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"Woke Anti-Semitism" in the US -- should Israel

David Bernstein, Founder and CEO of Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, speaks about how woke ideology could become a national security issue for Israel



David Bernstein (Courtesy [JILV.org](https://www.jilv.org))

According to the [Reut Institute](#), in addition to all the challenges to Jewish life represented by the radical left (or “woke” world, as some call it), there is also a nexus between radical progressive groups and Islamist organizations, which have been ‘migrating’ from Europe to the US. In light of the rise of identity politics in the United States, the collaboration between these two streams creates a powerful social and political axis that has an increasing influence on American foreign policy in the Middle East, as well as on the status of both Israel and the Jewish community in the US.

We recently reached out to David Bernstein, author of the new book *Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews*, and asked him to reflect on the implications of what he’s discovered for Israel and American foreign policy vis a vis Israel.

We’re sharing our conversation today, with a transcript provided, and hope you find David’s thinking interesting. For those who’d like to learn more, David Bernstein’s book, *Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews*, is now available on [Amazon](#).

Also, you might like to take a look at David’s article in the [Jerusalem Strategic Tribune](#).

The link above will take you to our conversation, being made available today, along with the transcript below for those who prefer to read.

I have the pleasure today of speaking to someone that I've known for a long time and whose work I have long imagined. He has a new book out and a relatively new position, so we'll start with that. David Bernstein is the Founder and CEO of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, which he will tell us about in just a couple of minutes. He has long been a very passionate advocate of the free expression of ideas. He's past President and CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and the former Executive Director of the David Project, which is where I first got to know him. And he is the author of a brand-new book just coming out called "Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews". As we're going to hear from David in just a second, he not only thinks that it can harm Jews, but he also thinks that a woke progressive ideology in the United States is actually something that could harm Israel. And that's the part that we want to focus on. But before we get to that, first of all, David, thanks so much for joining us. Give us a tiny bit more background about yourself and then tell us a bit about both JILV and about the book.

Thank you. It's really an honor to be on. Just as you follow me, I've been following you my entire adult life and you've really influenced my thinking over the years, and your books have as well. So, I've been a lifer in the Jewish world. I started out in political campaigns in the early 1990s. I spent some time at APAC. I spent some time at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington and then 13 years at the American Jewish Committee. So, I've been around a while, and it was really almost 20 some years ago when I first started to warn my friends and colleagues that there was an ideology that sounded very different from what I might have considered politically liberal growing up. And we can talk about what we mean by liberal, but what I had started to hear in various spaces was sort of an indictment of the system in the United States. Now, most American Jews who love America, grew up in America, would

have readily admitted that United States was a far from perfect country. But it was a country that was constantly striving to live up to its own high ideals. That's not what this ideology saw in America. It viewed America as pervasively oppressive to minorities in a country that was sort of born in sin. And I started hearing it first at diversity and multicultural workshops that I attended as someone who did intergroup relations for the Jewish community. I remember a speaker saying that racism equals prejudice plus power. And I thought to myself, that's interesting. I always thought that racism was just bigotry against racial groups. And when I started to think about that, it struck me immediately that the formulation that racism equals prejudice plus power could be used to suggest that perceived powerful groups like Jews could not be victims and perceived weak groups could not be victimizers and that could be weaponized against Jews. And I wrote about it in 2003, nearly 20 years ago in the Washington Jewish Week, saying that there's a danger. I also started to hear in various civil rights circles comments that America was systemically racist. And I warned my colleagues at the American Jewish Committee that this could be a problem and that you could have a whole generation of immigrants coming to this country thinking that America was a racist place and that would not be good for America's future.

I just want to interrupt you for one second and point out that you said 20 years ago, and I think that's exactly right. That's about when it happened. But actually, I mean, just for our listeners, it goes way back. There are things that were happening in the 1980s, so just give me two examples, one of them was that Howard Zinn, the well-known American historian, wrote a book called The People's History of the United States. That book is about 42 years old, and that book was a huge indictment of the United States as basically a country born in sin. The other thing that I remember when I was in college in 1980s was that the

Saudis were actually starting to endow chairs in political science and in other fields at my campus. And I thought to myself as a young kid who was kind of obviously stupid, I thought, well, if they want to waste their money and endow chairs on American campuses, go for it. You have an unlimited amount of money, and I don't know why you would possibly do that but go ahead and do it. And of course, they were very smart, and I was very wrong. They were seating a certain worldview on American campuses. And it wasn't only the Saudis. It was a whole array of different figures. So, we're talking about a project here that you've been talking about for the last 20 years, but it's really been going on for the last 40 years or more.

More actually. In the late 1960s, the term the Long March through Institutions was coined by some followers of Herbert Marcuse, who was a philosopher, and they endowed programs and ethnic studies at various universities starting in California. And that formulation turned out to be completely precious. And that's exactly what they did. They undertook a long march through institutions and that gets us to where we were. We are today facing institutional capture of this ideology in many segments of American life.

So, I founded the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values in the summer of 2021. This was after the May 2021 round of hostilities between Israel and Hamas and Gaza when it was very plain to anybody who had been observing past conflicts between Israel and Gaza and Hamas that this conflict was being perceived and portrayed very differently than past conflicts. You could really feel it in the air. It was all over social media. You could hear it in the mainstream media outlets. Israel was indicted from the very beginning for prosecuting an illegitimate war. In previous rounds of conflict, that was not the case. So, we immediately saw the connection between this ideology, which had set in in the previous

few years, and the portrayal of Israel in the media. We also wrote a letter, we called it "The Jewish Harper's Letter", which was named after a letter in Harper's Magazine by a group of public intellectuals and writers and journalists who were concerned that the racial reckoning had also unleashed a very censorious rampage in American life that was silencing people with different opinions. And we saw that happening in the Jewish community and we pointed it out in a letter that was signed by about 50 Jewish public intellectuals and then 1000 others later. And we formed an organization out of that. And it's been an amazing opportunity to try to reset the discourse of the Jewish community, but also to point out that there's a problem in how this ideology, that many Jewish groups have embraced in some ways, in promulgating antisemitic tropes and anti-Israelism.

Okay, so this ideology that you're talking about obviously is woke. And what you're trying to do in your work is, first of all, distinguish between left wing, i.e. woke or very left wing and liberal values. Just give us a couple of sentences on what you mean by liberal values. Since you're for liberal values but you're opposed to woke. What are the liberal values that you and your colleagues are for?

Yeah, there's a lot of confusion around the word liberal. So, there's politically liberal in the United States, which is associated with supporting abortion rights and separation of church and state and immigrant rights and the like. And then there's the word liberal in its classical sense, which means the free expression of ideas and liberties associated with liberalism in America and with liberalism in the west the enlightenment values that make us democratic and able to have conversations that are critical of each other, of the trends of the day and the like. So, I have been both a political liberal and a classical liberal. But what happened over time was that these two forms of liberalism became disjoined. So many political liberals stopped being classical

liberals, and they started to buy into what writer Wesley Yang called the successor ideology, or what I call in the book woke ideology. And that ideology holds two things. One, that oppression and bias are not just a matter of personal attitude, but they are embedded in the very systems and structures of society. And two, that only people who have experienced that oppression have the qualifications and the insight to articulate it and define it for the rest of society.

Now, both of those things can be true. Oppression can be embedded in societies. And I think it would be hard to argue that there was an oppression embedded in American society during Jim Crow. And people who have experienced racism or anti-Semitism or whatever might have insights that other people who haven't experienced it have and we should listen to them. But that second pillar of this ideology that I talked about that sometimes it referred to a standpoint epistemology I don't want to get too technical here that is used to silence people. It's to say, you don't have the standing to make that point. You have to defer to others who have lived experience to make that point about racism.

That becomes the whole cultural appropriation idea, right? That people who can't even write a novel about somebody in whose situation they weren't. There was the novel "American Dirt", which was, I thought, a great read, which was about asylum seekers coming from the south of the United States and was written by a woman who she herself is not Hispanic or at least a questionable Hispanic genealogy. And it created an outcry. And at the end, if I'm not mistaken, the publishers actually had a pullback on the book a little bit. So, this idea that if you're not black, you can't write about blacks, if you're not Hispanic, you can't write about Hispanics, et cetera, which is, of course, obviously the opposite of what literature has always been about. Literature has always been about putting yourself in the shoes of somebody else and

writing a story based on their world. So, there's that. And it's also cancel culture that it imports. So, you're talking about a whole, as we say in Hebrew "michlol", kind of an aggregate of issues here. And what you're trying to do is restore classical liberal values, of the worth of the individual, the right of free speech system. I also want to point out, tell me if I'm wrong, I think that one thing that the radical left and the radical right in America share is that they actually both think that there's something very wrong with system.

Yeah, both the radical left have started to undermine the idea of liberalism and no longer support it. And will even claim, and I've heard this from very prominent voices in the Jewish community, that when you talk about liberalism, what you are doing is you are upholding these systems of oppression. And now you're hearing from the right a new form of sort of right-wing liberalism, that liberal values and liberalism has allowed this sort of cultural rock to set in in America and that it needs to be stopped and we need to sort of enforce cultural norms through the state and the like. So, you see liberalism really on the ropes on both sides of the political spectrum. And one of the arguments I try to make is that we need to sort of form a new alliance of liberal voices in the sort of center left to center right who stand up for these values. Jews have always done better in societies with liberal values, with free expression of ideas. That's how we thrive. And I think people don't realize that as soon as liberalism is on the ropes, we're going to be on the ropes as well.

One of the things that struck me is that when you pointed to the fact that the JILV was a product to a certain extent of the tragedy of what happened in May 2021. A tragedy because of the war. A tragedy because of the riots that broke out inside Israel. And some people said that pogroms had come to the Jewish state. Which is the ultimate painful irony. And the tragedy of how Israel was portrayed in the international world among Jews and non-

Jews. That's what led you to the creation of JILV. And it just struck me as interesting because those were also the events that led to the launching of this podcast, blog, Substack. Because it struck me that as soon as you have a conversation about Israel that's only based on the conflict, then you're playing defense the whole time. You can never talk about the grandeur of Israeli society. You can never talk about the rebirth of Jewish culture in music, poetry, literature, et cetera. You can't talk about great Zionist thinking that's being done and all you talk about is the stuff that nobody wants to hear about because it's depressing and it's grinding and it's ruling and so on and so forth. So, it's just kind of interesting that the same events in the world led to the beginning of your work with the JILV and our work here with Israel from the Inside.

You said something to me not long ago that really struck me, and I wanted to ask you to reflect on that. You made the point that obviously your book focuses mostly on America. And again, I just want to remind everybody that this book is "Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews". Most of the book focuses on how it harms Jews in America and that's a hugely important conversation. But you said something about Israel that struck me and what you said was that you thought that woke ideology in America could become a national security issue or national security threat for Israel. And that's counterintuitive and fascinating and I'd love to hear you explain why and how that is.

Yes, so I think it can harm Israel in two ways, one in the immediate term and one in the long term. In the immediate term, this ideology creates new opportunities for Muslim Brotherhood groups funded by Qatar to come into the United States and to lobby on American foreign policy issues, lobby against the Abraham Accords. This is what the Reut Institute called the Red-Green Alliance. It's been operating in Europe for many years now and it has found its way to the shores of the United States. And it

is well funded, and it is trying to change the conversation in the United States on foreign policy issues, particularly in US relations with some of the Gulf countries and with Israel's ties to those countries as well. So, you see how these groups can find their way into liberal discourse and they mimic progressive discourse. That's happening in the here and now. There was a conference last week that the Reut Institute sponsored that we were involved with where we brought together an alternative Muslim Jewish coalition to try to face down that Red- Green Alliance. So, you can see that's really weighing on us now. The second way is it can lead to the "Corbynization" of the Democratic Party in the United States. And by that I mean we can see the Democratic Party in the long term become like the Labor Party in the UK under Jeremy Corbyn if these forces continue to gain ground, not just on the far left but in the mainstream left, and if they're able to move the discourse in that way, it's going to bring forth a very different Democratic Party than we have today. Now, there's already been some damage and I know that there are people on the right who will say, well look, it's already the Democratic Party because of the squad. That's not really true. The squad are just a few members of the Democratic Party. They have influence. They have influence in the White House and the like, but they're not the dominant force in the Democratic Party. And it may be a long time before they become one. But I don't think it is out of the question that over time, if they can move the discourse in the direction of this much more ideologically charged message that we see today then we may see a very different Democratic Party in the future.

Right and if you have a different kind of Democratic Party, let's just say that you have Biden, who's kind of an old-style Democrat, instinctively supportive of Israel... and then you have, let's say, at the opposite extreme, you have the squad, somewhere in the middle there, and not that far out to the left of Biden is a president lying in wait to become President who might instruct the United

States not to veto a resolution at the United Nations. In other words, an anti- Israel resolution comes up in the UN. Israel has most of the time been able to rely on the US to strike that veto. I don't think you have to move the needle too far to the left of the Democratic Party to get to a place where those vetoes might come, but also might not come depending on the circumstances, depending on the relationship with the Prime Minister that Israel has an office, depending on the specific issue. And that obviously itself, by the way, could be a hugely dangerous thing. One could see, for example, a growing international sentiment designed to ostracize Israel and you could foresee the next time there's a May 2021, you can see a world in which European air carriers said we're not flying to Israel, and they also say that Israeli lines like El Al cannot fly to the US. And you could imagine in a different kind of a precedent, the United States copying that even for a week or two, reminding Israelis that they are fundamentally completely surrounded. There is no way to get out. You obviously can't go by land. It's very hard to go by sea. And if you can't go by air, you have a country where 10 million citizens feel fundamentally isolated and boxed in. To say nothing, by the way, of the fact that Israel's food reserves are not nearly as deep as people imagine. Israel does not have food for months and months. It has food for much less time and storage. So, a blockade of an international sort or just a refusal to do shipping could have an enormously negative impact on Israel. And all it would take sometimes is a non-veto in the UN. Or an American President with a somewhat different disposition.

Right. I don't think many realize that the one bulwark that Israel has against the scourge of hostility in the international arena is really the US Congress. It's the only place where the American Jewish establishment has any power at all. We don't have any power in the State Department or really even in the White House. There might be some derivative power in some of those

institutions, certainly not at the United Nations. And so, we rely on the 435 or 535 votes in the US Congress to serve as that bulwark against that scourge of hostility. And if that starts to loosen too much and as you said, it doesn't take that much for it to fundamentally change the dynamic. Israel may not have that type of support in the future. So that's why woke ideology in particular is a threat. We just conducted a national poll that has not yet gone public, but will be public soon, and we look at how support for Israel is shifting. And I've been watching these polls for a very long time. It has shifted to the right in the past 20 years. So, what used to be sympathy toward Israel in the Democratic Party has steadily moved to the right is now decidedly so. There's much less sympathy among Democrats for Israel than there is Palestinians. The other thing is that the total amount of sympathy is shrinking. So that's a problem and it may not sustain the kind of outcomes that were accustomed to in this country and support for Israel. So, we've got to take this ideology very seriously because it's probably the driving force for that shift.

When you say that the total amount of support in the United States put together is shrinking, that's a little bit countercultural to say that right? Isn't the prevailing word on the street that support for Israel is very solid, but yeah, there's the woke fringe, but fundamentally in the mainstream it's okay?

I wish I could say that, but that's not what the polls show.

But what I just said isn't that the common claim of leading Jewish establishment speakers?

Yes. And so, I'm just trying to be honest with what I see in the numbers. And I talked to a pollster that's been doing polling on these issues for a long time and you're seeing a shrinkage in total

support. That's probably a function of diminishing support on the left. The increase in support among the right does not make up for the losses on the left.

I was at the David Project teaching young students, college students, high school students, how to advocate for Israel from 2010 to 2015. And when I took my initial tour of campuses, I asked a lot of questions to Hillel directors, to student activists, to professors on what they thought, the attitude, the prevailing attitude of campus was. And what I got at that time was what I would call postmodernism. That means that all stories are equal. And that was fundamentally how students saw the world. So, if you train pro-Israel students to tell stories well, to talk about their personal connection to the state of Israel, they can become effective advocates because they could tell their story and they would appeal to their fellow students in that regard. In 2014, there was a sudden shift in attitude. It was crazy to watch. We came back to school and all of a sudden, all the students that we thought were on our side, and I don't mean Jewish students, I mean non-Jewish students, and we brought to Israel and tried to bring into the fold, had turned hostile on us and we couldn't figure it out. And now I know why. It took me a while to understand that summer was the summer during the unrest in Ferguson, Missouri, when Michael Brown was shot and killed by police. And that was not about all stories are equal anymore. It's set in a new narrative that only the story of Black Lives Matter, that America was a pervasively racist country, was now the dominant story in America. And so, people no longer saw stories being equal at that point. You also had some other changes in social media and the like that Jonathan Height writes about that were taking place beneath the surface. So, when you combine those things, you saw a very sudden shift in discourse around 2015 that started to build, up until the killing of George Floyd, and then that put us over the edge.

And of course, that trend has only continued in the last seven years. I mean, there's no question that it snowballs and is going faster and faster down the mountain.

Exactly.

I want to shift the conversation a little bit. I mean, you really think more about this ideology and its pernicious effects, and you think more about this ideology and its origins more than almost anybody that I know. And while you're American and you live in America and all that, you know Israel very well. So let me ask you about petri dishes for a second. Petri dishes can be hospitable to certain kinds of growth, and they can be inhospitable to certain kinds of growth. How hospitable a petri dish is Israel to woke ideology? I always hear people asking me, well, when is all of this stuff going to come to Israel? And I have my own view. But before I say what my view is I want to hear what you think is the likelihood that this kind of radical, progressivism woke stuff can find a good base inside the Jewish state.

So far, we've seen woke ideology get traction in English speaking countries like the United States, the UK, Canada. It might be worse in Canada than it is in the United States. It has its own manifestations. But it might be worse in Canada because Canada is a much more sort of left leaning country than the United States without any countervailing force.

If anybody wants to see that, by the way, just look at Concordia University, for example, in Canada, which is kind of a very good bellwether of where they're heading.

You haven't seen it as much in places like Germany and France. You see it in New Zealand and Australia, and the French are

trying very hard to keep it out. It's kind of ironic because a lot of this ideology came from French philosophers and now, we're exporting it back to them. In general, it hasn't gained much ground in the non-English speaking countries. My own personal view is that Israel is not a very susceptible petri dish to this ideology. It is gaining ground in sectors of Tel Aviv, for example. You certainly see it at Tel Aviv University. You probably see it on sort of the gender issues that are taking place. I would imagine that the gender ideology, the idea that gender is completely fluid and non-binary and so forth, that probably has gained a lot of ground in parts of Tel Aviv because the leadership of Tel Aviv often come from the LGBT community. So, I imagine you'll see it there. I think sort of the oppressor- oppressed binary probably will not gain that much value in Israel. Israel is just not politically structured in a way that's likely to say, oh yes, there's oppressed oppressor binary and anybody who has power is automatically complicit. Anybody who doesn't is automatically innocent. I just don't think that that's likely to gain ground in Israel as we know it today.

Yeah, I actually agree with you, and I think there's a bunch of reasons for that. First of all, I think what people don't recognize is that Israel is a very conservative society in a lot of ways, not only among religious Jews. I mean, first of all, Israeli Arabs who make up 20% of the country are very conservative. People scratch their heads, and they say, why in the world would Israeli Arabs vote for Likud? I mean, that seems to make no sense. Partly it is because, by the way, the left hasn't done all that much for Israeli Arabs either. So, they don't think they're losing that much by not voting for the left. But it's largely because they actually share the social values of the Israeli right. Certainly on gender and on marriage and let's say, on having kids in or outside of wedlock and taking religion seriously and having a certain degree of reverence for the tradition of religion and for the value of religion. There's a whole

host of ways in which, first of all, Israeli Arabs are a very traditional society. Israeli ultra-Orthodox are obviously a very traditional society. The Mizrahim, who make up more of Israeli society than do Ashkenazim, meaning Jews of darker color from the Levant, North Africa, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, are now more numerous in Israel than white European origin Jews, are also instinctively much more right wing. I don't mean right wing, by the way, politically or on foreign policy or in the Israeli Arab conflict. I mean in terms of the roles of women, in terms of changes in religion, in terms of all kinds of things. And then just some people who happen to be conservatives, you have a much wider conservative base in Israel, which you're right, it's not reflective of Tel Aviv University's campus necessarily, but that's a small piece. I also think, and here you and I might just read a tiny little bit. I think Israel is very hospitable, and I actually think it's fabulous to the whole gay lesbian community and so on and so forth. I don't think that that's morphing in Israel quite into gender fluidity, in the same way that you don't go to Israel and see all gender bathrooms, at least if you have them, I've never seen them. I've literally never seen an all-gender bathroom in Israel. There's the men's room, there's women, and you know where you want to go. But I just think it's not going to take quite as much because, as you pointed out, some of that is derivative of an oppressed-oppressor ideology. And that would be a very ironic worldview for Israelis to buy into since the oppressor-oppressed ideology always makes Israel look guilty. So, I think there's a whole array of reasons. I tend to agree with you that it's not likely to come to Israel so quickly, though as you point out, some elements of it probably will. It goes without saying that Israeli teenagers are bopping around Israeli cities with Air Pods in their ears are listening to a lot of the same music and a lot of the same stuff that kids are listening to in Argentina or in France or in America. And so, some of it will come through. Israelis watch a lot of American TV. They watch American movies. But I think fundamentally you're right that this is

much more an American phenomenon. I never thought about it the way you said it, that it's an English speaking worldwide phenomenon, not a non-English speaking thing.

It hasn't totally affected the UK in the way it has the United States, which to me is a bit ironic because I always viewed sort of the student activists that I knew in the UK as much more sort of radically left than Americans, but it hasn't yet caught on in the same way. And there are people in the UK who are trying to prevent it from catching on. By the way, also ironically, I have seen gender neutral bathrooms in Tel Aviv and various LGBTQ places. We visited them on a mission that I took a few years ago and met with some activists there. So, I'm not saying it has the same pride in place as it does in the United States, no pun intended, but it does have some cache. Another thing that you said really resonated with me about Jews from the Middle East. My mom is a Baghdadi Jew, so I grew up with Iraqi Jewish Jews in my home. I spoke Iraqi Jewish dialect of Arabic and so forth. Many of the Jews from the Middle East, from Iran, Persian Jews, really find this ideology distasteful, Jews from the former Soviet Union even more so.

Natan Sharansky wrote the forward to my book. And it's not at all surprising because Jews from the former Soviet Union, when they hear this ideology, they hear totalitarianism, they hear the ideology that they were indoctrinated with in the Soviet Union, and it sets off alarm bells immediately. It makes them think that the country they fled to is starting to sound like the country they fled from. And so, it's not surprising that I'm finding many allies in the Jews from the former Soviet Union community in the United States. I'll bet you the same thing would be true in Israel if they knew it. And I think that we're going to have to tell American Jews and American Jewish establishment that you may think that you are being inclusive by having this ideology to choose the color

and the light, but what's really happening is you're traumatizing Jews from countries that were oppressive to them. And those are the Jews who have really been oppressed. Those are the Jews who have experienced tyranny. And you're basically making Jewish life less hospitable by embracing this ideology.

That's absolutely true. So, I want to ask you one more question. A reminder to our listeners that this is a conversation based on David's book just released called "Woke Anti-Semitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews" and the book is scary. I mean, it's very worrisome. You can't put the book down and not feel like this is not so good. One can agree, disagree, whatever, and you point that out yourself. But it's very hard to walk away without a certain sense of something feels ominous. So, the last question that I wanted to ask you as we wrap up is do you think woke is beginning to burn itself out? Do you think woke is not yet beginning to burn itself out, but will burn itself out? Or is woke here to stay?

I don't think it's here to stay, but I'm not sure it's going to go away anytime soon. The problem is that if politics is downstream from culture, as we say, institutions are far downstream from politics. For example, even if you change the political dynamics around this issue because let's say democrats who might have bought into woke ideology lose at the polls as they probably would have if it had not been for the abortion issue in the United States. You saw that in the Virginia elections when a republican won in a democratic state in Virginia because of these issues over woke ideology. Because of critical race theory in schools and the like. You would think that that would change the dynamic around wokeness. But it really hasn't had the impact that we had hoped. And the reason is that a lot of institutions in the wake of the George Floyd killing had bought into this ideology, and they signed on what I call the dotted line of deference. That is, they

said, okay, we have got to get with the program here and stand up for racial justice. And sometimes they brought in a diversity equity and inclusion consultancy. Sometimes they hired somebody who was now in charge of their thinking around race and racism, and they deferred. And now it's very hard to get out of that. Even if they now regret it, even if they now worry that it's gone too far, they've sort of already signed on the dotted line. I think that's why this is not going anywhere. It's only now, two years after George Floyd, when all these sort of antiracist commissions and antiracism audits that organizations were performing, governments were performing, have come out with their reports, and those reports are now being institutionalized. Now, my son's school and I want to give you this example to see understand really how dangerous this ideology can be. My son's school, in the Montgomery County public school system, which is home of one of the largest Jewish communities in the United States, right outside the DC area.

And the wealthiest county in America, I think, right?

I think it is one of the wealthiest counties in America or one of the top three. The school has a new anti-racist audit which is recommending that the social studies curriculum teach students how to recognize and resist systems of oppression. Now, you can say, what's wrong with that? I mean, there are systems of oppression in the world. The problem is that this idea of systems of oppression is related to an ideology that holds that only people with power are the oppressors. So, it looks at anybody who's powerful as being the oppressor and anyone who's supposedly powerless as being the oppressed. That means that Jews in the United States who on average do better than the rest of society, can be held responsible and complicit in white supremacy against those who are not doing as well. That's part of what we mean by equity, by the way, in that way that this definition of equity has

taken shape in American society. It means that we are installing software into the brains of young people not in college, at liberal universities anymore, but in K-12 schools, so that they see the world through this ideological binary. You don't have to teach that Israel and Zionism suck. You can just teach them the oppressed oppressor binary and they will view Israel and Jews in a certain way. That to me, is the fundamental problem we're facing in the future if we don't put this ideology in control.

And that's why the universities have become one of the many reasons that the universities have become such a problematic place for Jews on campus. Whether or not Israel should respond to that by actually offering opportunities for American students to come to Israel is a hotly debated topic in the world in which I work, because I'm in the college system. But that's a different conversation. All I'll end up by saying is that this is also a huge challenge to Israel in the following sense-- a lot of Israelis know very little about America. They have a sense of 50 states, they know it's powerful, they think it's rich, they know a lot of movies and music that come from there, but they know nothing about the issues that you're talking about. And therefore, even if they're not worried about it coming to Israel, which as you say, they probably should be, at least a little bit, they certainly should be worried about what this ideology means for their own security down the road. Because what's happening on American college campuses at the end of the day is going to influence what happens in Congress and at the end of the day, what happens in Congress is going to influence very clearly what happens on Israel's borders and in Israel's skies.

So, this is an issue that is not over the ocean, far away beyond the horizon. It may be over the ocean and beyond the horizon, but it actually has enormous impact and a potential impact for Israel and for Israelis and the future of the Jewish state, which makes

Israelis coming to think about the issues that you're speaking about all the more important and all the more urgent. So that's a challenge to Israel as well. For the work that you've been doing, and you are doing, once again, I want to wish you a congratulations on the appearance of the book, and wish you continued success with the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values. I look forward to thanking you in person and wish you all the best.