

JVP's READY TO FIGHT SERIES:
"The Toxic Stew: Zionism, Antisemitism, & White Supremacy"
TUESDAY, JAN.10, 2016

Tallie INTRO:

The election of Trump surfaced stuff that's always been there...

An illuminating moment: when the Rabbi debating Richard Spencer couldn't respond to Spencer's question - "Isn't what we're doing the same thing Israel's doing? Deciding who gets to be here and who doesn't?"

Also illuminating: the Jewish Defense League (an extreme right group) sees nothing wrong w/neo-Nazi MLK Day march against Jews in Whitefish, MT...

LIZ JACKSON (Palestine Legal):

Going to share a story of how false accusations leveraged against Palestinian human rights activists = legal strategy to justify targeted suppression but first some background:

- Helped found Palestine Legal (PL) in 2012
- Joined Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign as a Jewish solidarity activist after Operation Cast Lead
- Mentored by National Lawyers Guild, who pointed out that anti-BDS legislation wasn't just a strategy to distract/detract energy of Palestine activists from their organizing, it was also a *legal* strategy... and sure enough--
 - a Jewish student active in pro-Israel organizations sued UC Berkeley for violating "Title 6" for all the Palestine activism that the University of California "tolerated". The judge in the case threw it out because activism for Palestinian human rights fell under protected speech. The plaintiff re-filed with the Department of Education (DOE), (mimicking two other complaints brought against CA universities claiming Palestine activism = anti-semitism)... all complaints (plus one against Rutgers) were dismissed, and attorneys w/the office of civil rights did a LONG factual investigation on campus... found that the Palestine activism was an example of the "robust & discordant discussion to be expected on a college campus"...
 - citation for DOE written decision: DOE, letter to UC Berkeley, Aug.9, 2013, re: Case No. 09-2-2259, 3, available at <http://bit.ly/doeuch>
- This strategy has been driven by a Zionist legal & strategy team headed up by Ken Marcus (brandeis center, amcha initiative, etc)...
 - even though dismissed, Palestine activists are intimidated, and it doesn't look good to have been investigated for anti-semitism... Ken's approach: "Doesn't matter if we win, it matters if we scare people, and if people have to worry about being investigated"
- The next legal strategy was to turn to the State definition of "anti-semitism"... **the 3 D's: *Demonizing Israel / Delegitimizing Israel / holding Israel to a Double standard***... adopted by the State Dept in its work for researching its country reports on human rights &

discrimination, including anti-semitism... was never intended for use domestically, because it's really obvious that it would compromise freedom of speech, which is theoretically an American ideal-- i.e. vigorous debate about the world's most pressing issues...

- They started to focus on California schools (berkeley, irvine, santa cruz)...
 - December 2016: ADL, AIPAC, & other major Israel orgs turned to the US congress, where they submitted a bill in the dark of night, directing the DOE to apply the state department definition to investigations of claims of anti-semitism... so when trying to figure out if Palestine activism creates a hostile environment for Jewish students, they should use the 3 D's. it passed in the senate but was blocked by the fast-track procedures in the House, and is being reintroduced by the new Congress.
- Palestine Legal's [FAQ's](#) on the anti-semitism definition

TAMAR GHABIN (US Campaign for Palestinian Rights)

Going to try to pull out lessons learned!

- Over past few years, anti-BDS legislation has seen a huge proliferation across the country especially at the state level... (in congress bills passed that include anti-BDS provisions, but nothing incredibly worrisome YET... though the "Combatting BDS Act" of 2016 will probably be re-introduced)
- Cuomo (NY) and others now trying to copy his executive order to divest from / boycott / blacklist anyone who supports Boycotts, Divestment, and Sanctions related to Israeli human rights violations
- Zionists have taken to pushing unconstitutional bills to silence those critical of Israel in this country
 - Can understand Zionism as internalized antisemitism... and as white supremacy
 - Those who want to hinder human rights / promote white supremacy get behind it
 - Richard spencer openly said he looks toward Israel as how he wants the US to become
 - Lots of alumni of the anti-BDS legislation in the new administration
- The real situation: BDS does NOT violate anti-discrimination laws!!! There's discrepancy in the wording & *purpose* of these bills... And they ARE winnable fights that we can fight.
- Over a dozen local coalitions to fight these unconstitutional bills... And the goal is not always necessarily to win, but to *educate*... We can't get deterred by not 'winning' cuz education IS winning on some level... These bills have provided an opportunity to reach state legislators and their staff, and these people may go on to become federal legislators and we're getting their ears early!
- 7 components of successful organizing against these bills:
 - 1) Broad & diverse coalition-building (MA! NY!)
 - ACLU has played important role
 - Racial justice, queer & trans groups
 - Important to amplify and NOT tokenize the voices that often don't get heard... eg Palestinians

- 2) Active & continuous lobbying (lobby days; followup with legislators / building relationships)
- 3) Identifying allies within the state legislature (in OH they were able to get a legislator to write an op-ed against the anti-BDS bill!)
- 4) Keeping an eye on hearings / discussions of upcoming legislations (MD! Got ahead of the anti-BDS bill and stopped it before it could be introduced!)
- 5) Reaching out to the media (and connect with the Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU)! They do this work all the time, can help with op-eds, letters to the editor)
- 6) Having call-in days / engage with legislators on social media
- 7) Holding intra-group educational teach-ins... (these bills can be confusing! Need to get on the same page re: how we're framing our activism before we get going with it)
- These laws are specifically aimed at punishing BDS... they aim to have a chilling effect and succeed at that (eg NY)... but *we should use this as an opportunity to talk about BDS!!!*

In 2016, activists successfully defeated anti-BDS legislation in the following states: MD, VA, MA... In NY, activists successfully stopped 2 anti-BDS bills from passing the legislature before Gov. Cuomo signed his anti-BDS exec order

www.righttoboycott.org

CHANDA PRESCOD-WEINSTEIN (theorist; educator):

- Theoretical Physicist
- From an Afro-Caribbean fam and with a white Ashkenazi Jewish father... organizing standpoint draws very much from Black community organizing
- Looking at a framework for thinking about racial justice in a north american context...
Take-away: to think about the "tent of whiteness"

Presenting some questions & answers...

- Are Jews white?
The answer can't be "Yes," as there are *many* Jews of Color, and SO many combinations and variations of identities!
- Well is it at least correct to say that SOME Jews are white?
Absolutely. And it's SO frustrating when white Jews claim vis a vis antisemitism that they're not white.
- Are white Jews always treated like other white people?
Think of white identity as a tent... some people live closer to the center, some live closer to the exit, and things can be somewhat porous as things change over time... white Jews clearly live closer to the exit than the center, evidenced by anti-semitism...
- Where does this leave white Jews in the face of white supremacy? Are they still implicated?
Yes. To live as white in north american society is to benefit from white privilege. This is shorthand for saying that white people are granted easier access to their human rights and are often granted undue rights / hold undue power (and thereby can/often do cause harm to people of color)...

➤ Does Zionism have a relationship w/white supremacy?

YES. The world powers' (especially the US's) support of the [violent] formation of the state of israel wasn't just predicated upon their striving for independence, it was about establishing a white-friendly power base in the middle east... and white euro-descended jews were given the power, and mizrahi jews were held in camps. Since then, other jews of color (eg ethiopians) have been denied refuge despite the Law of Return... (even just [recently](#) with the jews from venezuela!)

There is a real and conceptual connection between zionism/white supremacy & jim crow/white supremacy & s.african apartheid/white supremacy...

The "state of the jews" is a jewish privilege state... Founded on not just the removal/erasure of palestinians, but also on maintaining arabs and other non-white people (even including jews) as 2nd-class citizens... a system maintained with heavy military force-- *funded* by the U.S. (money that might've otherwise gone to ending ongoing structural jim crow)... and the IDF now trains U.S. forces to respond violently to indigenous communities & other communities of color... (Not to mention that the US did business w/south africa while they were in the depths of apartheid)

We need to understand that anti-blackness and, more broadly, racism-- is everywhere.

Mizrahim are NOT treated the same.

We need to do our homework about how colonialism & white supremacy work together, and work together w/zionism.

Important to highlight that israel has spent SO much \$ trying to get people to conflate zionism w/judaism... it's a key part of their program. It sets them up to be un-criticizable.

So we need to educate people about why they should distinguish.

Heavy theoretical stuff, but is valuable in understanding black solidarity w/palestine... to see that it's a natural outcome of 2 peoples recognizing a common experience under white supremacy...

Recs for 2 novels:

- 1) [Among the Living](#) by Jonathan Rabb (about a holocaust survivor learning to be white in the american south... came out fall 2016)
- 2) [Long Division](#) by Kiese Laymon (learning about jewish experiences under the KKK)

[Anthology on antisemitism](#) JVP is putting out in April (Chanda has piece in it)

Chanda's public writing here: <http://www.cprescodweinstein.com/writing/>

Q&A:

Q: How do we define zionism to someone who doesn't know what it is?

Tallie: Think about *nationalism*... that the state should have only specific people in it (based on racial / religious purity)...

Tamar: WE understand zionism = white supremacy / apartheid / genocide / ethnic cleansing... but we need to use the term *zionism* when we talk about it to make it well-known enough that we don't have to use analogies...

Liz: White supremacy in the US is different here than in israel... We at least have laws in our country that say we shouldn't have race discrimination (even tho our systems still function as tho we don't have those stipulations)... Israel's legal system is literally set up for different people to have different privileges / status...

Chanda: It's important to *not* try to collapse things into a single narrative... There are definitely similarities (esp re: indigenous populations displaced early on)... White supremacy / colonialism are adaptive... At various points american laws have adapted to protect white supremacy, which makes it extremely hard to combat (which is part of the current frustration)...

Right now we're seeing white supremacy in the era of Black Lives Matter...

As a jew of color, have experienced much worse racism from white jews than anti-semitism from non-jews...

Tallie: re Whitefish, MT... sent a message to the academic council about sending messages of solidarity, and a palestinian academic was excited to participate, but wanted to be sure a message from a palestinian would be *welcome*

Experiences with this are different w/leftist movements... most of us see folks on the left explicitly denouncing anti-semitism

Q: How do we move from a "free speech" (or "academic freedom") framing to the more radical "Palestinian rights" framing?

Tamar: framing is really important in these fights against anti-BDS legislation... many groups start by using the free speech framing (or academic freedom) as a way to get in the door and then talk about BDS & Palestine...

Liz: the way Palestine Legal handles this tension is to try to integrate discussion about palestinian freedom into every conversation, op-ed, legal letter, etc. that's about free speech. "Free speech" frame is necessary for defending rights to speak at all, and also can be an opening to access audiences who otherwise would not listen.