
**ANTISEMITISM IN
AMERICA TODAY:**

**Outspoken
Experts Explode
the Myths**

**EDITED BY
JEROME A. CHANES**

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To the memory of my mother
ביילה בת ר' משה הכהן ולאה

Berta Gottlieb Chanes

and my father

שמחה עמנואל בן ר' יעקב ורחל

Manuel S. Chanes

ing surveillance on the mountain ridge in an attempt to enforce an arrest warrant issued for Randy Weaver for allegedly selling illegal firearms to a government agent three years previously. Weaver had failed to appear at a 1991 court hearing and had vowed never to be taken alive. Police and federal agents used tanks, earth-moving equipment, remote-controlled surveillance machines, and a helicopter in a futile effort to dislodge the Weavers from their cabin on top of Ruby Ridge.

By the time it was over, three people were dead, including Degan, Vicki Weaver, and the couple's fourteen-year-old son. The event made national headlines and galvanized Klansmen, Christian patriots, and skinheads across the country.

Eventually, Populist Party presidential candidate James "Bo" Gritz negotiated the surrender of Weaver and Harris, who had also been severely wounded. Weaver and Harris were acquitted of murder charges related to the shooting of Marshal Degan in July 1993. In addition to highlighting the murderous potential of Christian Identity believers, the Weaver standoff was significant in at least three other respects.

First, it demonstrated the tremendous depth of local support that the Christian Patriot movement had cultivated in the region. For eighteen months, from February 1991 until August 1992, the Weavers held out in their cabin without electricity or telephone while being regularly supplied with food by a network of friends, neighbors, and supporters. After Weaver surrendered, Identity leaders and far-rightists organized the United Citizens for Justice to press for murder indictments against federal authorities.

Second, the acquittal of Weaver and Harris demonstrated that the criminal justice system could not always be effective in prosecuting even the most extreme far-rightists, especially in cases where jurors thought the government was using strong-arm tactics. Like the 1988 sedition acquittals in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the trial of Weaver and Harris was a debacle for government prosecutors. In the eyes of the media and the jurors, the white supremacists had become the victims and government agents were the criminals.

Third, the siege revealed the media savvy of the far right. It also demonstrated certain weaknesses within the media itself. Weaver consciously chose terms like "white separatist" to avoid

the negative connotations associated with white *supremacy*, and the hundreds of journalists who descended on Idaho to report on the siege dutifully described him as such. Virtually no mention was made of the family's Identity beliefs or of the fact that Weaver had attended Aryan Nations meetings at the group's Hayden Lake compound.

Key activists worked the courtroom on a full-time basis during the trial, arranging interviews for Weaver and spoon-feeding information to the press. Ironically, this tactic was borrowed straight from the political trials of leftists and civil rights movement activists. The result was overwhelmingly positive coverage in the local press. Newspapers that might have condemned groups like Aryan Nations never criticized the Weavers or examined their beliefs closely. Instead, they placed all the blame for the confrontation on the federal agents.

THE ELECTORAL ARENA

In contrast to the violent, clandestine activities of the military wing of the far right, other sectors of the movement sought to use the very visible arena of electoral politics to gain support for their message and organizations. Unlike the political efforts of the Klan in the 1920s, however, these attempts were rarely designed to win a voting majority, although in some instances they came surprisingly close. Instead, far-right political campaigns were used intentionally to provide a platform for the dissemination of racism, antisemitism, and homophobic bigotry.

In other instances, such as the campaigns waged by Lyndon LaRouche and his surrogates, the political process was also viewed as part of a larger strategy to destabilize mainstream institutions—such as the Democratic Party—that were believed to hold together the center of political power.

LYNDON LAROCHE

For almost three decades, Lyndon LaRouche has engaged in political activities that have been chameleonlike in their shifts from left to right; however, he has been consistent in creating and elab-

orating conspiracy theories that contain a strong dose of anti-semitism.

LaRouche's National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) was founded in the late 1960s and drew its initial support from former members of various left-wing groups such as Students for a Democratic Society and the Progressive Labor Party. LaRouche quickly moved to the right, establishing alliances with organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and the Liberty Lobby. He set up dozens of front groups in the United States, Latin America, and Europe—all of them dedicated to promoting elaborate conspiracy theories and LaRouche's peculiar brand of antisemitic, neofascist ideology.⁹

LaRouche made his first bid for president in 1976. His campaigns in 1980, 1984, and 1988 netted a total of more than \$1.7 million in federal matching funds. LaRouche even campaigned from federal prison in 1992, when he was serving time for a 1988 conviction for loan fraud and tax evasion. Although LaRouche never drew more than a minute fraction of the national vote in any presidential campaign, his electoral strategy was successful in several respects.

LaRouche's followers succeeded in winning significant numbers of low-level positions within some local Democratic Party structures. For example, in the March 1984 Democratic primaries near Chicago, the LaRouchians won fifty-seven suburban county committee seats, including all thirty-one seats in DuPage County. LaRouche's National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC) claimed they ran 114 candidates in Illinois that year.¹⁰

In perhaps the best-known incident of LaRouchian electoral manipulation, two LaRouche-sponsored candidates, Janice Hart and Mark Fairchild, won the March 1986 Illinois Democratic Party primary nominations for secretary of state and lieutenant governor, respectively. This stunning upset forced Adlai Stevenson III, the party's chosen gubernatorial candidate, to withdraw from the ticket. Stevenson, who had otherwise been expected to mount a strong campaign, ended up running as an independent and lost.

LaRouche pursued a "tripartisan strategy" of running candidates for public office as Republicans, Democrats, or independents. Congressional districts with very small numbers of either

registered Democrats or Republicans were targeted because the party with the fewest registered voters usually didn't run a candidate. This left the political field open to the LaRouchians. After winning in these uncontested primaries, the LaRouche candidates went on to certain defeat in the final election, but not before they had created political and media havoc and secured an effective platform for their ideas. LaRouche delighted in the turmoil these efforts caused within both political parties, particularly the Democratic, and he viewed this strategy as a kind of political guerrilla warfare.

LaRouche's electoral efforts were also successful because they broke new ground for other far-right groups such as the Populist Party, which copied his approach.

DAVID DUKE, RALPH FORBES, AND THE POPULIST PARTY

Formed in February 1984, the Populist Party disguised its neo-Nazi agenda by nominating former Olympic athlete Bob Richards as its first presidential candidate. Among the key figures behind the party were Robert Weems, a former state chaplain for the Mississippi Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; Ralph Forbes, a Klan activist and Christian Identity minister; and A. J. Barker, a former state organizer for the National Association for the Advancement of White People. Behind them all was the shadowy figure of Willis Carto, founder of the antisemitic Liberty Lobby and a leader on the far right since the 1950s.

The Liberty Lobby's biweekly tabloid, *The Spotlight*, trumpeted the cause of the Populist Party to its 100,000-plus subscribers and the 20,000 members of its "board of policy."

Beginning in 1987, the Populist Party pursued the same tripartisan strategy as LaRouche, running candidates as Democrats, Republicans, and Populists. The most successful efforts were the campaigns of former Klan leader David Duke. As Leonard Zeskind summarizes in *Ballot Box Bigotry: David Duke and the Populist Party*, "[Duke] entered the Democratic Presidential primaries, announcing his candidacy in June 1987. He ran for President in the 1988 general election as the candidate of the Populist

the United States Supreme Court to review the appeals court ruling. (ADL and other Jewish organizations have filed amicus curiae briefs supporting CUNY's as yet unsuccessful appeals.)

Of greater ultimate significance than Jeffries's legal victory, however, is his success in reaching the hearts and minds of college students. How can one explain the appeal of such noxious ideas to college-educated audiences? One factor noted previously in the spread of myths about Jewish control of the slave trade, obviously, is the woeful lack of understanding most students have of history—what the historical record states, and how scholars come to understand these events.

Most Americans, black or white, know nothing about their own history, and know nothing about the history of persecution and degradation that brought Jews to this country. As Alisa Solomon and Eric Breindel have pointed out, many seem to lack, also, an understanding of what antisemitism is. If the Nation of Islam's—or Leonard Jeffries's—exaggerations and distortions of Jewish involvement in slavery reach students before a truthful account of events, then those students, unless they possess an unusual sense of intellectual curiosity and rigor, are lost; they are captive to Farrakhan's and Jeffries's version of history.

With Holocaust denial, it is again the ignorance of student journalists that is being exploited. Though there is no evidence that any of the editors who have published Bradley Smith's advertisements believed the calumny contained in them, most have defended their decision on grounds that not publishing the ads would violate the spirit of the First Amendment. These students never seem to realize that the First Amendment gives them, as editors, the right to decide exactly what goes into their newspaper. The First Amendment does not compel an editor to publish an ad; rather, it prevents the *government* from dictating what will or won't go into a publication. (ADL's reports on Holocaust denial elaborate on this distinction.)

Both Holocaust denial and NOI's slave-trading myths, of course, are conspiracy theories; their purpose is not to identify occasional plots which have caused historical incidents, but to cast a "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as the single motivating factor in world events. Though ostensibly dealing with singular occurrences, their intent is to seduce an audience to a specific

way of looking at Jews' interaction with history. Thus, the editor of one Holocaust-denial publication wrote in the inaugural issue of his journal that "Talmudic Jewry is at war with humanity. Revolutionary communism and International Zionism are twin forces working toward the same goal: a despotic world government with the capital in Jerusalem."

Conspiracy theories of this sort appear to be the vanguard of antisemitic ideology today, just as "anti-Zionist" rhetoric was twenty years ago, or pseudoscientific theories about the Jewish "race" dominated the antisemitism of the Nazis. One reason for their appeal to professional hatemongers is the currency of other conspiracy theories in the popular culture. After the scandals of Watergate and Iran Contra alerted the public to the possibility of governmental covert action, the fear that world events have spun beyond the control of ordinary citizens (because control of the society has fallen to sinister forces) fueled the popularity of works such as Oliver Stone's film *JFK* and Pat Robertson's best-seller *The New World Order*.

If segments of the population are really willing to believe that President Kennedy was killed by the military-industrial complex because he was too soft on Communism, or that a secret group of Bavarian Freemasons has controlled the secular left for more than two hundred years, then it is not hard to imagine some of these same people falling for the lies of Bradley Smith or the fabrications of Louis Farrakhan and Leonard Jeffries. All of these conspiracy theories share the core feature that the "research" which supports them—little more, in fact, than a compendium of anecdotes divorced from their original context—is rigged to arrive at predetermined conclusions, not historical revelations or insights.

Indeed, some conspiracy theories in general circulation owe their genesis to extremist hate propaganda. Lyndon LaRouche, the demagogue known for years for his twisted theories linking the drug epidemic, AIDS, world "underpopulation," and international financial crises to Jews—particularly ADL⁸—as well as the Tri-lateral Commission, the British monarchy, the KGB, the International Monetary Fund, the Congress of Vienna, the Freemasons, and Henry Kissinger (among others), also made strenuous efforts to popularize the "October Surprise," a supposed 1980 plot instigated by the Reagan campaign to ensure the presidential candi-

date's election by delaying the release of American hostages in Tehran. This lurid tale gained such popularity that only a congressional investigation put the theory to rest.

LaRouche associates were also responsible for the assertion that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, which supposedly "controlled" a European drug-smuggling route, had allowed terrorists to commit the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. This fantasy found its way into court—where the LaRouchean testimony was discredited—when Pan Am's insurers used the scenario to argue that the airline's lax security was not to blame for the catastrophe. Reports of the trial inspired a cover story in *Time* magazine devoted to the LaRouche-inspired conjecture.

Liberty Lobby, the nation's largest antisemitic propaganda mill, has similarly joined the JFK conspiracy craze by publishing *Final Judgment*, a book which purports to expose "how the CIA, the Mossad and the Meyer Lansky Crime Syndicate collaborated in the murder of John F. Kennedy. . . . The book also presents new revelations which now show that the so-called 'French connection' to the JFK assassination is, in reality, the Israeli connection. . . . [The book] brings forth new material which links former President George Bush to the JFK conspiracy." Of course, Liberty Lobby's chief counsel, Mark Lane, had already written a JFK conspiracy book titled *Plausible Denial*; the organization's mania for conspiracies, however, appears to be inclusive enough to assimilate both theses.⁹

The effort of hate groups to use such outlandish ideas to lure the gullible into accepting their agendas, or at least part of them, is easy to understand. Less explicable, and more indicative of the worsening climate of intolerance, is the disturbing tendency of too many responsible citizens to rationalize or ignore antisemitism and antisemites when they emerge in the mainstream.

Take, for example, the recent political campaigns of David Duke. When the former Klansman and neo-Nazi unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate in 1990, and for governor of Louisiana in 1991, he carried the majority of white votes in both elections; in the governor's race he reportedly won two-thirds of the white fundamentalist vote.

This is not to suggest that every Duke supporter was an overt antisemite or Nazi sympathizer. The findings of ADL's 1992 sur-

vey, as well as the personal experiences of most of Louisiana's small Jewish population, would refute such a charge. Duke skillfully manipulated voter discontent toward blacks, the federal government, and the Louisiana political establishment. By thus appealing to voters' other prejudices, he was able to convince those voters to cast a blind eye toward his virulent hatred of Jews.*

Given the evident popularity Duke enjoyed among white evangelicals, the role that the Reverend Billy McCormack, the state director of the Christian Coalition and at the time an influential member of the Louisiana Republican Central Committee, played during this period is particularly troubling. On September 23, 1989, McCormack and his associates on the Central Committee tabled a motion to censure then state legislator Duke. The state party never repudiated Duke during his term as legislator, despite the unanimous condemnation of the Republican National Committee, and despite the fact that Duke was known to be selling racist and antisemitic hate propaganda from his legislative office.

When interviewed by the *Los Angeles Times* in November 1990 about Duke, McCormack suggested that the former Grand Wizard posed no greater a threat to America than "the Jewish element in the ACLU." He added that Duke was "saying some things that are very true, and that's the reason he's getting as many good marks as he's getting." Because some of Duke's political positions apparently echoed McCormack's, McCormack was willing to defend Duke. He did so even though in defending Duke, he not only ignored the twenty-year record of one of America's leading hatemongers, but also indulged in antisemitic scapegoating of his own.

A similar trend emerged from the 1992 presidential campaign of the political commentator Pat Buchanan. For a figure in the political mainstream, Buchanan has compiled a disturbing record of antagonism toward Jews and other American minorities. He has accused Israel and the American Jewish community of fomenting the Gulf War; he has offered unsettling praise for Hitler's "great courage . . . oratorical powers . . . extraordinary

*See Mark Mellman's analysis of the Duke vote in chapter 9 of this volume. (Editor's note)

department, often in concert with other agencies, drafts amicus curiae briefs and model legislation to protect civil and religious liberties, and to establish constitutionally viable punishments for extremists whose bigotry and hate motivates them to engage in criminal activities.

In sum, the formulation adopted from ADL's 1913 statement of purposes could well serve as a motto for all Jewish organizations: "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people . . . to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike."

NOTES

1. ADL confirmed this finding with a June 1993 survey, also conducted for the League by Marttila and Kiley, on racial attitudes in the United States. This second study concluded that education (or lack thereof) is the most important predictor of racially prejudiced attitudes, and that a high correlation exists between intolerance and xenophobia generally, and anti-black racism specifically. Among the most prejudiced group (29 percent of the population), neither political ideology nor party affiliation proved a consistent predictor of racial prejudice, though ideological liberals and moderates were more likely to fall in the least prejudiced group (45 percent of the population). The only significant difference between the two studies concerned the relationship of age to prejudice: antisemitism steadily declined among younger Americans, but racism was higher among Americans aged 18 to 29 (31 percent), than those aged 30 to 49 (23 percent).

2. The latter two conspiracies signify a disturbing new trend among neo-Nazi skinheads to act upon more ambitious and organized violent schemes either by working with or taking inspiration from older, more established hate groups. Although neither of these incidents resulted in a loss of life, since June 1990 there have been more than two dozen murders committed by racist skinheads—in the preceding three years there had been only six. These homicides have included the stabbing death of a homeless black man in Alabama; the firebombing of a gay white man and lesbian black woman in Oregon; the stomping death of a fifteen-year-old Vietnamese immigrant in Texas; and the robbery and stabbing of an eighty-three-year-old woman in Florida by her own skinhead grandson. Neo-Nazi skinheads currently number approximately 3,500, affiliated with more than 160 gangs, in over 40 states. In the year since these two plots were uncovered, skinhead hatred and violence have shown no signs of abating.

3. This was not the first instance in which Khalid Abdul Muhammad had attacked Arabs. According to Peter Noel, writing in the February 15,

1994, issue of the *Village Voice*, Muhammad in 1992 appeared on the New York radio station WLIB with a member of a rival Black Muslim sect. There, he attacked his opponent for having "become not just a white man's nigger but now . . . the Arabs' nigger." He also referred to Arabs as "the rusty, dusty, dirty desert Arabs," and reportedly blamed the Prophet Muhammad for the terrible conditions of the world today—a remark blatantly blasphemous to traditional Islam.

4. The current exceptions are Nebraska, South Carolina, Utah, and Wyoming.

5. When Bradley Smith's ads first appeared in 1991, the student editor-in-chief at Cornell's *Daily Sun* also defended the decision to run the piece on grounds that it "did not overtly slur Jews." His defense prompted Eric Breindel, an editor for the *New York Post*, to write, "Those who deny that the mass murder of European Jewry by Hitler and his collaborators took place commit an unspeakable outrage against Jewish history, Jewish memory and Jewish humanity. If they aren't anti-Semites . . . then there's no such thing as an anti-Semite."

6. Minister Farrakhan, responding on the *Arsenio Hall Show* to Professor Gates's characterization of the book, stated, "You know a bible, a bible should never be denigrated. The word of God should never be denigrated." The issue for Minister Farrakhan thus was not his book's antisemitism, but Professor Gates's use of the term *bible!*

7. It is important to bear in mind that in contrast to Professors Martin and Jeffries, a number of African-American scholars and academic leaders—Cornel West, Orlando Patterson, Randall Kennedy, and Henry Louis Gates at Harvard, Selwyn Cudjoe at Wellesley, Russell Adams at Howard University, Roger Wilkins at George Mason University, the feminist scholar Bell Hooks, and United Negro College Fund Director William Gray—have been at the forefront in denouncing black antisemitism.

8. Vintage antisemitism from LaRouche includes his bizarre analysis of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*: "The fallacy of the 'Protocols of Zion' is that it misattributes the alleged conspiracy to Jews generally, to *Judaism*. A corrected version of the 'Protocols' would stipulate that the evil paths cited were actually the practices of . . . B'nai B'rith" (*New Solidarity*, December 8, 1978). LaRouche's particular obsession with ADL stems from the league's exposure of his group's antisemitism during the 1970s and the assistance we provided prosecutors in their successful tax, loan, and mail fraud case against the organization. The conviction resulted in LaRouche receiving a fifteen-year federal sentence in 1988, from which he was paroled in January 1994. ADL's recent publication *Paroled: The LaRouche Political Cult Regroups* discusses the many facets of LaRouche's organization, its philosophy, and its campaign against ADL.

9. Moreover, L. Fletcher Prouty, a retired Air Force colonel who has been interviewed on Liberty Lobby radio programs and has served on Liberty Lobby's "Populist Action Committee," reportedly was the model for "Mr. X," Donald Sutherland's character, in Oliver Stone's *JFK*.

10. William F. Buckley, *The Search for Anti-Semitism* (New York: Continuum), 1992, p. 126.

11. In addition to his work with the Abundant Life Clinic, Dr. Muhammad is NOI's leading contact with the LaRouche organization. In the 1980s, Muhammad participated in a Paris meeting on AIDS called by a LaRouche front group. In the fall of 1992, he collaborated in a series of meetings and rallies with LaRouche representatives to denounce ADL as "the new Ku Klux Klan"—an ironic designation, considering the fact that LaRouche has been associated with members of the "old" Ku Klux Klan. The most recent of these rallies attended by Dr. Muhammad took place on April 13, 1994, at Baltimore's Morgan State University.

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How Jews Use Antisemitism

ARTHUR HERTZBERG

Arthur Hertzberg has been professor of history at Columbia University, and is now visiting professor of humanities of New York University. He is the author most recently of *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter*.

Arthur Hertzberg offers, within a historical context, a sharp counterpoint to Abraham Foxman's observations on the role of the organized Jewish community in counteracting antisemitism.

J.A.C.

Studies of antisemitism have almost invariably included a question for both Jews and Gentiles: In your view, how virulent is antisemitism? The answer is strikingly different. In the United States more than three-quarters of American Jews think that antisemitism is a serious threat; at least nine out of ten Gentiles believe that Jew-hatred is residual and vanishing. In the former Soviet Union, in a study done in 1990, four out of five Jews predicted antisemitic violence that year, but only 2 percent of the non-Jews thought that pogroms were possible. In actual fact, the Jews were wrong—there was no violence—but that did not bely their fears. Jews in the former Soviet Union continue to answer the poll takers that they regard antisemitic violence as a present danger.

This striking difference in perception is not the only anomaly in the recent history of antisemitism. The overt reaction by