

# On Being Interviewed in Films

By Phyllis Chesler

Over the years, aside from television and podcast interviews, I've appeared in many films. I honestly cannot remember them all. However, it was always a privilege to be asked, and the conversations were intense and pleasurable. I usually prepared very carefully for each interview—but not always. Once, I was in a film that did not appear for many years. In any event, while very gratifying to one's ego (and perhaps to one's publisher), such appearances never changed my life.

I am only thinking about a few films such as Lily Rivlin's *Miriam's Daughters Now* (1986), which was about our creation of feminist rituals and our feminist Passover seder; Joyce Warshaws's film about the work of Joan Nestle,



Image Courtesy: UCLA Cinema Archive

titled *The Feminist Sex Wars* (1982); a speech that I gave which served as a video-fundraiser for the Vancouver-based monument to the women engineering students who'd been massacred in Montreal—*Marker of Change: The Story of the Women's Monument* (1998); Gloria Greenfield's film titled *Unmasked: Judeophobia* (2011); Monique Schwarz's *Beyond Paranoia: The War Against the Jews* (2015); and a Netflix documentary by Johanna Demetrakas titled *Feminists: What Were They Thinking?* (2018). This film was based on the fabulously intimate photographs taken by Cynthia MacAdams in the mid-1970s.

Just recently, I came across the notes I'd prepared for a film interview about a year or two ago. I don't think that the film

has yet appeared, and I'm not even sure if I will appear in it.

But I was taken by my notes, which I'd also drawn upon for a lecture I delivered for Dr. Catherine Chatterley, the dedicated founder of the [Canadian Institute for the Study of Antisemitism](#). That interview was recorded and appeared in 2023, many months before 10/7.

Here's some of what I was prepared to talk about. You may find it of use.

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I can't remember a time when Israel was not central to my imagination both as a model for heroism and as a transcendent, miraculous reality. From childhood on, Zionism was an ever-evolving example of political, theological, historical, and personal liberation.

I was called to fight in a cognitive war, and I must tell you that we've lost that battle, or at least we've lost this round, partly because Jews, including Israeli Jews, failed to understand how important this war really is, and partly because the forces of hatred were even greater than we could imagine.

As yet, we do not have an Iron Dome against such lethal propaganda (which I first called for in 2006) and the global noose around the Jewish neck has grown ever tighter.

Today, we are up against dangerous demagogues whom we have allowed to flourish on campus, in the media, and in government.

Would we allow a professor to teach that the earth is flat and reward him for teaching Junk Science? Imagine if this professor had a following which demonizes, intimidates, and death threatens all those who believe that the earth is round!

Such behavior is typical of Islamists, Stalinists, or the early Church Fathers, but here I am describing the Western intelligentsia. The well-meaning “wokesters.”

For telling the truth about Israel, one loses one’s friends, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, publishers, funding, and lecture invitations. Piffle. As they say: Kavod Kaved, glory, honor, is a heavy burden.

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Like so many, I had assumed that the world’s hatred and persecution of Jews had ended, that Jewish history would never again repeat itself.

I was wrong.

We are, perhaps, in the midst of a slow-motion Holocaust or trapped in a real-life horror movie. Israel faces multiple, simultaneous Intifadas.

And yet, demonizing Israelis as “worse than the Nazis” allows Europeans to continue the Holocaust against the Jews. It is also a way of scapegoating Jews and Israel for the crimes of European racism, antisemitism, Nazism, imperialism, and colonialism. Who could have predicted that the United Nations would remain ineffective in all matters except one: The legalization of Jew-hatred?

Who could have predicted that such a false idea—Zionism = Racism—would be so widely accepted? That the false allegation that Israel is “an apartheid, Nazi, ‘settler’-colonial state” would be taken up by western intellectuals, yes, even by some Jews and Israelis? By faux-feminists too.

Israel has become Orwell’s “Goldstein,” the fictitious enemy whom Big Brother’s mobs have been indoctrinated to hate. Such non-stop blasphemies and reversals of reality are flooding the internet and the airwaves—brainwashing viewers around the

clock. Their combined effect is a clear incitement to genocide.

Neither Israelis nor diaspora Jews understood that Jewish history could and always has repeated itself; that there was no escaping it; that the well-funded cognitive war against the Jews not only in the Muslim world but also in the West—a campaign that had been poisonously percolating for at least sixty years—was now actively visible. Jews and Israel were surrounded by armies of Jew hatred—at the UN, at international orgs, on campuses, in the streets (Gerald Steinberg of NGO monitor documented 157 different anti-Israel NGOs operating in America alone, groups that shared 3,000 connections). Simultaneously, on the ground, Israel was facing seven armies, which have been launching hundreds, no thousands, of rockets, drones, into Israel.

Israelis and diaspora Jews were not yet ready to acknowledge that anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism. Unbelievably, many still resist such an understanding.

Some Israelis are more focused on hating Bibi than on grasping that Iran and its many proxies and all the tentacles of the Muslim Brotherhood mean to genocidally exterminate them. They believe that Bibi's "mowing the grass" was the wrong concept—but they do not understand that so were the Oslo accords, which led to the intifada of 2000 and to all the many intifadas that followed.

Jews in general refused to believe that this was essentially an Islamic *religious* war against the Jews and against the Jewish state. It was not about land.

In my opinion the cognitive war has been hotter, more extensive, more global, and will absolutely determine what happens on the ground.

In 1980, I tried hard to persuade leading Israelis that antisemitism was back, that the bloody beast was really back.

I was not believed. I'm just a girl, one without money-power. So they told me that now, Israel had a nation. One nation fights with another; that was all.

Students in America are in a trance. They've been brainwashed. They identify with the aggressor and scapegoat its chosen victim or sacrifice—in this case Judaism and Israel. In so doing, they are not self-hating. They are rank opportunists who want to keep their friends, their jobs, their trendy reputations, all their perks. They refuse to be cancelled or ostracized, which is precisely what happens when one stands up for the truth, for the West, for Israel, and opposes barbarism. I am not exaggerating.

But there is also a darker side psychologically. They fear freedom—actually, they fear freedom's price, are unwilling to face the "armies of the night," so to speak, and they avoid doing so by glamorizing or romanticizing such armies. They are not only cowards and traitors. They are, at once, both self-loving and yet suicidal. They cannot bear to live in the harsh light of reality without their illusions/delusions about Israel's evil nature and Arab innocence.

I dare to write: That Israel is still a version of the Warsaw ghetto, only one with spectacular military power. Well, maybe we do have important allies...

Anti-Zionism is Jew hatred in its current form. When I wrote this back in 2002–2003, I was hotly challenged and denounced even by my own editor.

Jew-hatred as a word is an attempt to steer clear of all those who say that antisemitism includes Arab Muslims and Arab Jews. there is no such thing as "Islamophobia," but there certainly is antisemitism = anti-Zionism = Jew hatred = Judeophobia.

For a long time now, hate speech has been considered an academic freedom and a civil right—but only as long as the hate is directed towards only Jews and Israel, maybe also

towards conservatives. Say one wrong thing about a trans person or a person of color, and you're likely to be reprimanded, harassed, fired, and out the door. I am not exaggerating.

I had much more to say—I usually do—but I think I'll stop for now.

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