



WEEKEND READS

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The man who saved more Jews than Schindler

By Jane M. Friedman

As a journalist in Israel in the 1980s, I'd covered the Lebanon War and violence in the West Bank. But I'd always felt like an outsider. Last month, I returned to Jerusalem after nearly 35 years away. This time, though, I wasn't just an observer. Dancing around a Torah scroll at a tiny Haredi yeshiva, I was a participant.

That Torah was saved thanks to Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a Portuguese official who rescued thousands of Jews from the Nazis — including my grandparents.

For two days in November, Sousa Mendes was posthumously honored by the city of Jerusalem and Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to victims of the Holocaust. I attended those celebrations along with others — mostly secular American Jews like me — whose family members owed him their lives.

Defying his own government

Sousa Mendes was the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux, France, when German forces overwhelmed the country in 1940. He defied his own government and issued thousands of visas that allowed an estimated 30,000 refugees to escape. Ten thousand Jews

were said to have been saved, including my beloved grandmother Dora Friedmann, my grandfather Jozef Friedmann and my uncle Marcel Friedmann.

In fact, historians believe that Sousa Mendes may have been responsible for the largest rescue by a single individual during the Holocaust. (For comparison, Oskar Schindler, a better-known rescuer thanks in part to Steven Spielberg's movie, is credited with saving 1,200 Jews.)

For my relatives, the visas were a last-minute miracle. They'd been on the run since May 10, 1940, when Germany attacked Belgium. First they fled to France. Then, with visas in hand, they walked over a French footbridge into Spain on June 23, 1940, days before Germany sealed the border. They took a train to the riverside city of Porto, north of Lisbon, and waited for my father, Willem Friedmann, a prisoner of war. He showed up four months later, holding forged documents and covered in lice, having smuggled himself over the Pyrenees into Spain.

The Holocaust 'didn't exist for us'

Growing up on Long Island, the daughter of elegant French-speaking Jews from the diamond trade who rejected organized religion, I knew nothing of these stories. World War II and the Holocaust were never mentioned in our family. They didn't exist for us. My brother and I even had a German nanny. It was only after my parents died that my uncle Marcel told me about my family's escape, although he had no idea that one individual was responsible.

In 2012, I showed a transcript of that interview to a cousin who immediately said that Sousa Mendes had saved them. My grandmother's 1940 Belgian passport bore the right scribbled signature. I joined the U.S. Sousa Mendes Foundation and immersed myself in research to help identify the thousands of refugees he saved.

Punished for his heroism

Sousa Mendes paid a heavy price for his heroism. The Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar had prohibited visas for Jews and stateless people. Sousa Mendes, a deeply observant Catholic, knew what would befall the masses huddling around his consulate if he didn't give them the visas they were begging for. He went to his bed and, emerging three days later, announced that he would grant visas to all who asked.

With his two sons and a Hasidic acquaintance, Rabbi Chaim Kruger, who had pleaded with the consul to defy his own government, he established an assembly line, issuing thousands of visas over the next few days until Salazar ordered him back to Lisbon.

Sousa Mendes was tried, expelled from the foreign service and stripped of his salary and pension. He died in poverty in 1954.

His 12 children were pariahs in their own country. Most fled Portugal, establishing new lives elsewhere without the burden of the past. It took decades for Portugal to posthumously restore his ambassadorial status.

Honored by Israel

But Israel didn't forget. In 1966, three years after Yad Vashem established a program to recognize non-Jews who took risks to rescue Jews, Sousa Mendes was named a Righteous Among the Nations. In November, in Yad Vashem's Hall of Remembrance, the consul's grandson Gerald Mendes rekindled the eternal flame in his memory while a cantor chanted prayers.

And in the late afternoon of Nov. 8, I joined others in a standing-room-only tent overlooking a square landscaped with 6,000 pink and red flowers, for the dedication of Kikar Sousa Mendes — Sousa Mendes Square.

"This small corner of Jerusalem, the eternal city, now carries the name of a hero," Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion proclaimed. Colette Avital, a former Israeli ambassador to Portugal who had pressed the Portuguese government to rehabilitate the rescuer, talked about the obligation to remember not only those murdered in the Holocaust but those who saved Jews.

Hunting for a rabbi's grave

On Nov. 9, our group visited Jerusalem's huge municipal cemetery, with more than 150,000 graves dug into a mountain on the city's periphery. Finding the tomb of Chaim Kruger — the Haredi rabbi who convinced Sousa Mendes to issue the lifesaving visas — was not easy.

Once it was located, Mordecai Paldiel, a leader of the U.S. Sousa Mendes Foundation, read the tombstone inscription listing Kruger's relatives, including his mother and four sisters, who were murdered in the Holocaust. Paldiel then recited Hebrew prayers for the rabbi and "the murdered innocents." I was swept away in a moment of tribal bonding, as if the rabbi had been one of my own.

An assimilated Jew among Hasidim

All that was left was to celebrate the Torah, which had been spirited out of Nazi-occupied Europe by a rabbi with a visa from Sousa Mendes. The event was with students at a Jerusalem yeshiva, and I wondered how that would feel. After all, I had been trained to disapprove of Hasidim and Haredim. They looked different and dressed differently from us assimilated Jews. Their religious practice, their separation of men and women, was foreign to me. And I knew they were trying to make Israel into a more religiously intense country.

A rabbi removed the Torah from a wooden cabinet that passed for an ark as young yeshiva bochers with long payot watched with curiosity. Paldiel danced with a younger

rabbi as we clapped and kissed the Torah, a first for me.

It was an emotional moment, a deep connection with Jewish people I had never expected to meet, whose stories I had never expected to hear. Among them was Suchi Steinberg, a yeshiva student from Brooklyn whose great-grandparents were murdered in the Shoah. Here was a Haredi Jew at the opposite spectrum of Jewish practice from me. But we both embodied Jewish survival after the Holocaust, and I felt that bound us together more than anything that could pull us apart. I was definitely not an outsider anymore.

The Jewish afterlife: How New York preserves memories across generations

By Anna Kaufman

The news of my great-uncle Archie's death broke on our family WhatsApp group earlier this year. He was 91 years old, a geochemist for the Weizman Institute of Science in Israel, and the last living member of a fierce foursome that made up the first generation of my family in the United States on my father's side.

Archie was the youngest of the four: Betty, the next youngest, was a bookkeeper and died at 70; then Ben — my grandfather — a pharmacist who passed in 2004 at 77; and Harry, the eldest, who was a postman, and died in 1992 at 79. Kaufmans around the country posted a flurry of condolences on WhatsApp, remembering Archie with fondness. The most common refrain was "May his memory be for a blessing."

I had never thought much about that phrase before, though it is perhaps the most common Jewish response to someone's death. Now, with the stark reality of a generation gone, I find myself pondering its poignancy.

May his memory be for a blessing. It's often abbreviated on gravestones as Z"L, for the Hebrew *zikhrono* or *zikhronah livrakha*, meaning "of blessed memory." It dates to

the Talmud and is a traditional way of signaling that those who have gone can live on inside of us.

It hints at an afterlife — not in the religious sense of a world to come, but in a real sense of something lingering after death. In some ways, I've been living this generation's afterlife since I moved to New York City in 2017.

My family has a quintessential Jewish New York story. My great-grandfather Israel moved to Lower Manhattan from Russia in August 1913 and became a garment worker. He was followed nine years later by his wife, Stishe, and their eldest son, Harry, who was 12 at the time. The other three were born here. Stishe's Hebrew name was Channe, as is mine.

Harry stayed in New York the longest, raising two daughters in a Bronx household that he kept strictly kosher. His daughter Fran was my welcome committee when I arrived in the city for college. My grandfather Ben, born the year Stishe arrived in New York — they called him the reunion baby — served in the Navy during World War II and moved out to California in 1965.

Betty, who my father describes as almost comically loving, had two daughters, eventually moving to Las Vegas.

Archie, the baby of the group, took the family history seriously, compiling poetry written by his father for future generations. He moved to Israel in the mid-1960s and had four children, who carry on the tradition of a tight-knit Kaufman clan.

I was at Essex Market recently to get ice cream with a friend and noticed they were serving a special flavor called “L’chaim.” The placard described it as “a celebration of the diverse and resilient people who immigrated to the Lower East Side at the turn of the century, the people who crowded into tenements and started family businesses and brands we are still enjoying today.”

The flavor was dirty chai mixed with coffee, tea and spices from the local Porto Rico coffee company. I ordered it, thinking of Archie’s father, Israel, himself one of these immigrants, hoping he might crack a smile at the poetic longevity of the choices he made so long ago.

Some people say New York isn’t as Jewish as it used to be, but for me its streets are populated by all the ghosts of generations past — their memories blessing the concrete.

The phantom spirit of the garment workers who thoughtfully sewed our culture into the fabric of this city lives on, their bagel shops and bravado serving as defining features of our neighborhoods still.

And so the phrase gives birth to a tangible afterlife. May his memory be for a blessing. May your ancestors walk alongside you, their wisdom becoming your own, and may the many blessings they left weave into your daily life without notice.

L’chaim — to life, or to their lives, perhaps it’s better said. Archie, Betty, Harry, and Ben. Bestowers of the wisecrack and of curls that thicken in the New York humidity, of this city suspended in time, blessed and made mine by their memories, passed from one generation to the next.

They hate to see a girlboss getting divorced: ‘My Unorthodox Life’ is back

By Irene Katz Connelly

Everyone knows the girlboss era is over.

For almost a decade, the term denoted admiration for a woman who, through grit and determination, achieves the kind of powerful career historically reserved for men. But millennials have become disillusioned with Lean In-style dogmas that feel increasingly out of reach in our vastly unequal society. And stories of mismanagement and abuse at female-led companies have challenged the notion that women are inherently enlightened or progressive leaders.

In recent years, zeal for the girlboss has curdled into disdain. The girlboss has been eulogized in the press. She’s been pilloried in memes. On social media, the slogan “gaslight, girlboss, gatekeep” has become shorthand for a woman who seeks to ascend the ranks of a broken system rather than to change it.

Those trumpeting the death of the girlboss appear not to have watched the confused meditation on female empowerment that is the Netflix reality show *My Unorthodox Life*. Nor does the show’s star, Julia Haart, seem aware of this archetype’s newly ignominious status. A formerly Haredi rebbetzin (rabbi’s

wife) who left her community to become a fashion mogul in the secular world, Haart has positioned her transformation from repressed housewife to leather-clad, latte-sipping executive as the core of her brand.

But in the show’s second season, fissures in that narrative start to appear. When Haart divorces her billionaire husband, Silvio Scaglia, she experiences a reversal of fortune that shouldn’t be possible for a woman who has it all — and, if inadvertently, exposes the problems with the girlboss version of female liberation.

For those who choose to remain blissfully ignorant of Netflix’s incursions into reality TV, a little background: Hailing from Monsey, New York, Haart married and raised four children within a Haredi community she described as repressive and patriarchal. (Her characterizations of Monsey on *My Unorthodox Life* raised ire among some Haredi women, who used the briefly viral hashtag #myorthodoxlife to share stories of happiness and fulfillment within their communities.) In 2013, she got divorced and set out to try her luck in the fashion industry.

Just a few years after entering the secular world, Haart appeared to have achieved astounding success: She launched a line of shoes, designed a Met Gala dress for Kendall Jenner and, a few months before marrying Scaglia, became CEO and co-owner of Elite World Group, a modeling agency her husband had purchased several years earlier. Haart's three adult children — Batsheva, an influencer, Shlomo, a shy student, and Miriam, a precocious coder — joined her in the marital penthouse and play prominent roles in *My Unorthodox Life*. (She and her first husband share custody of their youngest son, Aron, who remains involved in the Haredi world and appears intermittently on the show.)

The first season of *My Unorthodox Life* focused on Haart's exodus from Monsey, presenting her as an entirely self-made woman and attributing her success to her creative talent and ability to hustle. Scaglia, who made brief appearances to kiss Haart's hand and call her "my love," always seemed more like a posh-accented accessory than an actual spouse, and the couple's divorce was extremely predictable.

What's surprising is Scaglia's power to upend his ex-wife's life.

In Haart's telling, she and Scaglia agreed to divorce without changing their professional relationship or their respective roles at Elite World Group. By the second episode, however, Scaglia has begun to assert total control over assets Haart considers jointly owned. In one surprisingly candid scene, Haart and her entourage are blindsided by

an abrupt email announcing that the board has replaced her as CEO.

Scaglia subsequently asserts in lawsuits that he is the sole owner of the agency, and accuses Haart of such colorful improprieties as using company funds to pay for breast implants. He threatens to come to the aforementioned penthouse with movers to take away all the furniture; when Haart finds out that her former chef has snuck in during the night and stolen a piece of art, she concludes that Scaglia has paid him to do so.

Despite surrounding herself with the trappings of girlbossery, Haart isn't living up to the untouchable persona she's created. And there's nothing inherently wrong with that. Perhaps because she left an insular community with few resources, perhaps because she worked in a sexist environment, perhaps because, as Scaglia's allies have suggested, she's just not a great leader, Haart ended up reliant on a man even as she made total independence her personal brand. As we reexamine the girlboss ideal, stories like hers, about women for whom sheer grit and independence do not yield empowered and fabulous lives, feel newly compelling.

But while Haart loves to kvetch about the time spent corresponding with her lawyers and make grave references to legal entities like the Chancery Court of Delaware, *My Unorthodox Life* does everything to avoid addressing the gap between her persona and her reality. The show can't delve too deeply into the court documents, because to do so would inevitably produce a portrait of

a flawed woman, not a tale of uncompromised empowerment. Instead, Haart clings to a personal narrative that increasingly seems like a myth. Again and again, she insists that Scaglia is spewing lies and that, despite the fact that the Chancery Court of Delaware repeatedly sides with him, she will eventually prove her point.

As if to compensate for its obfuscation on the most interesting points, *My Unorthodox Life* devotes far too much airtime to various prurient or simply banal subplots. Shlomo halfheartedly attempts to lose his virginity. Robert, Haart's closest friend and colleague (until Scaglia ousts them both) and his boyfriend Ra'ed have important conversations about their open relationship while shaving each other's backs. Batsheva, recently divorced herself, is dating furiously — but also has to take Haart to therapy after she repeatedly overshares about her daughter's sex life.

(Just a few weeks ago I wrote of Hulu's new series *Fleishman is in Trouble* that "sex has never seemed worse or less appealing;" I regret to report that *My Unorthodox Life* is already compelling me to eat my words.)

Several of the show's subplots feature Haart fighting for, in her own words, "freedom for as many women as humanly possible." (It should be noted that she makes this comment in reference to helping a model develop a lucrative Instagram presence.) In one, Haart collaborates with Amber Adler, an Orthodox activist and candidate for New York City Council, to plan a safehouse for Jewish and non-Jewish women leaving

abusive marriages. By supporting this cause, Haart can bolster her self-image as a benefactor, a woman who can give aid rather than receiving it.

In her own story, those demarcations — between freedom and dependence, success and defeat — are rarely so clear. Failure to conform to a chosen ideal of womanhood is the one thing that connects Haart's improbable, gilded life to those of the women who might watch *My Unorthodox Life*. Yet for Haart, that failure is nothing more than a source of shame. Rather than address the contradictions that make her life interesting, the show simply retreats into pantsuit-shaped stereotypes.

This Black American diplomat is one of the least-known architects of the state of Israel

By Kal Raustiala

In October, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, slammed the latest report from a U.N. human rights body calling for the International Criminal Court to investigate Israeli human rights abuses toward the Palestinians, calling it "terror white-washing" and "morally bankrupt." Such open conflict between the U.N. and Israel is now sadly commonplace.

Yet 75 years ago this month, a very different relationship existed when the U.N. decided to partition the territory then known as Palestine. The U.N.'s actions not only made Israel's birth possible, but were cited in Israel's Declaration of Independence as "irrevocable."

One of the chief authors of that influential decision is largely forgotten today: the Black American diplomat and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ralph Bunche. Golda Meir would later say that almost no outsider was more central to the birth of Israel than Bunche. As Israel ushers in a new government, one seemingly more opposed to the U.N. than ever before, it is worth remembering the crucial role played by the U.N. — and Bunche — in ushering the country into existence.

At the end of World War II, conflict between Arabs and Jews, and their shared animosity toward their British overlords, intensified. Eventually, exhausted by the war, Britain handed the problem of Palestine to the newly created U.N.

The U.N. immediately convened a "Special Committee on Palestine" to forge a recommendation. Ralph Bunche, then a mid-level U.N. official with little experience in the region, was sent to the Middle East. His task was to assist a multinational team of diplomats in their effort to develop a workable solution to the impasse of who would rule the former Ottoman territory, and where.

Bunche, who had written his doctoral dissertation at Harvard on colonial governance in Africa, was a former Howard professor who had been recruited into the Roosevelt administration in 1941. After serving in the State Department, where he helped draft the U.N. Charter, he moved to the U.N. itself. With few staff at the organization having any experience in colonial regions, Bunche was tapped to travel to the Middle East.

The U.N. committee toured the region, interviewing leaders like Menachem Begin, then head of the Zionist paramilitary group called the Irgun, and King Abdullah of Jordan, as well as farmers and business owners. Bunche found a tense Jerusalem in June 1947, full of barbed wire and barricades. Having come of age in South Central Los Angeles in the 1920s, Bunche was largely unfamiliar with Jewish customs. He marveled at the Wailing Wall and discovered that Jews were far more diverse than he knew, including what he called “Black Jews,” or Mizrahim. He thought Palestine had a “lazy tempo,” but that the “spirit in the kibbutzes” was impressive.

The only thing the Arabs and Jews could agree on, Bunche wrote a friend, was that “the British must go.”

Bunche was quite troubled by the views of some of the members of the U.N. committee. A few were openly antisemitic, and ultimately supportive of a Jewish state in part because they hoped their own Jewish populations would emigrate.

The U.N. committee eventually offered two proposals to the U.N. General Assembly, against Bunche’s advice for unanimity. The majority recommended partition into two states; the minority a single federal, binational state. The question of Palestine elicited fierce disagreement back in New York City, with thousands of spectators crowding a repurposed ice rink in Queens for the debate. The final vote on Nov. 29 was 33 states in favor and 13 opposed, with 10 nations abstaining. The partition was approved.

Fighting immediately flared in Palestine, and many questioned how — or whether —

partition could ever be implemented. Yet on May 14, 1948, the last British High Commissioner for Palestine departed for London, and David Ben-Gurion and other leaders of the Jewish community gathered in Tel Aviv to proclaim Israel’s independence.

The Israeli leaders set forth their claims to the land of Israel in historical terms. Yet they also repeatedly invoked the core role played by the U.N. and formally appealed to the organization “to assist the Jewish people” in the creation of the state and to receive Israel “into the community of nations.”

Bunche’s efforts on behalf of the U.N. had helped to convince Israeli leadership that they needed to be accepted on the global stage, and recognized as part of the international community forging a fresh path in the wake of World War II’s destruction.

Almost immediately, however, violence again broke out, and Bunche returned to the Middle East. On Sept. 17, 1948, Folke Bernadotte, the original mediator appointed by the U.N. to broker peace, was assassinated on a Jerusalem side street by Jewish extremists posing as Israeli soldiers. Bunche, who had been his deputy, narrowly missed being riddled with bullets, and was appointed in his place. His marathon bilateral negotiations between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon led to a series of armistices, for which Bunche won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950.

In the years that followed, he remained close with Israeli leaders like Ben-Gurion and Abba Eban. Bunche died on Dec. 9, 1971, too soon to really grapple with the implications of the Israeli occupation. However, he would remark that until what

he called “the refugee problem” was solved, violence would be inevitable.

Upon his death, Jewish leaders praised Bunche’s “deep understanding, moral integrity, and devotion to peace.” Then-Israeli prime minister Golda Meir cabled his widow, Ruth, that Ralph “contributed so much to bringing to a close the first outburst of Arab hostility against Israel.” It is possible that without Bunche’s patience, understanding and diplomacy in those early years Israel may not have survived.

Bunche was a true believer in peacemaking. Indeed, in many ways he was the man who created U.N. peacekeeping, first in the wake of the 1956 Suez Crisis, when U.N. troops from around the world poured into Gaza, and again in Congo, Cyprus and many other hotspots. A self-proclaimed “professional optimist,” Bunche was firmly of the conviction that any lasting solution to political division would ultimately rest on a foundation not of conflict, but compromise.

Israel and the U.N. are unlikely to recapture any time soon the mutual support they shared in the 1940s. Yet the basic principles Bunche and the U.N. laid down 75 years ago — two states, Arab and Jewish — remain sound, if ultimately elusive.

In the face of an extremist far-right ruling party’s ascension in Israel, it would be wise for Israeli leaders to recall Ralph Bunche’s optimism and commitment to diplomacy. Were he alive today, he would surely counsel that it is not too late to pursue a path of compromise that would ensure lasting peace, and not a one-sided, but perhaps ultimately pyrrhic, victory.

Is saying that Jews are wealthy and powerful really a compliment?

By Mira Fox

You know that old joke. A Jew is reading a Nazi newspaper. His friend asks him why and he says something like, “When I read the normal newspaper, it’s all doom and gloom and antisemitism. But when I read the Nazi paper, we Jews are doing really well! We own Hollywood, we control the media and we are all rich doctors, lawyers and bankers.”

Of course, these are antisemitic conspiracies — that’s the joke. But there’s a seed of truth there: Jewish stereotypes can sound oddly complimentary.

Even Kanye West — who legally changed his name to Ye — can sound philosemitic at times. On Tucker Carlson’s show, the rapper said he wished his kids learned about Hanukkah instead of Kwanzaa at school — so that they could learn “financial engineering.” And in 2015, after talking about conspiracies regarding Jewish information sharing, Jewish control and Jewish wealth, he denied any antisemitism. “That’s a compliment,” West said. “I love Jews.”

He’s not the only one. Some people online have attempted to defend West by saying that his antisemitic comments about Jews

are really compliments. And other politicians, including Trump and Michele Reynolds, have made comments about Jewish business or financial prowess, which they also retroactively excused as well-intentioned appreciation.

Other groups’ stereotypes are obviously defamatory. So how did Jewish stereotypes become so different? And are they as harmful as open insults?

‘Poisonous power’

There are plenty of negative stereotypes about Jews: That Jews are untrustworthy, weak, greedy, ugly. There are the weird ones, like blood libel, about Jews drinking Christian children’s blood.

But a tractate called Protocols of the Elders of Zion published first in Russia in 1903, marked a change in prevailing ideas about Jews. Purportedly written by a council of Jewish leaders, it outlined a plan for Jewish global domination.

“The Protocols are, in my view, the essence of antisemitism, which is the idea of Jewish poisonous power,” Kenneth Jacobson, the deputy director for the Anti-Defamation

League, told me. “For the antisemite, the Jew is not what he or she appears to be. The reality of the Jew is something hidden, something more powerful.”

This allows antisemitic conspiracies to sidestep the need for any evidence — the lack of it is simply proof of the insidious nature of Jewish skill subterfuge.

“The idea that Jews, particularly Jews in Russia, who had no power whatsoever, were coming together to take over the world, is the most preposterous thing, and yet it resonated so tremendously,” said Jacobson.

The Protocols were not the first instance of a conspiracy about Jewish domination and power. Still, the Protocols had a lasting effect, one which Jacobson attributes to the era in which it was published. In the early 20th century, urbanization was creating a massive shift in people’s lives, identity and economic status, provoking an atmosphere of anxiety.

“When people are living in a state of anxiety for a variety of political, social, economic reasons, it’s been said a million times in the past, they’re looking for a scapegoat. More than a scapegoat, they’re looking for an explanation to themselves,” said Jacobson. “Jewish power is the number one conspiracy about that.”

Even after the London Times debunked the Protocols in 1921, showing it to be a forgery, it was translated into numerous languages and spread around the world. And whether or not antisemites cite it — or

have even heard of it — it indirectly influences their ideas.

A threat to white society

Most racist stereotypes focus on putting down another group, positioning them as lesser, undesirable or worthless. And while some Jewish stereotypes do this — think about caricatures of Jews as nebbishy, nerdy or weak, hook-nosed and beady-eyed — stereotypes of Jewish power function differently.

Contrasting Jewish stereotypes with those of other groups makes them seem less harmful. But stereotypes about Jewish wealth or control position Jews as a worthy adversary for white supremacists or antisemites, a group to be feared and defeated, not simply ignored or excluded.

On Instagram, Jamyle K. Cannon, the founder of Chicago nonprofit The Bloc, said he had been talking to a Black man in his 20s who had said talking about Jewish wealth and power was a compliment — how could it be antisemitic?

Cannon, who is Black, said stereotypes about Black people, “paint the picture of a group of people who are a drain on society unless they are broken, controlled, imprisoned, or enslaved.”

But stereotypes about Jews conjure “a picture of a group of people who can compete with, outperform and even subjugate white people in the open market,” he said.

“Goebbels in Germany was all about this,” Jacobson told me. “He basically convinced the German people not to merely dislike Jews, but that you have to fear Jews — and you have to defend yourself against these Jews.”

And these ideas about Jewish control mesh well with stereotypes and conspiracies about other minorities. The “great replacement theory,” a longtime white supremacist conspiracy promoted by conservative ideologues including Tucker Carlson and the Tree of Life shooter in Pittsburgh, posits that minorities are attempting to take over the world and exterminate white society and culture.

But given that stereotypes about most ethnic minorities portray them as stupid or weak, some other group must be masterminding it, puppeteering the people of color — the Jews, of course.

Conspiracy goes mainstream

Conspiracies about Jewish wealth, power or control have roots in medieval Jewish money lenders, in the Christian Bible, in the Protocols, in Nazi propaganda. And people in the corners of the internet where hate speech and conspiracies brew, on sites like Gab or 4chan, continue to propagate them too.

But with public figures such as West making unambiguously antisemitic comments, or Trump meeting with virulent antisemite Nick Fuentes, the ideas are being mainstreamed.

Jacobson said the ADL has not seen evidence that public figures such as West,

Trump or Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene openly promoting antisemitic ideas has swayed greater numbers of people against Jews. In the ADL’s recent surveys, Americans’ attitudes toward antisemitism have stayed relatively stable, with between 11% and 14% of Americans holding antisemitic ideas.

The issue, he said, is not numerical increase, but mainstreaming antisemitic ideas. If even under 15% of Americans hold antisemitic ideas, that means around 30 million people are walking around hating or feeling threatened by Jews. They just never felt emboldened to act on those ideas.

“I don’t think the American people are more antisemitic, but those people who are, are getting too much support,” said Jacobson. “There’s plenty to worry about.”

Trump destroyed the guardrails against antisemitism — and there's no going back

By Larry Cohler-Esses

In September 1988, James Baker fired four members of an ethnic outreach coalition he'd recently established. Baker, then manager of Vice President George Bush Sr.'s campaign for president, made the move soon after a news story revealed their past associations with a variety of fascist or antisemitic organizations.

In one case, it wasn't even entirely a first-degree association. Florian Galdau, a New York archbishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church, had been a loyal and zealous defender of that sect's U.S. leader — a prominent, self-confessed activist during World War II of the Iron Guard, Romania's wartime pro-Nazi movement. Galdau staunchly backed his superior, Valerian Trifa, during the Justice Department's effort to deport him for lying about this past to gain entry to the country and obtain American citizenship.

The three other members of the American Nationalities Coalition included a Croatian American active in organizations that denied the Holocaust, a Catholic priest listed in Italy as a member of a neo-fascist secret organization, and a Republican activist who

had served as a junior envoy to Berlin of Hungary's pro-Nazi Arrow Cross regime during World War II.

As the reporter who broke that story, I recognized that the Bush campaign was acting in line with the Talmudic mandate to "build a fence around the Torah," that is, to construct outer guardrails around the principles you hold dear.

In fact, Laszlo Pasztor, the erstwhile junior envoy, later actually expressed regret about his service. But like the others, he quickly found himself outside the fence that Bush drew, albeit belatedly, around his campaign. Jerome Brentar, the Croatian American, was gone within hours after the story hit; the others soon after.

A fence around the Torah

"You cannot expect any quicker action than that," enthused GOP activist Marshall Breger, a former White House liaison to the Jewish community, who praised my news outlet, Washington Jewish Week, for exposing the blunder by his own side. Baker himself said in a statement accompanying

his action: “There is no room for antisemitism or bigotry of any sort in our campaign.”

That claim may be worth some skepticism. It was the Bush 1988 campaign, after all, that also gave America the infamous Willie Horton TV ad, with its close-up of a scary-looking disheveled and scowling Black man convicted of murder who was allowed out on a weekend furlough program under the administration of Bush’s opponent, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, during which time he raped a white woman and knifed her fiancée. The ad is today considered a classic in dog-whistle racism.

Despite this, the Bush campaign’s prompt and strong response to the antisemitism charges — with no claims of “fake news” — is something we might yearn for after the sclerotic and reluctant reactions recently shown by organizations such as Adidas (to Kanye West, who now goes mononymously by Ye), the Brooklyn Nets and the NBA (to Kyrie Irving) and by the GOP candidates Doug Mastriano and Blake Masters to Andrew Torba, a prominent Christian nationalist supporter with a record of anti-Semitic statements.

Adidas, the German sportswear manufacturer, took more than two weeks to “review” West’s call for a “death con 3 on Jewish people” before cutting its lucrative ties with him.

The day after their star point guard promoted an antisemitic book and film on social media, the Brooklyn Nets could manage no better than a broad statement

condemning “any form of hate speech” without naming Irving himself. Later, Nets owner Joel Tsai wrote of being “disappointed” with Irving, adding, “I want to sit down and make sure he understands this is hurtful to all of us.”

It was only days later, after a disastrous press conference in which Irving was unable to articulate a straightforward apology, that Tsai suspended him indefinitely.

Mastriano, who ran for governor of Pennsylvania, meanwhile, faced a barrage of criticism, including from some Republicans, before he disavowed the support that he’d received from Torba — a co-founder of the platform Gab, the online hub for extremist and conspiratorial content that Mastriano himself had utilized. (As revealed later by Politico, Mastriano accepted a \$500 contribution from Torba just days before he disavowed him last July.)

In September, Mastriano drew charges of dog whistling antisemitism himself when he criticized his Democratic opponent, Josh Shapiro, for sending his children to a “privileged, exclusive, elite” school — a Jewish day school — suggesting to one audience that it showed Shapiro’s “disdain for people like us.”

In Arizona, former U.S. Senate candidate Masters’ claim in August to not even know Torba after the Gab founder strongly endorsed him, was revealed as a lie when the news outlet Jewish Insider published an audio file of the two chummily talking politics at length.

This week, voters thankfully rejected both nominees. But these reactions by major companies and by candidates of one of America's two major parties are more dangerous than antisemitism itself. They mark the disappearance of the fences that used to keep out not just this scourge of bigotry but also anything even associated with it.

A breach in the fence

For me, the reality that the fences might no longer hold first hit home in 2017, nearly 30 years after I marveled at the Bush campaign's quick reaction to my earlier story. That year, with a feeling of history repeating itself, I exposed the antisemitic associations of Sebastian Gorka, President Trump's White House counterterrorism advisor.

This time, however, despite high gates and physical fortifications, the White House had no fences around it.

Gorka himself never said anything antisemitic that I, or my journalistic partner, Lili Bayer, could find. This was a point I tried to stress at the time.

But few seemed to catch the nuance: What Gorka represented — metaphorically — was the breach of the fence around the White House that had stood from the rise of Hitler in 1933 until the Trump administration.

Until Trump, no one could get anywhere near a U.S. president's ear if they had sworn allegiance to an organization classified as a Nazi-allied group, written regularly for an infamous anti-Semitic newspaper, launched a political party with

the former head of a neo-Nazi organization, or voiced support for a racist vigilante militia organized by that same organization.

That Gorka — an immigrant who came to America from Hungary — had never himself uttered an antisemitic word would have been deemed laughably irrelevant in any previous administration. A healthy concern about guilt by association — in a positive guise here — forced anyone with political, social or business ambitions to ensure that their affiliations remained above reproach when it came to antisemitism.

Set aside for a moment the endless debates about remarks by Donald Trump that play on classic antisemitic tropes, such as dual loyalty. No less important is the fence he dismantled that prevented anyone around the president — never mind the president himself — from saying anything that smacked of anti-Jewish prejudice; or from even from affiliating with entities that did so.

In the end, Gorka was dismissed from his post in August 2017. But antisemitism wasn't the reason, according to insider accounts at the time; rather, it was Gorka's sheer incompetence.

Today, I see Gorka as the pioneer who first breached the fence through which so many others have now followed. But it's business leaders and other politicians who pose the real problem. They have taken their cue from Trump by lowering or even dismantling that fence themselves. Antisemitism, unfortunately, will always be with us. It's reconstructing those fences that will pose the real challenge in the years ahead.

The greatest Jewish Hollywood character you've never heard of

By Michael Barrie

You hear the name Duke in Hollywood and you picture a mountain of a man in a weathered Stetson firing his Colt from a speedy horse. Well, this isn't about him. It's about another Hollywood Duke — a short Jew in a fedora firing expletives from his mouth. The smoking weapon in his hand was a cheap cigar.

In the mid-1970s, in New York, my writing partner and I worked on a sitcom produced by comedian Alan King. Alan was a hell of a storyteller, onstage and off. Story conferences would sometimes morph into hilarious anecdotes from burlesque, the Catskills, Hollywood. The subject of a few tales was Maurice Duke.

Maurice Duke was a talent manager and film producer. Some tagged him "King of the Bs." Though to call his films "B-movies" would be overpraising them. By a lot. Duke's low-rent productions exploited current fads. When 1940s magazines discovered "teenagers," he launched "The Teen Agers" series. When Top Ten radio arrived, so did his picture, "Disc Jockey." The Cold War spawned his Mickey Rooney flick, "The Atomic Kid." And the Twist dance craze of the 1960s gave us "Twist All Night."

Duke's magnum opus was triggered by the success of comedy team Martin & Lewis. It

was called "Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla." Actor Martin Landau called it "so bad it made Ed Wood's films look like 'Gone with the Wind.'" In 1958, UCLA named it "The Worst Film Ever Made." Duke beamed and clutched the award to his bosom like it was a golden Oscar.

"I made 103 pictures," he said with a foxy grin, "All of them s—t."

Maurice Duschinsky was one of seven born to Hungarian Jewish immigrants Armin and Melani (Weiss) Duschinsky. He was born — he might've called it his release date — on Oct. 27, 1910 in Coney Island, New York. It wasn't a strong opening. At 10 months of age, he was stricken with polio. "Before it was popular," he would say.

Polio shaped Duke's view of life. After that, no misfortune or defeat could be worse than what he'd already faced. It gave him the perspective and resilience to thumb his nose at any setback and say, "Next!" That became his mantra: It's over. Next!

Duke walked with the aid of a brace and cane. His metal brace was hinged at the knee. To walk, he'd lock the joint so the knee couldn't bend, then step forward with the good leg, swing the braced leg, and use the cane to stay upright. You didn't want to

distract him. “I can’t stop once I’m in motion!” Sometimes if there was a line at the deli, he’d say, “Make way, wounded veteran!”

“My friend Duke,” the pre-Don Rickles insult comic Jack E. Leonard once said by way of introducing him, “the only guy who walks around with his own Erector set.”

Duke learned to play harmonica in a bed at Children’s Hospital. He won a contest and formed the Cappy Barra Harmonica Band, a vaudeville troupe, becoming their manager at 21. Eventually, he’d go on to manage the careers of Mickey Rooney, Zero Mostel, actor Mike Connors, broadcaster Tom Snyder, and the dog Lassie. But in 1931 his only other client was friend and meshuggener Henry Nemo (Nuni Bregman). Nemo, who would later write such hit tunes as “Tis Autumn,” and “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart,” would do anything for a laugh, so Duke booked him into Borscht Belt hotels as social director or tumbler.

“Nemo and I were driving to California,” Duke once said. “I tell him the fresh air is doing wonders for my health. So, every day, when I’m napping, the Neem shaves a little off the bottom of my cane, then replaces the rubber tip. When we get to LA, I stand and say, ‘Neem, this climate’s great, I’ve grown 2 inches!’”

“Once, he insisted we stop at the Museum of Science and Industry. He wants to show me the largest magnet in the world. It’s the size of a house. So, we get there and he keeps pushing me closer and closer to the magnet. Finally, the magnet pulls my metal brace, and I’m hanging upside down.”

The man could talk. He’d jab the air with a lit cigar and he’d get a lot into a sentence by

keeping most words to four letters. At 40, he convinced a stunning 20-year-old Texas model named Evelyn Williams to marry him. The marriage was good, the divorce better. In 1983, their kids hosted a star-studded Hollywood roast for the 25th anniversary of their split.

In 1991, I had a first lunch date with the woman I would take a second shot at marriage with. When I asked Fredde about her parents, she said, “You probably never heard of my dad. He’s a producer named Maurice Duke.”

“The one Alan King talked about? With the brace and the cane?”

She was shocked I’d heard of him. I was shocked he was alive.

On our next date she said, “How would you like to meet my dad?”

“Sure,” I said, unaware he was in Brotman Hospital recovering from a stroke. But this was not your father’s stroke patient. He was taking calls, holding court, ordering the nurse around.

Months later, she asked her father what he thought of me. “Nice guy,” he said, “but he’ll never marry you.” Duke wasn’t always right about stuff. In Germany, in 1961, he turned down an offer to manage some group called the Beatles.

But back to ’51.

Martin & Lewis were the hottest guys in show business, banging out hit movies for Paramount. Duke had an epiphany: “Why should Martin & Lewis be the only ones allowed to make Martin & Lewis pictures?” So, he found a skinny kid, a carbon copy of

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Jerry Lewis named Sammy Petrillo, teamed him with an Italian crooner and hired Bela Lugosi for, er, name value: Lights! Action! Lawsuit!

Jerry Lewis and Paramount got wind of Duke's low-budget knockoff and sued him for theft of intellectual property. (If you've seen Martin & Lewis' act, "intellectual" may not be the word that comes to mind.) Soon, there was talk of a settlement; Paramount would pay Duke to bury his movie. Duke stood to make more by burning the negative than releasing the film. He thought it over for oh, maybe two seconds.

But first, Paramount wanted to see the picture. Duke refused and decamped to Palm Springs. That's when disaster struck. His producing partner, Jack Broder, agreed to screen "Brooklyn Gorilla" for Lewis and Paramount.

When the lights came up in the screening room, they knew this cheapo production was no threat. The deal was dead.

Duke was crushed. So close. Woulda been the score of a lifetime. What a heartbreaker.

"Next!"



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