

How I Plan to Triumph over Antisemitism: My New Year's Resolution

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FORT LEE, New Jersey — Tonight, as the proverbial hands of time slide across the clock – forever shutting the door on 2023 – a brand new year will begin. As we are greeted by the New Year, this presents a welcomed opportunity to triumph over the Sisyphean challenges we've faced since October 7.

At the top of the list, is the maelstrom of antisemitism unleashed on college campuses and in the streets. In private settings, many Jews have encountered, since Israel's military response to Hamas' brutal rampage in southern Israel, subtle displays of antisemitism: a cool or chilly reception at the local community bank, at the doctor's office, or at a store. We are suddenly reminded of our inescapable minority status in a sea of ethnic strangers. And for many of us who bear Jewish surnames, and for those who likewise possess identifiable first names, we stand out.

To adjust to these challenging times, many have tucked their kippahs underneath baseball hats and caps. Some private home owners have either removed, or considered removing, their mezuzah from their front door. And some have fastened their clothing so that the traditionally worn Star of David or a "chai" pendent won't be seen. I will not do any of this. In fact, I have averred and professed my Jewish identity at the highest decibel since the war began. I have written 30 opinion pieces, which includes reprints, following the war and its concomitant events unfolding in the diaspora. These op-eds have been published in Jewish papers in the United States and in Israel; and a couple of pieces have even appeared in the secular press.

Most interestingly, as the editor of three academic book series and of a speech technology and signals processing peer-reviewed journal, many of my contributors are of the Islamic faith. When the war began, I immediately reached out to my contributors in Jordan, UAE, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Islamic countries to grant extensions to their manuscript-submission deadlines, showing my understanding of the added stress they were facing. The payback was amazing. My contributors, fearing the intense conflict would be prejudicial to them because I am a Jew, were overcome with gratitude. In an end-of-year season's greeting message, one contributor wrote: "In light of the current events in the world, I want to take a moment to express my sincere support for the Jewish community during the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. I recognize that this is a complex and sensitive issue, and my intention is to convey empathy and solidarity during these challenging times."

True, the building blocks of solidarity consist of human compassion and kindness. However, we need more to triumph over antisemitism. As part of my New Year's resolution, I've placed on my agenda two very important items.

First, I have already begun the initial process of setting up telephone conference meetings with lobbyists in Washington, DC. I am asking the lobbyists for their help in securing a Congressional investigation into the federal grant programs intended for insuring equity and inclusion of university students, but have, instead, been usurped by propagandists, who have used these funds to bring in guest lecturers and core faculty members who espouse a full-fledged frontal assault on Israel as "colonists" and "apartheidists."

By resorting to mantras and propagandistic slogans in decrying Israel as a racist, apartheid state, no room is left for discussion or debate, which are undeniably the matrix of university life. In the end, everyone loses. This is so, because while championing the Palestinian cause, the African-American, Native American, and Latino students who most serve (and deserve) to benefit from DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), are woefully left to the side.

The students who are of Palestinian background, or have close friends who are, are consequently made to feel like victims of an "oppressive" regime where violent and deadly conflict is its only solution. No doubt the vitriol and animosity stemming from such a fierce campaign against Israel creates an atmosphere laced with asperities that no Jewish student at a US university can (or should) endure.

My second New Year's resolution is to perform the mitzvah of Tikkun Olam (correcting/repairing the world) by restructuring the family courts. To that end, I am beginning with the San Diego family court system because that is where I am finding some of the most troublesome cases in the country. As a Jewish mother, it pains me to see so many southern Californian women lose custody of their children and denied visitation privileges entirely. In many, if not all, of these cases the mothers are severe victims of domestic violence and coercive control by their former partner or spouse. In addition, their children have been credibly abused by the other parent, many of whom have drug problems. I have set up a "suicide watch" for these distressed mothers, who can reach me late into the night.

Many of the mothers that I soothe, comfort, and console are not Jewish. By seeing the unconditional devotion of a Jewish woman who cares for their children as if they were her own, many mothers have expressed to me that their hearts are warmed toward the Jewish community. In my efforts to help repair a fractured family court system and restore dignity to mothers abused by violent spouses, I see visible signs that I am helping to quell antisemitism – and to that end I am serving the community's collective efforts to triumph over antisemitism. Certainly, a good way to start off the New Year.

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The writer, a PhD, is the author/editor of 16 academic books. She writes on institutional structures and corroded values. Her latest book, *Moral Schisms*, will be published by Oxford University Press.