless others.

Here are some choice excerpts:

"Only now it's Palestinians and not Jews who are the martyrs and symbols, whose survival as a national community on their land has become, more than any other contemporary conflict, a bellwether of the possibility to address the increasingly intractable problems facing humanity."

Heavy stuff indeed. Sorry, but I find it hard to imagine Hamas and their followers as martyrs. The Jews who died on October 7 in the most horrible of manner are the real martyrs. That was an act of war, and Israel rightfully responded by declaring war against Hamas and going into Gaza. The regrettable fact that many Palestinian civilians have died is a direct result of Hama's actions on October 7 and their subsequent tactics of fighting behind their own human shields.

"It was Gay's moral cowardice in the face of Stefanik's unmistakably mendacious set-up to the genocide question that revealed not only Gay's unsuitability for leadership of the world's premier research university but also the deeper intellectual and political rot at the highest echelons of American academia."

While there is much to agree with in this paragraph, I take issue with calling Stefanik's questioning "unmistakenly mendacious." Anti-Semitism on college campuses is an undeniable fact, and if you call for a "Palestine" from the

river to the sea, it is clear that it means either the removal or wiping out of Jews from all land within Israel's borders. It's kind of like, "from the Oder to the Rhine, Deutschland will be Judenrein."

"The congresswoman claimed that merely by chanting the phrases "[river to the sea](#)" and "[globalize the intifada](#)," protesters are in fact calling for "violence against civilians and the genocide of Jews." "Are you aware of that?" Stefanik asked Gay."

As for globalizing the intifada, given the level of violence, death, and destruction, during the previous intifadas, any call to globalize the intifada is unwelcome anywhere. Back in the days when UC Berkeley Professor Hatem Bazian was a student at San Francisco State University, he infamously called for an intifada in the US. Bazian later went on to co-found the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and American Muslims for Palestine (AMP). The SJP has been a constant disruptor of any and all pro-Israel events on campuses across the nation. They are a prime source for campus anti-Semitism today.

"Here Stefanik was brazenly deploying the well-worn fascist tactic most recently resuscitated by Donald Trump to great effect: the "big lie." It couldn't have worked better; before Stefanik could even finish her accusation, Gay interjected that she found those phrases "hateful, reckless, offensive speech [that] is personally abhorrent to me." Soon-to-be-fired University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill, who only a few months before had worked overtime to prevent the Palestine Writers Literature Festival from taking place at UPenn, similarly bent the knee to Stefanik's concocted allegations about rabid anti-Semitism on her campus."

Fascist? And of course, LeVine would be remiss if he didn't throw in Trump's name. Whatever you think of Trump, LeVine forgets that Trump was a strong supporter of Israel, arguably

the most supportive US president in history. Even more importantly, it was Trump who put the universities on notice that if they didn't confront campus anti-Semitism, they risked losing federal funding. In addition, Stefanik's allegations about rabid anti-Semitism at UPenn are hardly "concocted".

"Gay might have a problem citing colleagues, but it's simply inconceivable that the now former president of Harvard is so ignorant and ill-informed as to believe that those two phrases are tantamount to a call for genocide (it is worth noting that "river to the sea" has been used by Zionists for over a century, most recently by Netanyahu to declare that there will be "no Palestinian state from the river to the sea"). Her rush to second Stefanik's racist accusation in the most "personal" way possible represented both a complete disavowal of what she and her colleagues must know to be reality and the kind of grovelling by academic leaders to state officials that characterise totalitarian systems, not functioning democracies."

Racist? Totalitarian? Telling publicly funded universities to crack down on campus hate is hardly totalitarian. As for Netanyahu's quoted comment, there is a vast difference between advocating the removal or killing of an entire population and stating that such and such a state will never come to pass.

"If there was ever a moment for academic integrity to show its face, it was then. If there was ever an inflection point in the struggle against fascist propaganda in the halls of Congress, it was then. The only ethical response to Stefanik's deployment of such brazen falsehoods in the service of repressive politics was the one another Harvard alum, Joseph Nye Welch, famously gave to Senator Joseph McCarthy some 70 years ago after McCarthy, during a nationally televised hearing, accused a young colleague from Welch's law firm of being a communist and suggested that the man should be fired. "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"

Welch had said before refusing to answer any more questions on the matter."

Well, at least LeVine didn't quote Patrick Henry's famous phrase, "Give me liberty or give me death." Maybe for a future *Al Jazeera* op-ed in which he claims that the academic freedom of scholars such as himself is under threat. I was just a kid when McCarthy was making headlines, but I don't recall him calling out campus anti-Semitism. His issue was the alleged presence of communists in government. (Some also accused him of being an anti-Semite.)

"Perhaps a generation ago, the three university presidents could have been forgiven for having no ready response to such a fantastical accusation since it existed outside the reality-based universe academics are used to functioning in."

Again LeVine appears to deny the obvious-the very reason those three presidents were called to testify in the first place; because campus anti-Semitism (disguised as the Palestinian cause) is very real and that includes the three respective universities they represented. That is the reality that academics like LeVine are **not** used to functioning in. After all, LeVine is the guy who, a few years ago, co-wrote a book claiming that the ultimate solution for peace was one state with two parallel governments, one Israeli and the other Palestinian. Now that's reality!

"Whether it's Columbia University banning both Students for Justice and Palestine and Jewish Voice for Peace, Harvard and UPenn fighting Palestine solidarity at every turn, the University of California pushing for "viewpoint-neutral history" while its campuses increase pressure on Palestine solidarity activities, or the outright criminalising and unrelenting threats, harassment, (self-)censoring and punishment of professors, students and staff, the campaign

against Palestine solidarity is inseparable from and indeed the spearhead for conservative attacks on allegedly “woke” academic disciplines and their attempts to increase the measure of justice and societal power for long marginalised communities.”

As LeVine builds toward his crescendo of a climax, he invokes the hallowed names of SJP and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), two despicable organizations most notable for their disruptive tactics of intimidation on campuses, as well as their refusal to engage in any constructive dialogue with those who disagree with them. He talks about the threats, harassment, etc directed against pro-Palestinian voices on campus (when they engage in language advocating hate and violence against Israelis and Jews in general, I might add). He doesn't have a word to say about the bullying, threats, disruption, and violence directed against Jewish students by these very organizations and their “woke” allies.

“Universities, the news media, the culture industries – the institutions that were at the centre of critical theory’s analytical gaze and practices a century ago – are, like the Frankfurt School itself, once again at the centre of culture, and through it, political warfare. While leaders remain ensnared by the system, artists and academics, journalists as well as students and even government officials are creating unprecedentedly broad networks of solidarity that can withstand the intense pressure by power holders to enforce fealty and silence dissent.”

“Through these webs of solidarity, the struggle over the future of the university will be increasingly bound up with campus struggles for Palestine.”

I told you it was overblown. All that's missing is the stirring Jonathan Livingston Seagull music in the background. And oh, yes. Hamas and October 7.