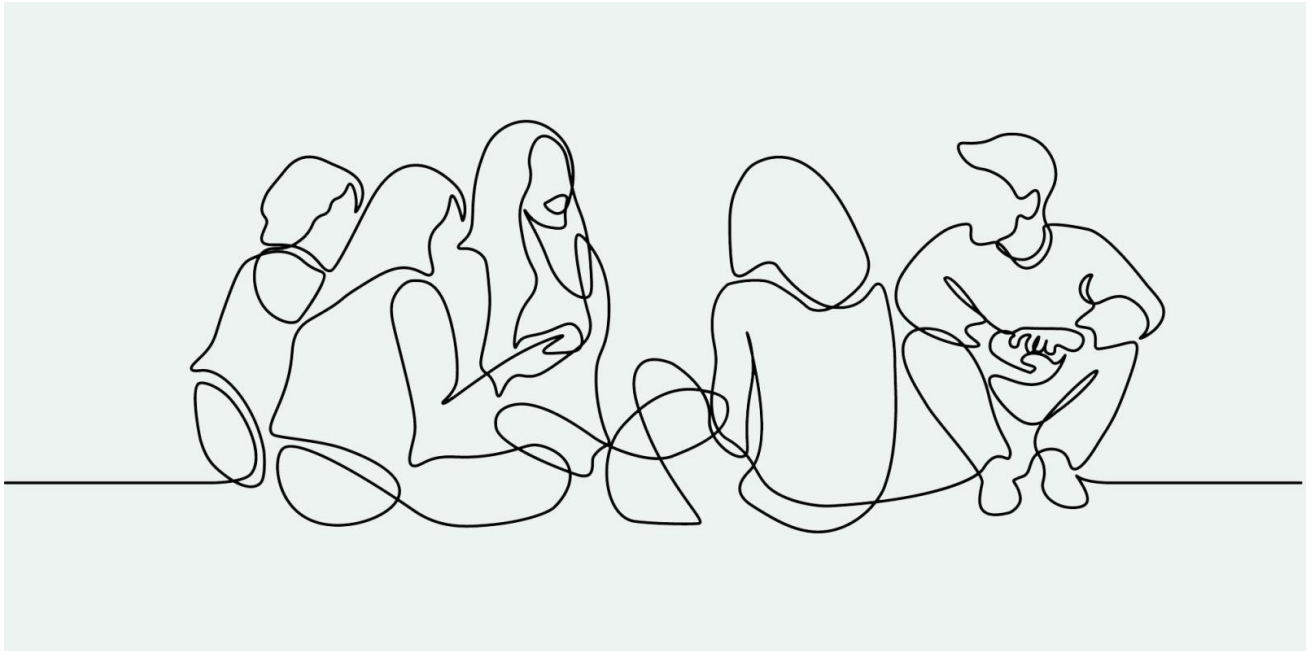


The Conversation That Dares Not Speak Its Name

by Phyllis Chesler



Right now, most white people are afraid to talk publicly about race and racism, especially about anti-black racism. “Progressive” white people are either silent—or they monitor other white people’s speech about race. Everyone is very nervous. If a white person says the wrong thing, or says something true but it offends someone, they will be shouted down, shamed, shut up, shut out. Politically incorrect speech is a Thought Crime—and there will be consequences.

Although slavery reeks to highest heaven, and discussing it is painful, really torturous, I hate to be silenced and I hate to self-censor and so I’d been hoping to have The Conversation with an African-American woman whom I’ve known since we were both 18. I had wanted to say: “As a Jew, the Black Lives Matter anti-Israel rhetoric is offending, enraging, and scaring me to death. How are all the protests and proclamations, the riots and the rhetoric, making *you* feel? Safer? More powerful? More hopeful?”

I tried to meet my friend in person but for one reason or another, we could not do so. We email-talked about Juneteenth. She found it ridiculous that so many people were jubilant about celebrating a holiday based on telling black slaves in Texas that they should have been freed two years earlier.

"Why not celebrate the date the Emancipation Proclamation was signed?" she asked.

We emailed back and forth about the horrors of black slaves and white owners in America. I sighed and sighed and then I wrote: "The matter is even more complicated. We know that Black Africans enslaved other black Africans..." And she said: "Oh, but they were much kinder to them than white people ever were, they allowed them to marry, they gave them a day off every week..."

Her response was something like: "Well, there's all sorts of misinformation floating around out there."

Our brief exchange was done. The Conversation was over. It had never taken place.

I had wanted to ask my friend this: Why are some very accomplished African-American women and men, and some people of color in general, so angry with Israel? Of all the challenges directly confronting people of color right here in America— why scapegoat Israel, half of whose inhabitants are Jews of color?

I am thinking of the Squad in DC: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib. Just today, [Representative Ilhan Omar said](#) that she did "not regret her tweet earlier this month in which she lumped Israel, the U.S., Hamas, and the Taliban together." Omar said that her fellow Democrats, "particularly Jews," are not "equal partners in justice," implying that they do not have her credentials as a Somali, Muslim, olive-skinned woman.

Her sister Squad members do not conduct themselves like victims or like male-controlled robots. They are in this for themselves and on their own. They are loud, they are proud, they are righteously angry, they are smart, they have power—and they obviously believe that defaming and destroying Israel via propaganda will get them re-elected to ever-higher office.

But, I am also thinking about the hostility, the bristling anger, that some African-American women have expressed towards white women—especially towards “guilty” white feminist women who have invited them to join a group, a panel, a meeting—events which have often devolved into punishment and abasement sessions for the white girls.

Here’s one example of the kind of up close and personal hostility that I’m talking about. Economist [College of Ethnic Studies](#) at Cal State, LA. One wonders if she will break new ground by including Jew-hatred in her ethnic studies curriculum? Will she also include Islamic hatred towards Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists? Mainly, I’m wondering whether Malveaux has softened in the last quarter-century, or has her former, unbridled hostility towards white women, towards white people in general, been further unleashed?

Malveaux, is an economist, columnist, entrepreneur, college president, and talk show. In 1996, [Tailhook harassment scandal](#). Malveaux said outright: “Sexual harassment is not my number one issue.”

Here’s what was. “Many times, if I’m faced with a white woman candidate and an African American man, I go with the African American man because I really do not see many white women being sensitive as they need to be about race issues, especially in politics.” Even if both candidates are “liberal,” she would vote for the African American man because “they are underrepresented in politics.”

Malveaux accused Bruce of interrupting her and said: "I'm frustrated (by) your inability to listen. This isn't worth being angry about. You're not that important." When Bruce objected to being insulted, Malveaux responded: "If you feel demeaned, that seems to be your problem."

Malveaux attacked Bruce for "going after O.J. Simpson. He is not the only rich man who batters." Because the 95% of other batterers whom Bruce exposed did not get the same enormous media coverage, Malveaux was using this to batter Bruce as a racist—and as an opportunist, who was using Simpson as her "ticket to ride."

Let me stop here. I have resurrected this dialogue because Malveaux is the woman who has just been chosen to lead the new Ethnic Studies Program in Los Angeles at U Cal.

What's going on?

California is going on. It's something in the air, and on the streets, an indoctrination into "radical" ideas that has been brewing there for a long time. Who's been influencing the generations in San Francisco and Los Angeles?

[Daniel Boyarin](#) and [police](#) really do target black men more than those of any of color and/or whether those targeted and glorified in the headlines are—or are not—criminals is now being [penned an excellent piece](#) about this. He writes:

"While following the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, which to me seemed just and necessary, I saw a sign that read FROM FERGUSON TO PALESTINE. This was puzzling...If activists were seeking foreign inspiration for a domestic movement, they had hundreds of ongoing ethnic conflicts to choose from... For these Americans, distant Jews have become an embodiment of the American evil, racial oppression. People have always projected fantasies onto other places and groups, but this particular type of projection, in which Jews are displayed as the prime symbol of whatever's

wrong, has a long history. When it surfaces, it usually heralds an impatience with logical analysis and normal politics, and a move toward magical thinking."

It also leads to individual physical attacks on individual, visibly Jewish Jews; to attacks on kosher supermarkets, synagogues, and cemeteries; and to pogroms and genocide.

Just as the Intifada, Hamas-style, has invaded campuses in California and activist uprisings everywhere, so too: California is the template for what is surely coming our way.