

Black anti-Semitism?

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Editors' Note: The following statement was delivered Feb. 12 at a Wayne University forum on anti-Semitism sponsored by the *South End* newspaper. It comes in the midst of growing concern on the part of the Jewish community about alleged anti-Semitism both in our city and in other areas.

Hochman, once a Zionist, is a professor at Eastern Michigan University and ran as the vice-presidential candidate with Eldridge Cleaver in Michigan last year.

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There is a psychology developing in Jewish institutions and organizations, and among many Jews who would not ordinarily identify with those institutions, which pictures Jews as a beleaguered people under siege both in the cities of America and in the Middle East. Organized Jewry sees itself as under attack in Israel by Arabs, and in the United States by black militants. This leadership cannot countenance even the slightest criticism of the Jewish community or of Israel.

Organized Jews are like the western Communists of a generation ago who would slavishly rush to the defense of any action or policy of the Russian government. Whereas the Communists would justify the Moscow purge trials, today Jewish spokesmen can justify, without reservation, the clubbing of Arab girls in Gaza and the raid on Beirut airport.

Jewish organizations in New York pass out leaflets condemning the Iraqi execution of 9 Jews. Of course 14 human beings were executed, but the Jewish outrage didn't extend to the 5 Arab human beings. The young man passing out the leaflets was too insensitive even to get the point. Israel made the same distinction in its pronouncements.

Israel might argue, I suppose, that it considers itself the special protector of the interests of the world's Jews. But then one would expect that Israel would have put forth the same energy on behalf of the executed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and that Israel would never have extradited the dying Dr. Robert Soblen back to the United States who had sought asylum there.

Of course Jews, especially older ones, cannot forget their history. Jewish history is one of European Christian persecution, pogroms, and mass extermination. But compare the present Jewish self-picture of a beleaguered community under assault, with the picture as seen by the black community and with reality.

Here is a black community that lives largely in poverty; a relatively prosperous Israel, sustained from abroad, in the midst of desperately impoverished Arabs. In the American setting, the one I'm most interested in, Jews live in the suburbs or in the most desirable sections of the city, while blacks live in city slums.

The Jew comes into the black community and the black faces the Jew as landlord, merchant, teacher, and social worker. The black comes into the Jewish community and the Jew faces the black as maid and garbage collector. In short, Jews collect rent from blacks, and blacks collect garbage from Jews.

This is not a Jewish plot, but it is a fact of life. Yet it must be looked at in perspective. Jews do not come into the black ghetto as cops. Other whites do this. In a 15-city survey, Jews are found to own 39% of the stores in Negro neighborhoods. This means 61% are owned by non-Jews, including many American Arabs. The biggest landlord in

Harlem is the Chase Manhattan Bank which, like all the really powerful institutions of wealth in this country, is controlled by WASPS, without a Jew in sight. Except in New York City, Jews are by no means the majority among teachers and social workers. Some middle class-oriented blacks do have an entre into these civil-service professions, while the skilled trade unions, not Jewish at all, are tightly closed to blacks.

Almost all whites, and all middle class people, are beneficiaries of racism. From another angle these people have been held back, because the real rewards of racism—from the days of slavery through the days of cheap black labor—have accrued to the upper class. The point here is that black impoverishment is not the fault of Jews in particular. Jews who find themselves in exploiting positions are acting out a class role, not a Jewish role.

Of course there is anti-Semitism in the black community—less than in the non-Jewish white community, but it's there. In the face of the totally understandable and justifiable anti-white sentiment among many blacks, the anti-Jewish feeling is almost superfluous. But the organized Jewish community reacts with paranoia. If you accuse a Pole of being a racist, he's likely to say "you're goddamned right."

But if you accuse a Jew of having racist attitudes, the whole propaganda apparatus gets to work and the Jewish organizations come out with lists of all the Jews in the civil rights movement, etc. Those Jews, by the way, are usually just the ones who have divorced themselves from organized Jewry and the Jewish organizations can no longer claim them.

There is, and always has been, contempt and distaste for blacks in the Jewish community. And the bigotry of the affluent is more to be condemned than the bigotry of the oppressed, not equally. Racism on the part of Jews is not worse than on the part of other white groups, but not better, either—only different. It is a quieter, more circumspect racism. They don't shout "nigger" at the tops of their lungs they just whisper schvartze.

They don't throw beer cans through the window of a new black family in the neighborhood—or they haven't yet they just move out because they can afford to. The *Detroit Jewish News*, a despicable journal, has run ads urging Jewish families to import their maids from Trinidad, pointing out that these black women are clean, healthy, government inspected, and cheaply obtainable.

The paranoid reaction of Jewish groups, especially in New York, to real or imagined anti-Semitic statements is truly incredible. As Julius Lester, a black radical, said on New York radio station WBAI a short time ago, "We are America's Jews and the Jews think we are the Germans."

Among the targets of institutional Judaism in New York are station WBAI, the Metropolitan Museum, Mayor Lindsay, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville local school board which it accuses of trying to drive out Jews.

I visited one of the schools in that experimental district last week, PS 155. The majority of the names on the teacher mailboxes are like Berkowitz, Liebowitz, Cohen, and so forth. These are not Quislings to some Jewish cause. They are just people with Jewish names to whom, probably, Jewishness means little, to whom organized Jewry stands for reaction and chauvinism, but who support the concept of taking control of ghetto education away from the establishments which have failed so miserably.

So there is unity between blacks and individual Jews. Unity between blacks and institutional Jewry will not occur, but it doesn't matter since those institutions are obsolete and totally irrelevant to the majority of young Jews in any case.

## Text box

"If every black man, woman, and child were an anti-Semite, they would still number fewer than the total of white anti-Semites in America...Jews in a perverse kind of way need anti-Semites. Jews in this country are in fairly serious trouble spiritually and ideologically, and it is very comforting to come once again to an old and familiar problem. By confronting others, you can avoid the much more challenging confrontation with yourselves."

Leonard Fein, Associate Director  
MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies  
—*Time*, Jan. 30, 1969

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