

The Silencers Complain About Being Silenced

by Gary Fouse (August 2017)



I just came across the below link via the blog site, Campus Watch. They have seen fit to respond to accusations of engaging in censorship against people in academia who support the Palestinian cause against Israel. The referenced [article](#) is from the blog site Mondoweiss, a rabidly anti-Israel site that I give no credibility to whatsoever.

In this posting, Mondoweiss is publicizing a new book entitled, *We will not be silenced: The academic repression of Israel's critics*. This book, edited by UC Santa Barbara professors William Robinson and Maryam Griffin, with forwards

by—are you sitting?—Cynthia McKinney and Richard Falk, argues that, on American university campuses, those who support the Palestinian cause are under attack and being silenced by supporters of Israel. Naturally, Mondoweiss supports the book's claims.

As a former teacher at the University of California at Irvine and one who has been involved in the campus strife between Israel and Palestinian supporters, as well as seen and heard some of the people mentioned, I feel compelled to respond.

Let me begin with one of the editors (I am not familiar with Griffin). William Robinson is one of very many Israel-haters infesting our college campuses. He was involved in a controversy at UCSB over emailing his students his personal views on Israel. I heard him [speak](#) once in 2010 at UC Irvine and, during the Q & A, I told him that I didn't consider him a teacher or a professional; rather I considered him an indoctrinator. He said not one word in response.

What can one say about the former congresswoman from Georgia, Cynthia McKinney? She has blamed Jews for her re-election defeat and joined with George Galloway in his *Viva Palestina* cruises to Gaza. [When she spoke](#) at UCI (2009) and I asked her if Jews cost her her congressional seat, she quoted the words of another anti-Semitic former congressman, Gus Savage of Chicago.

Then there is Richard Falk, professor emeritus from Princeton and former UN special rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian territories who has blamed all the ills of the

Middle East on Israel. Even the Obama administration disowned his findings for the UN on the last Gaza conflict in December 2008-January 2009.

Let me now address some of the writings in Mondoweiss in support of the book's thesis of Palestinian supporters in academia being repressed. In fact, it is the pro-Palestinian lobby that holds sway throughout academia from the West Coast to the East Coast. Middle Eastern studies departments are dominated by pan-Arab, anti-Israel, and anti-Western professors. At the student level, Muslim Student Associations and their sister organization, Students for Justice in Palestine, have succeeded in making the Israel-Palestinian conflict one of the most emotional hot button topics in universities. Pro-Israel groups and conservative groups hold events at their peril. They are almost surely to be protested and loudly disrupted. I know this from personal experience. Just last May 10, I attended a panel discussion at UC Irvine by five Israeli Army reservists, which was loudly disrupted by SJP and others causing the campus police to be called and the audience and panelists to be escorted from the venue. A similar event was disrupted at UCI in May 2016 by SJP, et al. Yet, Mondoweiss has this to say:

There are many ways to try to silence people whose ideas you don't like. You can bully, blackmail, violate, isolate, punish, and smear them until they shut up, back down, and/or lose the platform upon which they were speaking.

It's not just autocratic despots or crooked attorneys who wield such strategies with tyrannical efficacy. The forces of the pro-Israel lobby have long carried out systematic campaigns of vilification and repression with a pugnacious

energy that rivals even the mob's. Anyone in the public eye who dares to level a critique of the State of Israel could find themselves targeted. And if you are a prominent and vocal Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) activist: [fuggedaboutit](#).

When it comes to bullying and mobs, it is invariably the pro-Palestinian side that engages in it. I have never witnessed similar action by pro-Jewish students. They are generally loathe to confront the bully boys (and girls) of Hatem Bazian's SJP. Bazian, a UC Berkeley professor and Islamic activist, co-founded SJP. Mondoweiss continues,

This climate of censorship is especially hard felt on college and university campuses where a historic upsurge in [successful pro-Palestine activism](#) has led to a corollary increase in McCarthyist pressure by the dozens of Zionist organizations who have formed into a network called the Israel on Campus Coalition. Characterized by their shameless meddling in internal university proceedings, well-organized groups like the AMCHA Initiative, Stand With Us, Campus Watch, Canary Mission, and ADL are the most visible tip of a slander-industrial complex whose mission is to purge professors and students who challenge their own narrative.

While I belong to none of the above groups, I do collaborate from time to time with Campus Watch, AMCHA Initiative, and Stand With Us. I don't know why ADL is mentioned since they rarely get involved in issues where anti-Semitism comes from Islamic quarters. They certainly have been missing-in-action at UC-Irvine. Campus Watch reports on professors who use their bully pulpit to push their own personal anti-Israel agendas.

When appropriate, they report the sayings or writings of individuals and refute them point by point. They do not try to silence them.

The AMCHA Initiative is dedicated to fighting campus anti-Semitism. When students like those of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) at San Francisco State University display posters lauding the killing of Israelis or videos fantasizing about slitting the throats of Israeli soldiers, AMCHA writes letters to the university to complain and ask for a safe environment for Jewish students.

When Professor David Klein of Cal State Northridge (mentioned in this article) used the [university server](#) to post his anti-Israel propaganda and disseminate it around campus, the AMCHA Initiative complained that this was a misuse of university resources. Mondoweiss is correct that CSUN supported Klein and disregarded the complaints. Apparently, they agree with Klein's views on Israel or just don't care if their university server is used for personal agendas. The salient point here is, when professors or students enter the public/political arena to lobby for causes, those who disagree have a perfect right to express their disagreement. I have accused many professors of being embarrassments to their institutions, but I have never called for one to be fired-or silenced. Our side-unlike theirs-believes in free speech. We reserve the right to argue with it.

Continuing with Mondoweiss:

With more than a dozen essays by some of the luminaries in the movement such as Richard Falk, Saree Makdisi, Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Steven Salaita, Joseph Massad, members of the Irvine 11, and many others—"We Will Not Be Silenced" serves as an instructive

compendium of the pro-Israel lobby's bag of underhanded tricks and an invaluable playbook for how to preempt and defeat them.

Let me tell you about some of these "luminaries" (Falk I have already mentioned).

Saree Makdisi of UCLA is one of a team of Israel-hating professors within the UC system. I heard him speak twice at UC-Irvine. On the [last occasion](#), in 2016, he mischaracterized the US State Department definition of anti-Semitism as defining any criticism of Israel as being anti-Semitic (not true).

Rabab Abdulhadi of SF State is the mentor of the GUPS students who have caused so much tension on that campus. Recently she has come under fire for traveling to the Middle East on university funds to attend a conference in Lebanon, which never materialized. Instead, she went to the Palestinian territories and met with her allies dedicated to Israel's destruction. Most recently, she was instrumental in arranging for SFSU to sign a collaboration agreement with An Najah University in the West Bank, which has been described as a breeding ground for terrorists. Abdulhadi was supposed to [appear](#) with her GUPS crew at UC-I in May of 2015. However, when I showed up with my video camera and the university backed my refusal to turn it off, Abdulhadi and her supporters never materialized. The table and chairs on the stage sat empty as a hurried Skype telephone conversation was arranged with some Palestinian guy in Washington DC. I didn't bother to film because it was such a *nothingburger*. The highlight was when he blew cigarette smoke into the screen while answering a question.

Steven Salaita is the professor whose hiring at the University of Illinois was canceled because he had sent out a social media message stating that he hoped that "all the settlers go missing" when the news broke that three Israeli teenagers had

been kidnapped on the West Bank. They were later found dead. Salaita has since sued UI, and last heard from, he was teaching in Lebanon. He is no “luminary” other than with his notorious social media comments.

Joseph Massad of Columbia University is one of the leading anti-Israel academics in the country-for whatever that’s worth. As to the quality of his scholarship and teaching ability, I have no idea.

Then there is the Irvine 11. These were the UC-I and UC-Riverside Muslim Student Union members who disrupted and attempted to shut down the speech of the Israeli ambassador to the US, Michael Oren, at UC-I in 2010. I was there and witnessed the whole sordid event.

Much to their surprise and amazement, these so-called martyrs were arrested, prosecuted and convicted. Of course, they and their supporters, like Mondoweiss, argued that they were merely expressing their free speech. Nonsense.

I have been to many of these events, and I know the ground rules. You let the speaker(s) speak and you can ask questions and challenge them in the Q & A. These young men purposely violated that rule as they had planned to do. Their intent was to stop Oren from giving his speech.

Returning to Mondoweiss . . .

In their helpful opening essay, David Theo Goldberg and Saree Makdisi discuss the alarming implications of the [Hasbara Handbook](#) that is distributed by organizations like StandWithUs to help train pro-Israel campus activists to

be effective propagandists. The handbook explicitly encourages its acolytes to avoid legitimate argument and debate with pro-Palestinian activists in favor of deceitful strategies like point scoring, emotional manipulation, and name calling—to create negative connotations “without allowing a real examination of that person or idea.

Goldberg is a UC-I professor who specializes in critical race theory, and is also on the anti-Israel lecture circuit. He is originally from South Africa, but thinks the US is a racist society. As for the *Hasbara Handbook*, I have not seen it, but its suggested tactics don't sound nearly as ominous as the tactics of SJP and Jewish Voice for Peace—which is to disrupt pro-Israel events. In 2014, a SJP document surfaced from their State University of New York at Binghamton chapter that outlined disruption as just such a tactic to be utilized.

David Delgado Shorter, whose only “crime” was to offer his students the option of researching the BDS movement as a case study in his “Tribal Worldviews” course, survived a demoralizing ordeal at UCLA at the hands of AMCHA that included death threats and false accusations of anti-Semitism that damaged his professional and personal life.

In 2012, UCLA [reprimanded](#) Shorter for using his official class website to call for a boycott of Israel. Mondoweiss makes no mention of that.

Similarly, Mondoweiss makes no mention of why complaints were made against Cal. State Northridge professor David Klein, who was using his university server to voice his personal views about Israel.

David Klein, a math professor at Cal State, Northridge and prominent BDS activist, was subjected to a similar coordinated campaign of censorship that stretched out for

years and may not even be over yet. Unlike most of the scholars in this collection, Klein was fortunate that Harry Hellenbrand, the president of CSUN at the time, was an outspoken supporter of Klein's academic freedom.

What is especially disturbing is the alacrity with which many upper administrators quickly cave and often collude with pressure groups who have no interest in research and knowledge production, but rather have a vested interest in censorship and knowledge suppression.

Classic. The reality is that university administrators are terrified of the pro-Palestinian forces on campus. Thus, MSA and SJP get away with all sorts of disruptions, bullying and intimidation of pro-Israel students. Look no further than UC-Irvine, where I taught for 18 years. They are still trying to figure out how to deal with the latest SJP disruption on May 10-after they gave a warning letter to them for their May 18, 2016 disruption of an Israeli event. In addition, we have documented countless incidents of disruption and intimidation of Jewish students at universities across the country-especially within the University of California system, in which little to no punitive action was taken. The simple fact is that this type of disruption and thuggery is rarely practiced by Jewish and pro-Israel students or faculty. Yet when our side complains about anti-Semitism, bullying, and abuse of university resources to advance personal political agendas, these crybabies claim they are being silenced or repressed. Nonsense.

The Israel on Campus Coalition has shown few scruples about smearing its opponents as supporters of terror, self-hating Jews, or anti-Semites. Groups like AMCHA, Hillel, StandWithUs have worked with political allies around the clock to cement the erroneous notion that opposition to Zionism is tantamount to anti-Semitism, and that a hatred of Israel's policies of racism, ethnic cleansing and dispossession is the same as hatred of Jews

qua Jews.

First of all, if they are complaining about Hillel, they are really reaching for straws. Most Hillel chapters I have seen—especially at UCI—pressure the students to not get involved in the polemics. AMCHA does not classify mere opposition to Israel as anti-Semitic, but points out that the US State Department definition of anti-Semitism does include certain types of opposition to Israel, such as denying Jews the right to their own state, equating Israelis with Nazis, and assigning blame for Israel's policies to all Jews.

Given the horrific history of anti-Semitism, and the deplorable reality of its continued existence, even among some who identify as “supporters” of Palestinian rights, the grave charge of anti-Semitism is not to be taken lightly. As several of the essayists in this book point out, this highly fraught context gives the lobbying groups the perfect straw-man weapon to combat its opponents; and they wield it with a vengeance, in reckless disregard of the lives and livelihoods ruined in the process, and in reckless disregard of the important task of defanging the real anti-Semites.

Let me address that as a gentile. Over the past decade, I have personally seen and heard anti-Semitism at UC-Irvine which went far beyond criticism of Israel into damning Jews as people. I have documented it on my website and in conjunction with others have researched incidents at many other universities. It is legitimate to criticize Israel's policies though I do not accept Mondoweiss's charges of racism and ethnic cleansing. To me, Israel is a nation under attack and trying merely to survive, but they will fight back. As Jews, they know the lesson of history if you don't fight back.

I do not question the right of faculty and students to express their views about Israel under the First Amendment. However, when they cross the line from mere criticism of Israel into

anti-Semitism, we have the right to object. When professors misuse their position as faculty and utilize university resources, such as school servers, to spread their personal political views, we have the right to object. When groups like SJP use tactics of disruption, bullying and intimidation against supporters of Israel, we have the right to object.

Contrary to what Mondoweiss claims, Israel's enemies dominate the discourse on college campuses. For the purveyors of this book and Mondoweiss to claim victim status is laughable. But that's what happens when the bully is finally confronted and challenged.



Gary Fouse is a retired investigator from the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). During his career (1970-1995), he served in Los Angeles, Bangkok, Milan, Pittsburgh, and the FBI Academy in Quantico. For 18 years, he worked as an adjunct teacher of ESL at the University of California at Irvine. He is also the editor of the blog, [Fousesquawk](#).

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