

Was Feminist Andrea Dworkin Really a Jimmy Carter-Style Jew Hater?

By Phyllis Chesler

Long, long ago, in the late 1960s, I knew that the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Psychiatric Association were biased in terms of sex, class, and race. I [called them out](#) on it, as did the late great [Dr. Paula Caplan](#), and I left the Psychological Association, never to return.

What I did not know was that, within a half century, it would also enable the most blatant antisemitism.

At the time, together with others, I co-founded an alternative: The Association for Women in Psychology (AWP); I was also a pioneer of Women's Studies but that was back in the day when it was still concerned with women's rights, and before it adopted a hyperbolic, hysterical, paranoid form of incomprehensible academic speech, which targets white folk, Israel, and the Jews; before it adopted a Hamas style of mimicry, adopting or as they might say, "colonizing" or "appropriating" the stories of their indigenous Jewish Israeli victims. Thus, Hamas terrorists are the Jews; the IDF are the Nazis; Palestinians are living in Holocaust-era concentration camps; the Israeli Jews are committing genocide, etc. Reality reversed—academic style.

Of course, I lectured many times for both AWP and for the National Women's Studies Association. I knew every leading feminist author, bar none, and either endorsed or reviewed their books in ways that truly mattered.

I have, in the past, championed the works and lives of most of

the important Second Wave feminists. I read aloud the words of Pat Parker, Judy Grahn, Dale Spender, and Monique Wittig before speeches. I endorsed and/or reviewed books by Ti-Grace Atkinson, Charlotte Bunch, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin, Shulamith Firestone, Judith Lewis Herman, Kate Millett, Jan Raymond, Dale Spender, Lenore Walker—and many, many others. I danced with Audre Lorde, sang to Flo Kennedy as she lay dying, helped Mary Daly clear harassers out of her classroom, just on and on.

Today, do I regret having done so? Well—not exactly, because those were different times and the world—at least the West—was not yet so clearly and dangerously “occupied” by Death. But I did not anticipate the consequences—namely the rise, again, of Jew-hatred among the intelligentsia, the professional mental health organizations, and now, among some of the leading trauma-therapy authors, such as [Bessel van der Kolk](#).

My colleague Dr. Judith Lewis Herman worked with van der Kolk, but her amazing, pioneer book, which I reviewed in the *New York Times* in 1992, titled *Trauma and Recovery*, long preceded van der Kolk’s work, which was only published in 2014.

Today, matters have gone well beyond the United Nations’ resolutions and the billions of dollars of Arab oil-fueled anti-Israel and anti-American propaganda. Not only is Jewish Israel (the Jew of the world) being defamed and isolated for daring to defend itself; Jews everywhere are also being physically attacked, demonized, denied paid shelter for the night, dis-invited/or made to feel unwelcome at film festivals, marched against in the streets of Western capitals for crimes they have not committed, the very crimes that their persecutors, portrayed as victims, have indeed perpetrated.

Jew haters, aka antisemites, are infected by a virus or by a “moral plague,” as author and philosopher Abigail L. Rosenthal described it to me—it’s a “plague with the peculiarity that those who catch the disease *deny* that they’ve got it! Going so

far as to threaten legal action against those who call (them) out.”

Rosenthal is talking about van der Kolk, whose book on trauma has been on the bestseller lists for many years. As such, he is a major “influencer” as the young folk say. Van der Kolk [has been quoted](#) by Dr. Orli Peter as having compared Israelis to Nazis and for having disparaged Orthodox Jewish patients for choosing their “tribe” over “truth.” He allegedly did so at a workshop at the Omega Institute and when they admonished him, van der Kolk threatened legal action. (I’ve been told off the record that Bessel has a habit of “running his mouth” and “opining on things he knows very little about.”) Thus, he may also just move on to other subjects.

I just asked Dr. Julie Ancis, Distinguished Professor and the founder of Psychologists Against Antisemitism, to comment on Dr. Orli Peters’s piece. Here’s what she said:

“Peters addresses several important issues that plague our mental health organizations today. These organizations are not merely apathetic to Jewish suffering—they often actively contribute to it. Antisemitic propaganda and hatred are promoted through listservs, professional publications, organizational statements, and conference presentations. This discrimination frequently goes unchallenged, and when Jewish mental health professionals and their allies attempt to address it, their concerns are dismissed or silenced, or they are ridiculed.

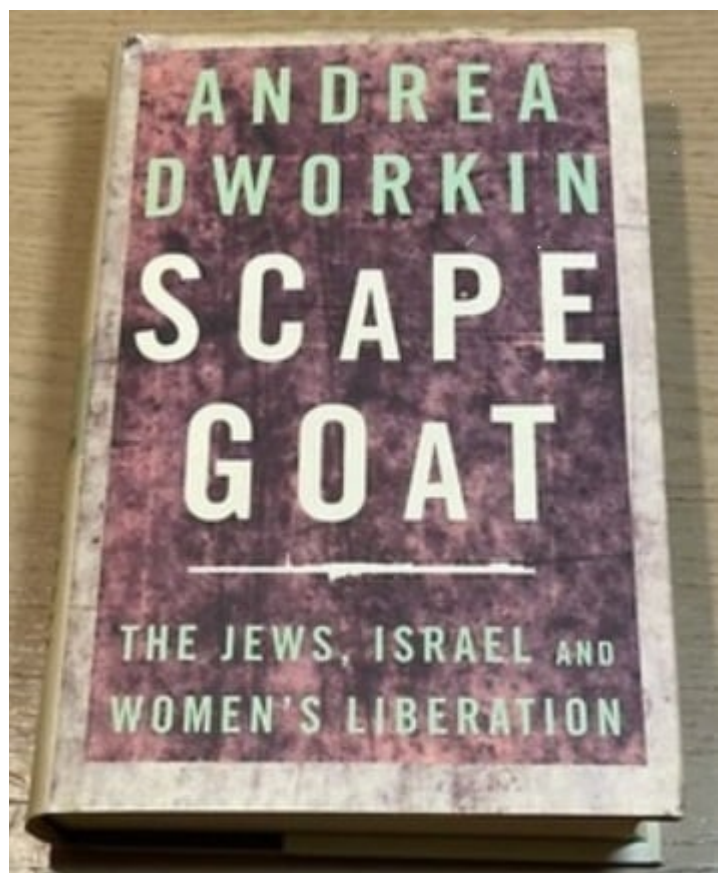
“Dr. Ancis commends Omega Institute for their swift response to van der Kolk’s remarks. The organization immediately condemned his antisemitic comments, issued an apology to participants, and committed to taking specific, decisive action. She hopes more organizations will demonstrate similar courage and accountability in confronting antisemitism within their ranks.”

I am usually not in favor of judging a work because its author is a woman-hater (I'm not ready to censor Leo Tolstoy or Philip Roth), a racist (Mark Twain? Joseph Conrad? Ernest Hemingway?), an abuser of power (far too many to name), a citizen of a country (like Russia, China, Turkey, Sudan) whose policies are horrendous. (Oh, for God's sake, bring Russia's Anna Netrebko back to the Metropolitan Opera.)

And yet, at a time when Israeli-only works, artists, authors, musicians, actors are being banned—is it time for me to rethink this position based on such a blatant double standard?

What harm can my old Second Wavers cause? Their best and most visionary work has not been taught in universities for many decades. Their work has not stayed in print. But now, a posthumous resurrection of one of us is upon us.

I stood by Andrea Dworkin's side when she first publicly launched her J'Accuse against pornography at the NYU School of Law. I was the one (other than her live-in boyfriend and our mutual literary agent) whom she consistently invited to accompany her when she delivered her fire-and-brimstone speeches in New York City. She showed me her articles and manuscripts before they were published but always



gave me very little lead time to comment upon any of them. And now, Andrea's—my Andrea's—work is being carefully,

posthumously, resurrected. For example, her work [Scapegoat](#) is the subject of an upcoming webinar launched by genuinely radical feminists this coming weekend.

Ah, *Scapegoat*. The backstory: I was the fool who took Andrea to Israel in 1988. My best friend, Merle Hoffman, was the fool whom I persuaded to fund her trip. Andrea was supposed to write an article for Merle's magazine, [On The Issues](#), for which I proudly served as Editor-at-Large. That never worked out because Andrea had insisted on a word count that far exceeded what was possible.

While in Israel, Andrea and I met with many feminists in Haifa and Jerusalem but then (or so I was told), with the assistance of Robin Morgan, Andrea slipped away to what she termed the "occupied camps" to meet with Arab women. I said: "Andrea, I could easily have introduced you to Arab women had you only asked me." For some reason, Andrea felt she had to do this on the sly. I did not truly understand why until I read her book *Scapegoat*, which she published in 2000.

In 2001, the Jewish feminist magazine *Lilith* reviewed it this way:

"The voluminous writing tends to obfuscate Dworkin's relatively simple thesis: Jewish men, once scapegoats par excellence, have been transformed into Israeli men with a heavy boot upon internal and external scapegoats. In Dworkin's words, 'For Jews, including Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arabs are the scapegoat: the source of all danger and terror...The masculinity of Israeli soldiers frankly goes off the charts: normalizing Jewishness has meant normalizing violence.'" "

Jewish women? Israeli Jewish women? In Andrea's view, they are the "internal scapegoat."

I challenged her privately and in a published letter about this book. Here's what I wrote to *The Jewish Week*:

"I am appalled by your review of Andrea Dworkin's 'Scapegoat' (Aug. 11). Your reviewer, Sandee Brawarky, fails to note that Dworkin has lost all intellectual integrity when she compares the Israeli mistreatment of Palestinians to patriarchy's mistreatment of prostituted women, uses many of Aviva Cantor's ideas about Jewish history and the Holocaust (as contained in 'Jewish Men, Jewish Women' without citing this as her source, and uses only secondary sources to discuss the Torah in her chapter on 'Religion/Maternity.'

"Dworkin views the Jewish God as an angry and vengeful one—as an Israeli-(Nazi) soldier. Dworkin uses the moral high ground of Holocaust research as "cover" for her attack on the Jewish state and the Jewish religion.

"Finally, Dworkin, whose work I have championed in the past, continues to recycle the same anti-pornography and anti-prostitution work—this time in a bid for some Shoah business of her own."

Why am I even bothering to go back in time about one book? Because still-standing Second Wave radical feminists, as well as some newbie feminists, will soon be discussing it. Once I was invited to their upcoming discussion, I pulled my copy of *Scapegoat* off the shelf and my heart fell yet again.

And why? Because Andrea views many Jewish customs, such as circumcision, as done so that men could become "menstruating women," "vulnerable" to and "submissive to" a monstrously "punitive god" (the small g is her choice) of "retribution." Her god "chose" the Jews so that they might suffer. In her words:

"The God of the Jews cannot be understood, approached, or loved. He is wrath and terror; he is not a god of kindness and love."

andrea (small "a") seems to prefer the god of Islam and his followers, all of whom are well-known pacifists, not mass

murderers, terrorists, and practitioners of gender and religious apartheid and slavery. (Forgive my sarcasm.) andrea writes:

“The Israeli desire to be separate from Palestinian Arabs increasingly looks like apartheid...The Israelis will never be as degraded as the Palestinians; nor will any woman not prostituted ever fall that low.”

Just as [feminists Robin Morgan](#), [Jan Goodwin](#), and [Susan Faludi](#) (who I understand is writing a book about Second Wave feminism, for which she interviewed me) view white Americans as the true “terrorists” in terms of having genocidally massacred the native Indian populations, and in terms of their history of slavery, capitalism, imperialism-via-capital, etc., so, too, do they view the subjugated, the impoverished as noble, pure, and innocent. Here is a description of Faludi’s book *The Terror Dream* by her publisher or her publicist:

“From the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and bestselling author of *Backlash*—an unflinching dissection of the mind of America after 9/11 In this most original examination of America’s post-9/11 culture, Susan Faludi shines a light on the country’s psychological response to the attacks on that terrible day. Turning her acute observational powers on the media, popular culture, and political life, Faludi unearths a barely acknowledged but bedrock societal drama shot through with baffling contradictions. Why, she asks, did our culture respond to an assault against American global dominance with a frenzied summons to restore ‘traditional’ manhood, marriage, and maternity? Why did we react as if the hijackers had targeted not a commercial and military edifice but the family home and nursery? Why did an attack fueled by hatred of Western emancipation lead us to a regressive fixation on Doris Day womanhood and John Wayne masculinity, with trembling ‘security moms,’ swaggering presidential gunslingers, and the ‘rescue’ of a female soldier cast as a ‘helpless little girl’?

“The answer, Faludi finds, lies in a historical anomaly unique to the American experience: the nation that in recent memory has been least vulnerable to domestic attack was forged in traumatizing assaults by nonwhite ‘barbarians’ on town and village. That humiliation lies concealed under a myth of cowboy bluster and feminine frailty, which is reanimated whenever threat and shame looms.”

My once beloved feminist sisters, of whom I still remain sentimentally fond, gave priority to the alleged occupation of a country that has never existed and jettisoned all interest in the occupation of women’s bodies in that very same country. More: They have, perhaps, sought expiation for their one-time focus on women-only by donning hijab, wearing keffiyehs—and, in intellectual terms, by preparing the justification for a new kind of Shoah which is now upon us.

It’s not only van der Kolk who is “opining” on matters he knows little about—it’s generations of feminists who have also done so—and whose decades-old work threatens to arm new generations with anti-Jewish views based on a hodgepodge of citations and ideas that are truly ignorant.

Does this mean that I am no longer a feminist? Absolutely not. In fact, my work in the 21st century (along with that of mainly women of color abroad) has remained bravely feminist in terms of many issues such as honor killing (femicide), FGM (genital mutilation), the endangerment of women, gays, and dissidents in Muslim countries (such as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia), and the trans cult. I’ve also co-lead a grassroots group who, in 2021, hands-on rescued 398 Afghan women from the Taliban, etc.

Alas, none of these issues has engaged the time and energies of most other Second Wave feminists, many of whom view such work as “Islamophobic.”

What’s changed is that I’ve added the issues of free speech,

hate speech, censorship, the nature of propaganda, the difference between fact-based truth versus doctored narratives to the issues that deeply concern me.

What's changed is that I've paid attention to what's happening in the world, especially to what's happening in the West (and in English-speaking countries), to Jews, and what's happening to Israel. My compassion dares to focus on Jews first, not on Muslim terrorists, not even on Arabs who support them, Arabs whom the entire world (as well as many "woke" Jews) insists on calling "Palestinian."

All this means that I cannot publish any longer in the "legacy" media. My words can only educate and give strength to those who already see what's happening and are looking for further enlightenment and ongoing support.

To them, I say: "Hineni." And I am not alone. There are many more like me. May we live to prevail over the forces of hatred and evil.

Or, even though I think it's "wrong," what about Israel refusing to share its miraculous scientific discoveries, its life-saving medications, its innovative technologies with those countries who ban and sanction them? And who vote against Israel at the UN? What about Israel keeping its inventions, and genius-level surgical practices for only its own—at least until the global powers cease their relentless and dangerous hate speech against and boycotts of the Jewish state? And, by the way, two million Israelis happen to be Christian and Muslim Arabs. They are, and will continue to receive, all the blessings of Israeli (and not only Israeli Jewish) genius.

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