

## Editorial

As I write this editorial to the spring 2021 issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*, it is mid-May and the situation for Jews is not a happy one. As always happens when conflict erupts between Israel and Gaza, British Jews are blamed and antisemitism rises exponentially. In Europe, protests outside synagogues are taking place, and attacks on Jews are increasing worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Hamas used police actions in Jerusalem as a pretext to bombard the country with thousands of rockets, and many Islamist and left-wing organizations issued statements in support, with some support from the far right, as when former British National Party leader Nick Griffin urged his social media followers to sign a petition for Israel to be sanctioned for “war crimes”.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, news organizations such as the BBC, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* attempted to draw a moral equivalence between the actions of Hamas and Israel’s acts of self-defense.<sup>3</sup> Around the world, incitement and violent attacks have taken place both against Jews and against those perceived to be supportive of Jews: in the United Kingdom, for example, messages such as “fuck the Jews” and “rape their daughters” were broadcast by a convoy of cars driving through north London emblazoned with Palestinian flags,<sup>4</sup> a rabbi was hospitalized after a broad daylight attack by two teenagers,<sup>5</sup> and masked men shouting “free Palestine” smashed their way into the home of a Muslim social media influencer who had spoken in favour of a two-state solution, terrorizing the latter’s young family.<sup>6</sup>

In other news, hostile environments for Jewish students on British and North American university campuses are increasing, largely because of a failure by university administrators to tackle antisemitic and antizionist expression on campus. A case in point is that of England’s Bristol University, where the now notorious Professor David Miller, who, despite depicting

his own university’s Jewish students as “pawns” of Israel and calling for the “end” of Zionism, is apparently back on campus although under investigation. An open letter in support of Miller was signed by 466 educators and researchers, including Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein, while open letters criticizing him were signed by 113 legislators, with a further ten subsequently asking for their names to be added to the initial list, and 807 academics, including Deborah Lipstadt and Simon Schama.<sup>7</sup> (Gender theorist Judith Butler apparently signed not only the letter defending Miller, but also the academic letter rebutting it, although her signature has now been removed from both.)<sup>8</sup>

There are many concrete examples of rising antisemitism on American college campuses, as well, including at Middlebury College, Vermont, where lawyers have recently intervened to urge the college president to take action against the National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP), who have threatened violence against Jewish students and others who support Israel’s existence.<sup>9</sup> The role of the NSJP in fomenting antisemitism and antizionism on North American and Canadian University campuses is discussed in this issue by David Patterson and Charles Asher Small. Staying with the situation on campus, British universities have been considering whether to adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism following a demand by the secretary of state for education, Gavin Williamson, that they do so. While many universities have since adopted the definition, it has not been without a fight. There has been considerable pushback from the University and College Union (UCU) and from left-wing organizations such as Independent Jewish Voices (IJV), many of whose members have signed and promoted the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) as an alternative to the IHRA. Despite

serious problems with the Jerusalem Declaration, not least that it accommodates contemporary antisemitism rather than challenges it,<sup>10</sup> it was recently adopted by the Open University as an aid to the interpretation of the IHRA definition, effectively making the IHRA definition unworkable. A campaign to rescind University College London's adoption of the IHRA definition and replace it with a different definition has been waged for many months, with the university's academic board now having voted in support.<sup>11</sup> The danger of a domino effect, with the weaker Jerusalem Declaration potentially being adopted at other universities in place of IHRA, is clear.<sup>12</sup> The same month also saw Verso Books publish a pamphlet claiming that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) was wrong to find that the UK Labour Party had unlawfully harassed its Jewish members.<sup>13</sup> Like Verso's earlier book on the subject of Labour Party antisemitism, which Matt Bolton reviewed for this journal,<sup>14</sup> it was published for download free of charge: in effect, a donation from the world's leading left-wing publisher in support of the fight *against* the fight against antisemitism.

It is against this backdrop that the editorial team at the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* is delighted to publish this issue, featuring five articles, including one in a new "Perspectives" category, five book reviews, and two tributes to the late and deeply missed Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, who not only acted as a peer reviewer for this journal, but was a friend and mentor to many.

In "I now pronounce you Jewish!": Pastor Steven L. Anderson, Genetic Ancestry Tests, and Antisemitic Conspiracies," Matthew H. Brittingham focuses on the Christian pastor and antisemitic conspiracist Steven L. Anderson, who, invested in theological supersessionism and embedded in Christian fundamentalist circles, wrote, coproduced, and costarred in the 2015 "documentary" *Marching to Zion*. This film aimed to convince Christian Zionists that their support for the State of Israel was theologically misguided and, in so doing, it promoted an array

of antisemitic conspiracy fantasies. Nevertheless, in the film itself, as well as in associated media, Anderson claimed that he was not antisemitic. He did this by using a genetic ancestry test (GAT) as "evidence" that he had Jewish ancestry. Anderson subsequently relied on this "evidence" to downplay his antisemitism and undergird his theological views. Matthew H. Brittingham, who is a PhD candidate at Emory University, analyzes *Marching to Zion*, as well as Anderson's sermons and blogposts, to chart the twists and turns in his rhetoric.

In "Survey Mode, Social Desirability Effects, and Antisemitic Attitudes: A Survey Experiment," Jeffrey Cohen addresses the topic of public opinion surveys which have long been used to measure whether an individual holds antisemitic attitudes. Results of such surveys have been criticized because of the suspicion that survey respondents are not being truthful when answering questions about their attitudes to Jews. This is because of what survey researchers call "social desirability bias." This is the phenomenon whereby survey respondents are assumed to provide answers consciously or unconsciously designed to make the interviewer see them in a positive light. In 2016, the American National Election Study (ANES) randomly assigned respondents to be either interviewed on the telephone or to complete the survey online. Cohen's article compares responses to a "feeling thermometer" question about Jews in the telephone and online versions of the ANES and finds no evidence of differences between the two. One would expect social desirability effects to be muted with the online mode due to the absence of any personal interaction between the respondent and an interviewer. Finding that respondents express similar levels of subjective warmth towards Jews both when filling out an anonymous online form and when speaking to a human interviewer over the telephone, Cohen argues that social desirability bias can have little effect on responses to this kind of question. Jeffrey Cohen is an emeritus professor of political science at Fordham University.

Jewish commentators frequently lament that antisemitism is regarded as a “lesser bigotry” by those claiming to oppose racism. In “A Lesser Bigotry? The UK Conservative Evangelical Response to Stephen Sizer’s Antisemitism,” authors James Mendelsohn and Rev. Bernard Nicholas Howard present a compelling example of this phenomenon by examining the responses of British conservative evangelical Christians to the antisemitic activity of Rev. Dr Stephen Sizer. The article describes Sizer’s antisemitic activity in detail, along with the disciplinary measures imposed upon him by the Church of England and the notoriety he earned in the UK media. The authors then assess how Sizer’s fellow British conservative evangelicals responded to his antisemitic activity, comparing this with their responses to other forms of racism. James Mendelsohn is a senior lecturer in law at the University of the West of England and Rev. Bernard Nicholas Howard is pastor of Good Shepherd Anglican Church, New York City.

In “The Contextualization of National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP),” authors David Patterson and Charles Asher Small analyze the history, expansion, and influence of the National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP) in academic institutions throughout the United States and Canada. Using the IHRA working definition as a guide, the article draws upon evidence from social media and other studies to explore the NSJP’s network across college campuses and the vicious antisemitism and antizionism that they foment on those campuses. Research findings demonstrate the organization’s bond with the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and various Palestinian student organizations, as well as its endorsement of known terrorist groups and financial connections. With respect to addressing the problem identified and analyzed, the article concludes with the following recommendations and ways of implementing them: follow the money, elevate awareness, and pursue opportunities for online interaction. David Patterson is a senior research fellow at the Institute for the Study of Global

Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) and Hillel A. Feinberg distinguished chair in Holocaust studies at the University of Dallas, Texas; Charles Asher Small is director of the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) and a research scholar at St. Anthony’s College, Oxford University.

We are pleased to feature a new section in this issue of the journal entitled “Perspectives.” This section is reserved for those authors who wish to present a unique point of view on antisemitism that has been molded by their own personal experience. Our first Perspectives article is “Holocaust Education and Increasing Antisemitism: A Triptych Approach” by Agnes Grunwald-Spier. She was born in July 1944 and went to the Budapest Ghetto with her family in November 1944. She was only 6 months old when the Ghetto was liberated, making her one of its youngest survivors. After obtaining an MA in Holocaust studies in her fifties, she went on to give regular lectures on the Holocaust, as well as write three books on the subject. In her article, Grunwald-Spier discusses her experiences of educating students about the Holocaust in Britain and abroad, and the effect of Holocaust education as part of the national curricula. She further examines aspects of today’s antisemitism and concludes that the concept of “Never Again” has long passed. Grunwald-Spier concludes that the teaching of the Holocaust should not be done in isolation, with the Jews seen only as victims, but should be sandwiched between earlier Jewish history, with consideration of the richness and variety of communal life, and post-1945 history, including the founding of the State of Israel. She calls this a “Triptych approach,” with the Holocaust as the centerpiece. Dr Agnes Grunwald-Spier is a founder-trustee of the UK Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), an author, an educator, and a regular speaker on the Holocaust.

This issue of the Journal is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr Manfred Gerstenfeld, who sadly passed away in Jerusalem on February 25, 2021 at the age of eighty-three. Manfred was a leading light in the field of antisemitism,

particularly in relation to its recent resurgence in Europe. I was introduced to Manfred in 2010 when, as general editor of the *Jewish Political Studies Review* he published my first article on antisemitism. That marked the start of a long association between us, during which time I enjoyed Manfred's hospitality when visiting Jerusalem and benefitted on many occasions from his scholarly advice and support. Like many other antisemitism scholars, I shall always be indebted to him for his kindness and guidance. We are therefore delighted that our "Remembering Manfred Gerstenfeld, 1937-2021" section features two personal tributes to Manfred from people who knew and worked with him over many years. The first, "In Memoriam," is written by Dr Steven Baum, and the second, "A Tribute," is written by Professor Leslie Wagner. These pieces honor Manfred's rich life and legacy.

This issue's book review section features reviews of a range of exciting contemporary books on antisemitism. First, Donna Robinson Divine reviews *The War of Return: How Western Indulgence of the Palestinian Dream Has Obstructed the Path to Peace* by Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf. Robinson Divine describes the book as "a courageously honest and clear account of how an imagined right of return was conjured up by Arab leaders as a rallying cry for rebranding and delegitimizing the Jewish state and as an effective strategy denying success to all efforts to end the Conflict." The book's authors explain why the existence of the UNWRA stymies the very policies that would resolve the Middle East conflict by means of a two-state solution that the agency's Western funders support. According to Robinson Divine, the book is not only well-reasoned, but is also an important one for all those interested in the Middle East conflict. Donna Robinson Divine is Morningstar Family Professor of Jewish Studies and professor of government emerita at Smith College. She served as the president of the Association for Israel Studies in 2017–2019.

Next, Bernard Harrison presents a review or, rather, a "critical notice" of Rabbi Julia

Neuberger's book *Antisemitism: What It Is. What It Isn't. Why It Matters*. According to Harrison, Neuberger's book offers a personal attempt to come to terms with the rise both of antisemitism and of the social acceptability of antisemitism. He writes that "Neuberger has provided an invaluable Guide for the Perplexed: a *very* short paperback of 192 pages, brief enough to be read on a train journey, that explains in useful detail what has been going on, and why we should be worried about it." Bernard Harrison is a literary critic and emeritus professor of philosophy at the Universities of Utah and Sussex. His latest book *Blaming the Jews: Politics and Delusion* was published in 2020 by Indiana University Press.

Third, Andrew Pessin reviews Keith Kahn-Harris's recent book *Strange Hate: Antisemitism, Racism, and the Limits of Diversity*, which he characterizes as an important and timely analysis of contemporary antisemitism. For Pessin, the volume features several innovative ideas, but most importantly it constitutes a searing "J'accuse!" of leftist antisemitism from a well-known thinker of the leftist tradition. Pessin argues that the book should appeal to the general reader and scholar alike, as well as to the left-leaning individual who feels uneasy about the way Jews and Israel have been understood in those circles in recent years. Andrew Pessin is a professor of philosophy at Connecticut College and a research fellow at ISGAP.

Fourth, Gil Ribak reviews *German as a Jewish Problem: The Language Politics of Jewish Nationalism* by Marc Volovici. Ribak describes the book as a "nuanced and innovative study" in which Marc Volovici shows the profound disparity between Jews who view the German language as a symbol of antisemitic persecution and Nazism, and those who see it above all as the language of philosophy, literature, and high culture. Volovici demonstrates how the "Nazification" of the German language was merely one stage in a long history of controversies, engagements, and discord among modern Jews. Characterizing the book as a fine example of cultural and intellectual history, Ribak argues

that it will be useful not only to students of Jewish history, but also to scholars of German and European history, and those who study antisemitism, nationalism, and group identity. Ribak concludes that Volovici's book makes a strong case as to why language matters, and does so in a clear, accessible manner, which can appeal to wider audiences beyond academia. Gil Ribak is an associate professor of Judaic studies at the University of Arizona.

Finally, Robert Rozett reviews Deborah Lipstadt's *Antisemitism Here and Now*. The book is set out as an exchange of letters between Lipstadt and two composite interlocutors: a recently enrolled student and an academic colleague at her university. Using this format, Lipstadt explains the substance of contemporary antisemitism, offers her opinions about it, and gives advice about dealing with it in real-life situations. She takes the reader through a short discourse about the fundamentals of historic antisemitism and its nature, and then sets out the various expressions of contemporary antisemitism that were visible up until the time of writing. Among the many topics Lipstadt addresses are antisemitic archetypes,

antisemitism on campus, antisemitism on the right and left, and antisemitism that stems from Islamic extremism. She also bravely discusses a few controversial subjects, such as the nature of BDS, and the conflicts Jews often feel between progressive ideas and their Zionism. Rozett concludes that, although there are some topics in the book that might have been explored more fully, the result is a very useful, lucid, and engaging primer about contemporary antisemitism, largely from an American perspective, and spiced with a good portion of Lipstadt's personal thoughts. Robert Rozett is a senior historian at the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem, and member of the Academic Working Group and Committee on Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial and Distortion at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

It is with great pleasure that I, my deputy editor Daniel Allington, and our dedicated editorial team, bring you the spring 2021 issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism*. We hope you enjoy reading it.

**Lesley Klaff**  
Editor in Chief

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