

Jewish Community Must Demand Better of Trump

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By Amy Neustein, Ph.D.



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FORT LEE, New Jersey –Many years ago, on a cold rainy night in late November I rushed down to the *New York Daily News* building in a desperate attempt to get the ear of their opinion columnist Bob Herbert (later, he'd join the *New York Times*), who'd been writing about the corrupt family court system that had hurt many Jewish mothers like myself. I didn't have an appointment with Herbert because his secretary had put up a barrier. Certainly, I couldn't get past the security guard, and I was frantic.

Suddenly, I spied Donald Trump, a dapper 40ish man, at the other end of the lobby of the *Daily News* building. Trump was often seen at the *Daily News* in those days as he was building his public profile as a real-estate developer. I took a deep breath and gathered my strength. Before I knew it, something propelled me to dash over to him. I extended my hand to introduce myself, and quickly explained the urgency of my getting into see columnist Bob Herbert.

Trump's response was quick. He said: "Come with me." We rode the elevator together and he took me up to see Bob Herbert, bypassing both security and Herbert's secretary. Herbert was sitting at his desk, while Trump and I were standing in the doorway. Furious that I had bypassed his secretary, Herbert got up from his desk and raised his voice. He demanded I apologize at once to his secretary for "end running" her and refused to listen to the important news story I was prepared to share. Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of the moment, what I remember most was the encouraging nod Trump gave me as I was subjected to a dressing-down from this newspaper columnist. I looked Herbert in the eye and declared, "I shall apologize to no one!" I then turned on my heels and left.

The encounter with Trump ended there. But I never forgot his graciousness of doing a personal favor for me at a time when my spirits were low. Similarly, I have not forgotten how I beamed with pride the day Trump moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem during his presidential administration. Nor have I forgotten how crucial it was for him to have recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. The list goes on to include Trump's stellar work in supporting the Abraham Accords, and his many other actions that have been beneficial to Israel.

Because I respect what Trump has done for Jews, I was horrified when I learned that his campaign boasted of underhanded tactics to portray Governor Josh Shapiro as a liability for the Democrats. Marc Caputo, national political reporter for *The Bulwark*, in [an article](#) titled "Trump World Fueled an Anti-Shapiro Whisper Campaign," quoted a Trump campaign adviser who said: "Where we could, we amplified the leftists on Twitter. We fed Shapiro oppo [opposition research] to the media. We did what we could to create more noise and discontent."

Though no one had a crystal ball to predict who Harris would ultimately choose, it is a fact that Shapiro, solely, went through a painful inquisition while the other VP hopefuls were spared. Most notably, Shapiro had to defend his skeptical mid-90s editorial on the willingness of Palestinians to have a peaceful co-existence with Israel, which he wrote while still an undergraduate student. In addition, when I heard news anchors repeatedly ask their guests about Shapiro's "ambitious" personality, I cringed with memories of the "pushy Jew" trope that has clipped the wings of so many Jews who were denied well-deserved promotions and advancement because of such factoids. Unfortunately, Trump's insidious role, as admitted by this own campaign staff member in speaking with Caputo, helped to create a climate that was certainly not propitious for selecting Shapiro as a vice-presidential candidate.

In addition to Trump's role in derailing Shapiro as the VP pick, his repeated attempts to assail the mental competence of Jews who don't support him is destructive because it pits one Jew against the other. As a community, why are we tolerating Trump's verbal attacks on our intelligence and soundness of mind? Do we fear antagonizing an important ally of Israel? Even worse, do we fear that if we expose the bald fact that Trump is assaulting the integrity of the Jewish voters – resorting to unwarranted name calling for anyone who dares to oppose him – we may weaken support for Trump in the Jewish community by flagging such destructive behavior?

All things considered, do we really need to bury our heads in the sand forever? After all, Jewish donors and supporters have the upper hand here. This is an exceptionally tight race and our vote is critical. We must go to Trump and demand that he cease and desist with deriding Jews as mentally impaired. As a Jew I ask for better from Donald Trump, because I deserve better – and so does everyone in the Jewish community, regardless of whether they are voting Republican or Democratic.

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The writer, a Ph.D., is a sociologist, and an author/editor of 16 academic books. Her two most recent books, *From Madness to Mutiny*, second edition, and *Moral Schisms*, will be published by Oxford University Press.