



Can We Talk About Anti-Semitism and Israel Without "Both-Sidesism"?

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In the immediate aftermath of the atrocities of October 7—even before any Israeli counter-attacks began—a common refrain from progressives was "Both-Sidesism." In the same breath, elites would mourn the tragedies in Israel and immediately turn to the plight of Palestinians. Often this pivot happened in the same sentence. Jews didn't even get a period. Maybe a comma. These statements have become more common over the past few weeks. At this point, both-sidesism is performance art—virtue signaling at its worst. How can you indicate a normal human reaction to the rape, decapitation, burning, kidnapping, and torture of innocent civilians, and at the same time, how can you subtly draw a false parallel between medieval barbarism with a modern military taking steps to minimize civilian casualties in difficult urban warfare?

Lawyers, in particular, are taught to view like things alike, and different things differently. But when it comes to Israel, basic logic goes out the window. (Sort of like the revised LSAT.) Dean Erwin Chemerinsky, to his credit, took a stand. He called out anti-semitism in no uncertain terms. Those calling to free Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea are advocating for an actual genocide of the Jewish people. (See David Bernstein's post from earlier today.) Protestors didn't shut down the Brooklyn Bridge to mourn the beheading of infants. They shut down the Brooklyn Bridge to call for the elimination of the Jewish state.

Why are so many students drawn to that worldview? For starters, I would wager that they are *never* taught about anti-semitism and Israel in the abstract. At most, they learn that Nazis were

bad (the Holocaust), Catholics were bad (the Inquisition), Catholics were bad (the Crusades), and so on. Any instruction on Anti-Semitism focuses on how disfavored groups engaged in bad policies. The Jewish people are discussed, if at all, only through the lens of their oppressors. Generally CRT advocates argue that oppressed people can define their own narratives. Not us! Students are never taught about the timeless link between the Jewish people and the land of Israel. That link predates all other major world religions. The Jewish people were expelled from the Holy Land many times over the millennia. Next time you celebrate Indigenous Persons day, think of the Jews! In any objective pyramid of intersectionality that considers the full sweep of history, the Jewish people should be at the apex of Giza. But again, this history is not taught. Instead, students learn about a specific strand of Marxist ideology and colonialism that conveniently begins in 1948 or so.

Back to Dean Chemerinsky. Should he be so surprised, David Harsanyi and Glenn Reynolds ask? After all, last year student organizations at Berkeley banned "Zionist" (that is, Jewish) speakers. The writing has been on the wall for some time. In the past few weeks, I have talked to so many left-of-center colleagues who are shocked. I'm not. But more importantly, what comes next? Will this experience change anything? In other words, will the past three weeks affect approaches to hiring, curriculum development, DEI programming, and so on? Is the Manischewitz worth the squeeze? Or, will colleges continue with business as usual, and pretend that both sides really are equal here. Color me skeptical.

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