

The Long Failure of the Left

by [Norman Berdichevsky](#) (December 2024)



Self-portrait, Prague (Peter Kien, 1936)

Eric Rozenman's recent book, *Jews Make the Best Demons* (New English Review Press, 2018), is a depressing reminder of the reality of renewed anti-Semitism to a degree unimaginable to those of us whose parents agonized through the 1930s. We grew up secure in the belief that the Allied victory in World War II had ended this insane carry-over of hatred from the Middle Ages with its long tradition of religious bigotry. How wrong we were!

For fifty years following Israel's victory in the Six Day War of June 1967, the Arab world, with the full support of the Soviet bloc, engaged in an intense anti-Israel campaign orchestrated by the Arab states and Iranian President Ahmadinejad. Their stated obsession was to wipe Israel off the face of the map under the fig-leaf protection of claiming they were anti-Zionist, not anti-Jewish. The Iranian leadership "imagined" (which is all they could in the past) a "World Without Zionism." They had at their beck and call a large "pliant majority" of U.N. member states ready, willing, and able to join this crusade or keep silent.

In so doing, they ignored not only the millennial tie of the Jews to their historic origins and homeland, but distorted an important theme in Western civilization stemming not only from the Bible and two thousand years of Judeo-Christian tradition, but even the Koran (Surah 17: 104). The "Z word" was prostituted and linked with a hideous and infamous "racist," and "apartheid regime" tied to a pariah state and people.

It was an obsession that eventually came to embrace what are today so erroneously called "progressive" movements—i.e. so called "left-wing" ideologies highlighting identity politics by various "minorities" or migrant communities in the West that envision Jews once again as the "enemies" of progress. This view spread to the women's movement, which insisted on special privileges for "all oppressed minority groups" —Arabs, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Workers, the Proletariat, the rural poor, the ghetto dwellers in slums. You name them, they got it

on their list.

During the morning American tv program, *The View*, (Jan. 14, 2019), Women's March co-chair, Tamika Mallory, explicitly refused to criticize (actually defended is more accurate) her past praise for notorious anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan (and hailed by many on the internet as having delivered "*the most powerful speech of a generation!*") She stopped nothing short of declaring, "I called him the greatest of all time because of what he's done in black communities," when asked about a social-media post in which she labeled Farrakhan the "GOAT" (Greatest of All Time).

Sadly lacking was any further reference to what Farrakhan has ACTUALLY DONE, besides providing inflammatory rhetoric to further drive blacks and whites apart and magnify latent anti-Semitism in the Black community.

At his most visible recent appearances, Farrakhan referred to Jews not just by the usual Fig-leaf term of "Zionists," but as "termites," using language familiar for centuries in Medieval polemics or the fundamentalist white supremacists in parts of the Deep South and referred to them as "satanic," a term explicitly used in Farrakhan's 2018 *Saviour's Day* address in Chicago.

Oblivious to the previous allies her movement had attempted to co-opt, including many Jewish women as long as they avoided any shred of pride in their own identity, Mallory's statements only succeeded in offending them, as well as the NAACP, NARAL ("Pro-Choice America" the National Movement to protect abortion rights), the AFL-CIO, and even the DNC who quietly dropped their support for the group and participation in the march. Their names are no longer listed as sponsors on the Women's Movement website. How novel was the Farrakhan message? Like inventing the wheel as far as antisemitism is concerned.

The long list of Jewish women who were active feminists who

struggled to champion the causes most progressives subscribed to goes way back to Rose Schneiderman, a leader of the garment workers' 1909 strike, poet Emma Lazarus, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Leah Rabin—all of whom have been out of favor for the past decade. The Women's movement's passivity to stopping anti-Semitism and anti-Israel extremism is by no means a new phenomenon.

Professor Judith Plaskow (regarded for more than a decade as the best-known Jewish feminist theologian) wrote as early as in 1980 about a disturbing new line of thought among leftist radicals which blamed the patriarchy on Jewish tradition and, by extension, on the Jewish state. In 2010, researcher Jennifer Roskies released a working paper concluding that, "One need not scratch very deeply below the surface to behold an undercurrent which is unsettling to Jewish women. In spite of all their bonafides as progressives, they have all been made painfully aware that to define Jewish women's participation in these causes as legitimate is predicated on their refraining from criticizing rabid attacks on Israel."

Three days before the 2019 Women's March, the organizers announced it would be moved to a smaller venue. The reasons given were it would confront bad weather and the government shutdown but the real factor is undoubtedly the much smaller crowd expected in Washington due to loss of support. It had been required to relocate by the National Park Service, but the March leaders accused the agency of pressuring the group to cancel the event.

National Park Spokesman Mike Litterst denied this as "patently false," adding that "Any assertion that the National Park Service has encouraged any organizer to cancel their First Amendment demonstration is patently false," For generations, Americans have come to the National Mall to exercise their Constitutionally-guaranteed rights to assemble and be heard."

This is what Bernard Henri-Lévy calls the "...great American

reversal rooted in the perverse effects of political correctness which has run amok and a communitarianism devouring legitimate American patriotism from within. All against the background of the uniquely modern malady, the form of leprosy known as competitive victimhood, of which the United States of America is one of the epicenters."

Henri-Lévy went on to recall how Martin Luther King Jr. always resisted the temptation of pitting memories against each other in rivalry. Few radical African-Americans today entranced by Farrakhan have any regard for Dr. King and his views of an integrated society, his lifelong support of the Republican Party, and his deep friendship for Jews as his staunchest allies and appreciation of the achievements of the State of Israel. Henri-Lévy is correct in asserting that "Antisemitism is not an opinion, it is a passion, even a religion, and that religion is stronger than reason, education, and information campaigns."

What is even more shocking to anyone familiar with the history of race relations and the century and a half of struggle for African-American dignity and equal rights is how these views of both Martin Luther King Jr and William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, the two greatest pioneers in the long struggle for full equal civil rights for Blacks in the United States explicitly warned against falling into the trap of anti-Semitism.

King's warm cooperation with the Jewish community through the decades of struggle for civil rights should be well known to any adult American over 50 years old, the ignorance of DuBois' progress from his early dabbling in antisemitism to its total rejection was once common knowledge among American Blacks, but is relegated now to the willful oblivion of almost the entire crop of African-American politicians on the Left, resentful over their loss of power and influence as a result of the Republican victory in the 2016 election.

DuBois was an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, author, writer and editor. He was born and grew up in a relatively enlightened and integrated community in Great Barrington, Massachusetts and, after finishing graduate studies at the University of Berlin and Harvard, earning the first doctorate by an African-American, he went on to become a professor of history, sociology and economics at Atlanta University and subsequently became the founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

Du Bois began his career tinged with the "refined" academic antisemitism in the Academy. Studying at the University of Berlin in the 1890s, he returned to the United States imbued not only with the latest in German scholarly methods but with his own version of the "*volkisch* nationalism" he had absorbed in Germany, and even regarded himself as a "Germanophile." Du Bois was most impressed by "the fire eating" Herman Treitschke ("by far the most interesting" of his professors, a man fond of quoting Luther that "the Jews are our misfortune.") Du Bois was, however, disappointed by Treitschke's disparagement of Africans as a "race without a history" and mulattoes as "an inferior breed" but, while in Europe, seemed to accept the conventional view of his European colleagues that many Jews were "degenerate cosmopolitans incapable of assimilating into the organic nation state."

Du Bois came to regret these remarks and, following World War II, admitted that he had been too quick to accept many second-hand views that laid the basis for the Nazis' racist appeals. Until 1936, he preferred to evade issues of race and antisemitism but a four-day tour of the Deutsches Museum made him aware that the exposition there was full of the kind of views that typified white supremacists at home.


Du Bois eventually came to react against the racist Aryan propaganda that glorified the grand Nordic *Übermensch* in the same manner as White Southerners at home looked upon Negroes.

The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin only reinforced his appreciation of how both Jews and Negroes had been singled out for discrimination in every way at the games and by Nazi racism. He drew progressively closer to fully understanding the Jewish plight during World War II and the full revelations of the Nazis genocidal policies.

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Norman Berdichevsky is a Contributing Editor to *New English Review* and is the author of [*The Left is Seldom Right*](#) and [*Modern Hebrew: The Past and Future of a Revitalized Language*](#).

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