

# From Ivory Towers To Castles Of Hate

By AMY NEUSTEIN, Ph.D.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jews were subject to restrictive quota systems that prevented them from attending elite universities. This was most pronounced at the graduate levels, forcing many aspiring Jewish doctors to study abroad. If a Jew wanted to earn a Ph.D., the doors were mostly closed. Schools such as Columbia University or the University of Chicago were notorious for barring

He would later become famous for his interviews of theatrical personalities in his television series, *Tom Cottle: Up Close*. When Dr. Cottle would speak about his Jewish upbringing and culture, the class was entranced. There was no sign of disrespect or enmity from either the Arab students or the American non-Jews in the class.

Something changed, and around the early '90s, a

entangled in, the campaign for equity and inclusion of those American demographic groups that had been excluded from ascending the ladder of American privilege. Federal funds intended for distressed American BIPOC (Black, Indigenous People of Color) populations have, instead, been used by anti-Zionist campaigners to attract charismatic guest lecturers who spew virulent anti-Zionist dogma.



Photo art by The Jewish Press

Jewish doctoral candidates.

This changed by the late 1950s, when the doors at reputable universities began to swing open in order to cultivate young Jewish minds. Many of the Jewish students were at the top of their class, and they repaid their universities handsomely with alumni dues, contributions and endowments.

What is not spoken about, and perhaps not publicized very much, is how universities in the 1970s, in a mad rush to balance their debt, began to take in very large endowments and contributions from the oil-rich Arab countries. I know this firsthand. I was a doctoral candidate at Boston University in the 70s, earning my Ph.D. in Sociology in May 1981. I sat in class with many Arab students (mostly Saudis) and some Iranians.

Sitting in class with Arab students, I stood out as a Jew. This was obvious from my dress code and my rushing out of the classroom early Friday afternoons to catch a trolley back to my apartment so that I could light candles in time for Shabbat. Yet, in spite of my overt Jewish appearance, I did not encounter antisemitism from my Arab classmates, nor did I encounter any prejudice from my instructors, most of whom were not Jewish. In fact, I recall quite vividly how one of my instructors would talk openly in class about his experiences as a Jew growing up in Chicago in the '40s. His name was Dr. Tom Cottle.

match was lit. The combination of infusion of money from the Middle Eastern countries and a social movement to promulgate the Palestinian cause (think "BDS" – Boycott, Divestiture, and Sanctions, which ossified about 10 years later) found its habitat at higher schools of learning. The university setting presented an ideal place to situate and nurture a cause that centered on a presumed "underdog." This galvanized students – sadly among whom were many Jewish students from tepid to nonexistent Jewish backgrounds – to champion the rights of the Palestinians while condemning Israel as "colonizers."

Certainly, the masterminds behind this movement understood that students are easily beckoned by social causes that make them feel empowered. By defending the rights of those they feel are less fortunate, they assuage their guilty conscience for enjoying the middle-class comforts that others do not. This behavior is commonly seen in students born into privilege. By identifying with those of a lesser class they can, in those vicarious moments when they envision themselves downtrodden and disenfranchised, feel vindicated.

It was not until around 2010 that the small fires started in the '90s would become wildfires raging out of control. The factor contributing to this conflagration was the popularly promoted DEI platform at universities nationwide. "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion," while in principle well-meaning, in practice became a dangerous albatross for the Jewish population in particular. This happened once the Palestinian cause was packaged together with, or

One must ask, how can we denude American universities of venom and strife? Certainly, as we saw in the Congressional hearings chaired by Virginia Foxx (R-NC) earlier this month, by holding the presidents of universities accountable for the menacing and threatening hate speech on campus we have taken the first big step.

However, the seeds of venom, sown so many decades ago, require a rethinking of patronage of secular institutions of higher learning. We've seen how they present a precarious setting for Jewish students, exposing them to violent diatribes and physical threats. In an era where we've witnessed more mass shootings on college campuses (and other places too) than at any other time in history, it becomes *a fortiori* even more dangerous for Jewish students, in particular, for they now have the added burden of facing a campus rife with antisemitism.

Alas, there are no easy answers. But from what we've seen from the cowardice of college presidents who shamelessly evaded the straightforward questions posed by Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, the universities, for quite some time, have been enabling a toxic climate prejudicial to Jewish students. This matter deserves nothing less than a full-scale congressional investigation into the usurpation of the federally-funded DEI platform by anti-Zionist agitators.

Pandora's Box has been opened. It must not be closed until we root out the anathema and abomination prevalent at U.S. universities today.

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