



Ksenofontov's Noah Damning Ham

African Americans, Ambivalence, and Antisemitism

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At UCLA, my doctoral dissertation on Black-Jewish relations grew out of undergraduate gestation in those days when “Negro” was a polite term for African American. Though never published as a book, the dissertation had significant influence—to the good, I like to think—on the study of what Ben Halpern called “the classic American minorities.” Yet it also included one page among seven hundred that has caused me considerable embarrassment.

I began a chapter with a long discussion of the ancient Jewish kingdoms, with Egypt and Sudan extending into East Africa. I concluded, on balance, that biblical attitudes were favorable to the beauty and valor of dark-skinned peoples, some of whom fought for or in alliance with Jews.¹ Then I turned to the Talmud.

My fateful generalization was that “there is no denying that the Babylonian Talmud was the first source to read Negrophobic content” into the Bible story of the disrespectful behavior of Noah’s son, Ham, and the resulting curse (Genesis 9:18). Ham—who had already been blessed—is not cursed. Instead, Noah’s curse falls on Ham’s son, Canaan, identified as

1. Ben Halpern, *Blacks and Jews* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).

the progenitor of the people later conquered by the Israelites. Noah's other son, Cush—identified as the father of African peoples—is also not cursed. But my reading at the time of Talmudic translations and secondary discussions in English led me to emphasize the significance of a few post-biblical folkloric motifs unfavorable to Ham, including one suggesting he was smitten in the skin or “blackened in his face as a punishment” for the sin of sexual depravity on the Ark.²

MY BLACK-JEWISH BLUES

Three years had passed before I realize that I had oversimplified in a misleading way Talmudic racial attitudes. The Ethiopian Jewish scholar Ephraim Isaac's “Genesis, Judaism and ‘the Sons of Ham’ ” appeared in the journal *Slavery and Abolition* (May 1980). In this essay, Isaac systematically demolished the overemphasis on Talmudic glosses on the so-called “Curse of Ham” as well as discussions of this subject in my dissertation and, among other places, in Winthrop Jordan's Pulitzer Prize-winning *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (1968). Jordan influenced a whole generation of American scholars, including me. Unfortunately, he—like me—was entirely ignorant of both Hebrew and Aramaic. His interpretation was based partly on a rather sloppy piecing together of two or three folktales from the Soncino translation of the Talmud, plus reliance on Robert Graves and Raphael Patai's popular but unreliable *Hebrew Myths* (1964). As soon as I read Isaac's essay, I knew I had made a mistake. My friend, now Yale emeritus professor David B. Davis (also a Pulitzer Prize winner), also had second thoughts; he repudiated Jordan's simplistic view in favor of Isaac's in his own book, *Slavery and Human Progress* (1984). Isaac had shown that some Talmudic glosses that have been interpreted as racist were really not even about racial difference! Subsequently, I learned from Bernard Lewis and David H. Aaron that these Talmudic folktales, rather than being original, may have been a borrowing from the Church Father Ephrem the Syrian, who independently and perhaps earlier than Talmudic fabulists spun negative stories about Ham.³

2. Harold Brackman, “The Ebb and Flow of Conflict: A History of Black-Jewish Relations Through 1900” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1977), 80.

3. Ephraim Isaac, “Genesis, Judaism and the ‘Sons of Ham,’ ” *Slavery and Abolition* 1 (1980): 3-17; David B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 82-101; Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 124; David H. Aaron, “Early Rabbinic Exegesis on Noah's Son Ham and

The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews (1991), by the anonymous "Historical Research Department" of Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, soon appeared on the literary scene—conspicuous by omission was Noah's curse and the alleged Jewish origins of African American racism. I was the first to write a book demolishing the Farrakhanites' libelous thesis about Jewish domination of the slave trade, and only then did Wellesley's Tony Martin, a Farrakhan acolyte, open up a second front against me.

In his *The Jewish Onslaught* (1993, self-published), Martin selectively quoted from my dissertation regarding the Talmud and Ham's claim of Jewish culpability in modern racism. The quotation was accurate but nevertheless misleading. As Martin and those who followed in his footsteps fail to point out, my dissertation devotes one page to the Ham curse juxtaposed to the ten-page Muslim-led Black African slave trade; the writers discussed there were Arab Muslim.⁴

As the controversy over *The Secret Relationship* became big news in the early 1990s, I did my best to correct the record by writing a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* (published February 14, 1994). Then I convinced Isaac to write a short refutation, "Afterword: The Talmud Does Not Teach Racism," to my book, *Ministry of Lies* (1994). Finally, I wrote a detailed correction of my dissertation error as well as other American scholars' mistakes, published in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 1997.⁵

In addition to the pioneering work of Isaacs, a number of other distinguished scholars—including Bernard Lewis, David H. Aaron, Benjamin Braude, Paul Freedman, David M. Goldenberg, and Jonathan Schorch, all with the requisite knowledge of the ancient languages—have rejected the mischievous, misleading notion that a few fragmentary folktales of ambiguous meaning in the Talmud were "the origins of anti-black racism."⁶

the So-Called 'Hamitic Hypothesis,' " *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (1995): 724-26.

4. Tony Martin, *The Jewish Onslaught: Dispatches from the Wellesley Battlefield* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1993), 34-35; Brackman, "The Ebb and Flow of Conflict," 88-102.

5. Harold Brackman, *Ministry of Lies: The Truth behind the Nation of Islam's "The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews"* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows Press, 1994); *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (July 1997): 682-86, letter from Harold Brackman.

6. Aaron, "Early Rabbinic Exegesis on Noah's Son Ham," 724-26; Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (January 1997): 103-42; Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 86-104; David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of*

In the 19th century, American apologists for the antebellum South's peculiar institution found a convenient rationalization for race-based slavery in biblical and even Talmudic passages, which they interpreted or, more often, misinterpreted, for proslavery, racist purposes. This story—which I also told in my dissertation when discussing the range of attitudes toward slavery and race held by American Jews before the Civil War—has most recently been retold in Stephen R. Haynes' *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (2002). Alas, Haynes' book continues to propagate the outdated, erroneous view that the rabbis invented racism—a claim that, whatever Haynes intended, has become a foundation of the new African American antisemitism.⁷

PREJUDICE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Why after the Holocaust should we continue to study antisemitism in general and African American antisemitism in particular? The poet Maya Angelou recalls her youthful dream that there was no more “need to discuss racial prejudice. Hadn't we all, black and white, just snatched the remaining Jews from the hell of concentration camps? Race prejudice was dead.”⁸ Were this true of both racism and antisemitism!

Despite Angelou's disappointed hope, polls show that, at least in the United States, overall levels of antisemitism—as well as anti-black racism—are much lower than during the Great Depression and World War II (the big drop occurring mostly between the 1960s and 1990s). And nobody can deny that African Americans—around 10 percent of the American population—are only a fraction of all antisemites.⁹

The reasons, it seems to me, to continue to study Jew hatred, including nonwhite antisemitism, are these. First, there is reason to be skeptical about reported post-Holocaust levels of antisemitism because the decline probably partly reflects that it's no longer polite, post-Hitler, to be antisemitic. Yet in many influential circles, it's quite all right to be “anti-Zionist” or “anti-

Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Racism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 168-77; Jonathan Schorch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 135-65.

7. Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 24-25.

8. Maya Angelou, *Gather Together in My Name* (New York: Random House, 1974), 2.

9. See Leonard Dinnerstein, “Antisemitism in America: An Update 1995-2012,” *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 4 (2012): 557-66; also, Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 198.

monotheist” (see the controversy over Jan Assmann’s latest work)—ideologies that, at least sometimes, are used as a cover by antisemites.¹⁰

Second, regarding African Americans, polling data has shown a substantial minority (now measured at around 30 percent) to be antisemitic—a level of hostility that has remained quite high since the first polls in the 1960s, even while hostility to Jews among the general population has declined to around 15 percent.¹¹

Despite this, the resistances to studying African American antisemitism in particular remain quite strong. First is the argument that African Americans can’t be prejudiced against Jews because they are immune to “racism” by virtue of their status (in the past and perhaps the present) as an “oppressed minority.” In other words, only the racism—or antisemitism—of “dominant groups” with the power to inflict harm is to be taken seriously.¹²

This argument, implicit in politically correct prejudice, pops up in the oddest of places. For example, Daniel Boyarin, in his book about the Apostle Paul, quotes and embraces the argument of biblical scholar E. P. Sanders that: “We shall all agree that exclusivism is bad when practiced by the dominant group. Things look different if one thinks of minority groups that are trying to maintain their own identity.” Hence, it’s tolerable for the Amish—or persecuted Diaspora Jews—to buoy themselves psychologically by adopting “exclusivist” or “intolerant” attitudes toward “outsiders.” While this rationalization for prejudice may seem appealing at first thought, it becomes problematic in practice. Many of the same observers who dismiss Louis Farrakhan’s antisemitism as “insignificant” because African Americans are allegedly powerless to do harm to Jews—one might ask the relatives of Yankel Rosenbaum, the rabbinic student stabbed to death in 1991’s Crown Heights riot, how they feel about this!—also interpret every ambiguous word or action by Jews or Israelis, no matter the mitigating circumstances or existential threats they face, as “racist.”¹³

10. Robert S. Wistrich, ed., *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1990); Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*, trans. Robert Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Richard Wolin, “Biblical Blame Shift,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 15, 2013.

11. Dinnerstein, “Antisemitism in America,” 557-66; Anti-Defamation League, “ADL Poll Finds Antisemitic Attitudes on Rise in America,” http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/ASUS_12/6154_12.htm

12. Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 87.

13. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 250-52.

Bigots come in all colors and creeds. Though bigots with power are more dangerous, bigots with less power are also odious. Adolph Reed, Jr., could not be more wrong to mock the existence of “Blackantisemitism” [sic], which he compares to “ ‘Africanized’ killer bees . . . a racialized fantasy, a projection of white anxieties about dark horrors lurking beyond the horizon.”¹⁴ Another argument against focusing on nonwhite intolerance is that Jews should not throw stones because they need to give much more attention to “Jewish racism” than to African American Jew hatred. This relativistic argument was implicitly embodied in the title of an early anthology on the subject, introduced by Nat Hentoff: *Black Antisemitism and Jewish Racism* (1969). In this work, Hentoff adopted the self-critical argument that Jews are “the goyim” in America—the only question is “who among us are the Germans.”¹⁵

Of course, it’s true that there have long been and no doubt still are Jewish racists. The search for them is part of the motive for the development of “whiteness studies,” which explore the alleged Jewish quest to “become white” in America. Jewish “whiteness studies”—as practiced deftly by Matthew Fry Jacobson and Eric L. Goldstein and clumsily by Karen Brodtkin (she outs “grandma’s racism”!)—are a fashionable update of the traditional study of the American Jewish quest to succeed by assimilating, however great the price.¹⁶ In addition, the “whiteness studies” movement ironically echoes African American criticism of Jews for “passing as white.”¹⁷

14. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land*, 87.

15. Nat Hentoff, introduction to James Baldwin et al., *Black Antisemitism and Jewish Racism* (New York: R. W. Baron, 1969), xvii.

16. Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); Paul Ritterband, “Modern Times and Jewish Assimilation,” in *The Americanization of the Jews*, ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (Washington Square, NY: NYU Press, 1995), 377-94; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 171-200; Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Karen Brodtkin Sachs, *How the Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 18. See also Emily Miller Budick’s account of the running battle between Ralph Ellison and Irving Howe, whom Ellison accused of “passing for white.” Emily Miller Budick, *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

17. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 235-39. See Budick, *Blacks and Jews in Literary Conversation*, 22. James Baldwin made a similar charge to Ellison’s: James Baldwin, *Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998), 739-48.

Here, too, I bear an uncomfortable relation to this movement, whose practitioners sometimes cite my dissertation—uncomfortable because, despite the flattering attention, I rather feel like paraphrasing Karl Marx’s disclaimer: “*Je ne suis pas Marxiste*.” Of course, the more able acolytes of “whiteness studies” have a point; the question is what exactly that point is. It is quite legitimate to argue that American Jews have always been of two minds about African Americans—some embracing and empathetic, others (in decreasing numbers over time) quite the opposite. In fact, I would even argue that “ambivalence” is a key, if not *the* key, to understanding how both Jews and African Americans have always felt about each other.¹⁸

Since long before the Depression Era and World War II, African American attitudes toward Jews had been a study in ambivalence. Identifying with the Bible’s Chosen People, African Americans also held up modern-day Jews as a model of economic success, educational attainment, and group solidarity. But, fusing envy with emulation and antagonism with admiration, they simultaneously projected a negative mirror image of Jews as a pariah people, stripped of divine favor and guilty of exploiting the blacks who patronized Jewish merchants in the South as well as the North.

Yet, a close reading of Eric Goldstein’s acclaimed *The Price of Whiteness* suggests that it is precisely the Jewish version of ambivalence about self-definition—the need to be “the same as yet different from” other whites—that has also made American Jews into “unreliable whites”: just as the Ku Klux Klan has always suspected!¹⁹

Goldstein answers the traditional account of Black-Jewish civil rights cooperation with a counter-narrative of assimilating Jews absorbing the racial prejudice of popular culture almost by osmosis. It is easy to cite examples, such as the period from World War I to World War II, when “Jewish Hollywood” tolerated or propagated demeaning “Sambo” stereotypes of black people. This is the master thesis of Michael Paul Rogin’s *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (1996). Among the most malicious spinoffs of “whiteness studies” is Harvard-educated Jeffrey Melnick’s *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song* (1999), which elaborates the alleged unending Jewish ripoff of black popular culture. According to Mel-

18. On “whiteness studies” as an ideology redefining historical research, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); David R. Roediger, ed., *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Perseus, 2005); and Joe L. Kicheloe et al., eds., *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998). Others have also emphasized “ambivalence”—but usually about Jews or African Americans, not both.

19. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 235-39.

nick, Jews “stole” African Americans’ music—yet, African Americans are immune from the charge of “stealing” the Jews’ religion by appropriating Hebrew Bible stories. Melnick followed with *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (2000), which flirts with the argument that it was the northern Jewish businessman Frank’s stereotypically ugly “Jewish looks” that almost guaranteed his lynching for raping and murdering Mary Phagan in Jim Crow Georgia on the basis of the dubious testimony of his African American janitor.²⁰

Yet the Jewish desire to assimilate—to “become white”—was a very complicated thing. Sears Roebuck’s Julius Rosenwald, a second-generation German Jew raised in Abraham Lincoln’s hometown of Springfield, Illinois, came to explain his legendary philanthropic impulse toward African Americans not by citing his Jewish roots, but in terms of “We Anglo-Saxons.” He credited upper-class WASP William Henry Baldwin, Jr., general manager of the Southern Pacific Railroad, with awakening his “more or less dormant sympathies” toward African Americans needing education. In other words, it was precisely Rosenwald’s aspiration to be accepted by “the best whites”—in Yiddish *edeler goys* (“refined Gentiles”)—that led him to embrace and not shun black people.

Hasia R. Diner’s *In the Almost Promised Land* (1977) demonstrated that Eastern European Jewish immigrants combined aspirations to assimilate with sympathy for African Americans, manifest across the Yiddish newspaper spectrum in an implicit affirmation that racial tolerance was both a Jewish and an American value. As the *Forvertz* put it in 1917: “The situation of the Negroes in America is very comparable to the situation of the Jews . . . in Russia. The Negro diaspora, the special laws . . . the Negro hopes are very similar to those which we Jews lived through.”

This attitude extended not only to the first NAACP presidents Joel and Arthur Spingarn (German Jews), but also to the Jewish labor movement,

20. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 153-57; Thomas Cripps, *Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900-1942* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Michael Paul Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in The Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 54-55; Terry Teachout, “The Two-Way Street,” *Commentary* (June 2011), 58-61; Harold Brackman, “Let’s Face the Music and Dance: African Americans, Jews, and the Creation of Modern Popular Music,” Simon Wiesenthal Center, October 2010, <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=LSKWLBPJLnF&b=4441467&ct=8842371#.Uhdc4X949w4>

particularly in the garment trades, which aligned itself with African American labor leader A. Philip Randolph.²¹

The point, which Eric Goldstein sometimes hints at, is that as successive generations of twentieth-century Jewish Americans became “more white” in the sense of assimilated and successful, they often also became more, not less, affirming of what they perceived to be the cause of racial justice in the name of being Jewish.

This is a paradox, perhaps, in the minds of “whiteness studies” ideologues as well as Black Nationalists like Farrakhan. Farrakhan—Black separatist Elijah Muhammad’s successor as head of the Nation of Islam—views the civil rights movement as a Jewish conspiracy to sell African Americans on a bogus integrationist agenda; others see “whiteness” as the equivalent of “original sin” that Jews can’t escape. But there is no contradiction in the minds of mainstream American Jews—among whom pollsters today have a tough job finding any who admit to racial prejudice.²²

The ultimate irony of “whiteness studies” is that they have become the vogue at precisely the same time that new demographic trends—particularly the growing number of, as well as the self-consciousness of, “Jews of color” (estimates 100,000 to 250,000)—are remaking the face of the Jewish future in a multiracial direction, primarily through the impact of interracial intermarriage. And Ethiopian Jews may have their complaints with what they perceive as “the Establishment” in both the United States and Israel, but they don’t take kindly to being lectured that Judaism or Jews are necessarily “white racists.” I take issue with Melanie Kaye/Kantrowicz’s anti-Israel “radical Diasporism,” but she’s on point in her criticisms of what she calls “faddist White Studies.”²³

There have been Jews of many different hues—by descent or conversion—probably since “the mixed multitude” leaving Egypt with Moses. Ethiopia’s Falashas or Beta Israel fall within this covenantal fellowship

21. Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 28-88, 199-235; Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 94, 286; Cheryl L. Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 26.

22. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 4-5. Jewish women multiculturalists may have a particularly hard time maintaining their Jewish identity while satisfying their “Third World” allies; if they abandon Jewishness, they are still suspect as “white.” See Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 374-84.

23. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowicz, *The Color of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 5-7, 36.

under the 1971 ruling by chief rabbi Ovadia Yossef that they are “descendants of Jewish tribes that moved South to Cush”—a ruling that became the basis of their incorporation under Israel’s Law of Return in 1975. In the United States, though the extent is debated, some slaves were converted by their masters to Judaism, while other African Americans after the Civil War began “converting themselves” by forming “Black-Jewish” sects that sometimes conformed to Jewish religious practices, but sometimes did not. Then, after World War I came a second wave of Black-Jewish sects founded primarily by West Indian immigrants, some claiming deep Jewish roots. One such “Black Jew,” Arnold Ford, actually tried to convert Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey to Judaism. Though small in number then compared to now, “Black Jews” always represented a challenge for advocates of a lily-white Judaism as well as for latter-day “whiteness studies” ideologues invested in the same ideology—that American Jews are deep-dyed culturally white.²⁴

Finally, the impact of African American attitudes and behavior on Jewish Americans remains uncertain. The “whiteness school” has a tendency to treat African Americans as “invisible”—passive characters who are acted upon, but who don’t act back. Prejudicial black attitudes toward Jews going back to slavery or post-slavery times, the rise of African American antisemitic demagogues starting with Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, and Harlem race riots with anti-Jewish implications in 1935 and 1943 do not register on the radar screen of “whiteness” ideologues—not unlike Captain Ahab’s pursuit of the Great White Whale. I would argue that it’s the “whiteness studies” ideologues who are really the monomaniacs hunting Moby Dick.²⁵

24. Elly M. Wynia, *Church of God and Saints of Christ: The Rise of Black Jews* (New York: Garland, 1994); James E. Landing, *Black Judaism: Story of an American Movement* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 50-61; Yvonne Chireau, “Black Culture and Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism, 1790-1930; an Overview,” in *Black Zion: African American Religious Encounters with Judaism*, ed. Yvonne Chireau and Nathaniel Deutsch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24; Roberta S. Gold, “The Black Jews of Harlem: Representation, Identity, and Race, 1920-1939,” *American Quarterly* 55 (June 2003): 179-225; Wilson J. Moses, *The Wings of Ethiopia: Studies in American-American Life and Letters* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 27-41.

25. Cheryl L. Greenberg, “*Or Does It Explode?*”: *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Dommenic J. Capecci, Jr., *The Harlem Riot of 1943* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977).

Only when he considers the 1960s does Goldstein recognize that African Americans, like Black Nationalists and Black Power Movements, can have an impact on American Jewish attitudes, in mostly negative ways.²⁶

Historical accuracy as well as political honesty require accepting that African American hostility toward Jews—one side of a two-sided, ambivalent tradition—has roots that must be explored because, without such exploration, there can be no adequate understanding of current Black-Jewish tensions.²⁷

This year, 2013, marks the one hundredth anniversary of the Leo Frank case and founding of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the fiftieth anniversary of Norman Podhoretz's famous (or infamous) essay in *Commentary*, "My Negro Problem—And Ours," and Louis Farrakhan's 80th birthday—so it seems to be a ripe time for this study.

ATTITUDES: PRE AND POST CIVIL WAR

How did African Americans acquire their attitudes toward Jews? There were at least several thousand African Muslims, sold as slaves across the Atlantic, who may have carried such attitudes with them from the Old World. Then there is the well-reported case of a self-identified African Jew, "Uncle Billy" Simmons, who claimed to be a Rechabite from Madagascar. Congregation Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, authorized his seating "in the nave of the Temple," despite the congregation's formal ban against admitting "free people of color."²⁸

Obviously, what mattered infinitely more were African American contacts with the Southern Jews. According to one study, one fourth of Southern Jews—the same percentage as the non-Jewish population—owned slaves. The master-slave relationship between Jews and African Americans mostly occurred in cities rather than on plantations. It usually was unexceptional, but sometimes produced remarkable results. Daniel Warburg, a German immigrant to "Creole" New Orleans, with a slave woman fathered Daniel Eugène Warburg, whom he educated in Europe. Francis Lewis Cardozo, Sr., and Thomas Y. Cardozo—African American political leaders in

26. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 213-21.

27. On the predominately positive side of the dualism, see Harold Brackman, "Zionism in Black and White, Part I: 1898-1948," *Midstream* 56 (January 2010): 17-23, and "Part II: 1948-2010," *Midstream* 56 (Spring 2010): 23-28.

28. Michael Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005); James William Hays, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 101.

South Carolina during Reconstruction—were children of a distinguished Jewish father.²⁹

Though it is true that the great majority of Southern Jews did not challenge slavery and racial subordination, there were significant exceptions. In researching my dissertation, I found German-Jewish immigrant peddlers who offended the white master class by calling their African American slave customers “Mr.” The Friedman brothers of rural Georgia went so far as to buy a slave, Peter Still, from his master without revealing that their real purpose was to take him to Ohio to free him.³⁰

What did Southern African Americans think of the Jews they encountered? Evidence about how they viewed “real Jews” is scarce. Anecdotes, related by whites for humorous effect, included the following; “An old pious Negro mammy” pestered her mistress to see “some of the Children of Israel.” The mistress allowed her to visit a nearby village, where a Jewish peddler could be found. The servant soon returned, indignantly exclaiming: “Missus! Dat’s no Children o’ Israel. Dat’s de same ol’ Jew peddler w’at sole me dem pisen, brass yearings [last year] . . . Sih low down w’ite man as dat, he never belong to no Lan’ o’ Cainyan.”³¹

Then there’s the tale of the slave girl who hid beneath her bed in fear of meeting her new mistress. This colloquy then occurred: “Why don’t you want to live with Miss Isaacs? She is a good lady and will make you a kind mistress.” The slave girl’s answer: “They tell me Miss Isaacs is a Jew; an if the Jews kill the Lord and Master, what will they do to a poor little nigger like me?”³²

Beneath this self-serving humor—both racially patronizing and tinged with antisemitism—there probably was a kernel of truth about the contrast

29. Bertram Wallace Korn, “Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South,” in *The Jewish Experience in America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), vol. 3, 179-80, 200-08; Bertram Wallace Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, MA: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), 181-82; John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 13-14, 98; Charles Reznikoff with Uriah Z. Engleman, *The Jews of Charleston* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), 160-61.

30. Maxwell Whiteman, ed., *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed: The Narrative of Peter and Vina Still after Forty Years of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971); Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered These Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941), 4-5; Naomi W. Cohen, *A Dual Heritage: The Public Career of Oscar S. Straus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 6; Brackman, “The Ebb and Flow of Conflict,” 267-70.

31. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 198.

32. Brackman, “The Ebb and Flow of Conflict,” 273-74.

between African attitudes toward “real Jews” and “biblical Hebrews.” On the one hand, African Americans in the South may have appreciated their respectful treatment—first by German Jewish and then Eastern European Jewish peddlers. Yet there was probably also tension in the relationship, reflected in the incident from 1873 of three black plantation hands being lynched after they robbed and killed an itinerant Jewish newcomer from Germany.³³

Was this post-slavery murder an “ordinary” heinous crime? Probably. Yet we can never know if it was influenced by the teachings of the old white master class, who catechized their slaves: “Q. Who killed Jesus? A. The wicked Jews.” And masters also delighted in one verse of a spiritual sung by slaves: “Virgin Mary had one son. The cruel Jews him hung.”³⁴

On the other hand, there was an overwhelmingly positive identification on the part of slaves and then freed people with the Hebrew Bible. An unusual case would be pious Lucy Marks, a member of Philadelphia’s Congregation Mivveh Israel buried in their cemetery. It’s uncertain whether she descended from “Black-Jewish” slaves from the Caribbean or acquired her Judaism in the household of Rachel Marks.³⁵

While Christian slaves prayed for a new Moses or Joshua to deliver them from bondage, black abolitionists also began quoting the Old Testament prophecy that “Great men will come from Egypt, and Ethiopia will stretch out her hand to God” (Psalms 68:32). This identification, not with “the Hebrew children” but with the biblical Hamites who were empire builders in Africa, subtly nurtured what by the late nineteenth century was a nascent, not necessarily antisemitic, Black Nationalism. African American abolitionists tended to identify with Jewish emancipation struggles in the present as well as past, yet occasionally they slipped into antisemitic language to castigate white proslavery churches as “synagogues of Satan” on the same level as Jewish “swine of the Scriptures.”³⁶

After freedom was finally won in 1865, African Americans continued to cling to the symbolism of the Exodus from Egypt as a harbinger for them

33. Rudolf Glanz, *Studies in Judaica Americana* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970), 61.

34. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 198; Brackman, “The Ebb and Flow of Conflict,” 273-74.

35. Kaye/Kantrowitz, *Colors of Jews*, 48; Whiteman, ed., *The Kidnapped and the Ransomed*, 15.

36. Theophus H. Smith, *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 236-39; Jarmain Wesley Loguen, *As a Slave and as a Freeman* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968 [1859]), 266; Brackman, “The Ebb and Flow of Conflict,” 302.

as a “newly chosen people” who would eventually escape sharecropping, segregation, and lynching.³⁷

Yet, there was a subtle post-Civil War change in mainstream African American Christianity that affected attitudes toward Jews. Northern white Protestant seminaries sent missionaries south to train the first generation of free southern black ministers and teachers. The missionaries often sought to “de-Judaize” the faith of the freed people, who, allegedly, did not understand the New Testament. According to one Northern army chaplain, “There is no part of the Bible with which they are so familiar as the story of the deliverance of the Children of Israel. Moses is their ideal of all that is high, and noble, and perfect, in man. [They] have been accustomed to regard Christ not so much in the light of a Spiritual Deliver, as that of a second Moses.”³⁸

African American leaders of churches and schools responded to such pressures by demoting the slave songs and folk tales in favor of new Christological hymns and sermons. They castigated Jewish businessmen who violated Sunday closing laws for “desecrating our Sabbath and insulting our religion.” While not hard-core antisemitism, the emerging Black Fundamentalist mindset helped create a cultural environment in which “Christ killer” accusations against Jews could more easily insinuate themselves. According to the autobiographical recollections of African American writers, the view of Jews as deicides remained a powerful force in shaping twentieth-century African American religiosity.³⁹

Richard Wright wrote in *Black Boy* (1945) of his Mississippi and Tennessee childhood: “All of us Black people who lived in the neighborhood hated Jews, not because they exploited us, but because we had been taught at home and in Sunday School that Jews were ‘Christ killers.’ ” James Baldwin, a minister’s stepson, wrote in his essay for *Commentary*, “The Harlem Ghetto: 1948,” that “the traditional Christian accusation that the Jews killed Christ is neither questioned nor doubted. . . . Just as society must have a scapegoat, so hatred must have a symbol. Georgia has the

37. Arnold Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends: Afro-Americans View the Immigrant* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 115; Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz, *Chosen Peoples: America, Israel, and the Ordeals of Divine Election* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 110-12.

38. Peter Kolchin, *First Freedoms: The Responses of American Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 118.

39. Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 174-76; Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends*, 123.

Negro and Harlem has the Jew.” Only later did Baldwin argue that African American antisemitism was pretty much solely an “antiwhite” reflex.⁴⁰

The overall generalization that needs to be made at this juncture is that—before the large-scale Black-Jewish encounters in the context of twentieth-century ghettos—powerful ideological currents were already in play among African Americans that could generate and sustain antisemitic traditions.

GHETTO BLOODSUCKERS

In the 1990s, Louis Farrakhan embellished the charge that Jewish merchants, by then a declining presence in African American neighborhoods, were “bloodsuckers.” The accusation was an old one, going back to 1900 or even a little before, when African Americans and Jews began their modern encounter in urban neighborhoods, first in the South and then increasingly in the North. Indeed, the pejorative “Jew merchant” was applied by African Americans to Greek, Italian, and later Arab and other white ethnic businessmen.⁴¹

Itinerant Eastern European Jewish merchants began to travel throughout the South in the 1880s. Like German-Jewish immigrant peddlers earlier, they won black clientele by offering them a combination of courtesy and credit. This meant a smile and a handshake, the respectful appellation “Mr.” or “Mrs.,” and selling consumer goods for the promise of future payment in cotton.⁴²

No particular friend of the Jews, the Southern historian Bell Wiley, like others, recalled that in his hometown the lone Jewish storekeeper “got most of the black trade because he treated Negroes as human beings and was kindly to them, taking time to joke, inquire about their families and otherwise manifest interest in them.”⁴³

40. Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends*, 133-34; Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), 70; James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 68, 73; Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land*, 40; James Baldwin, “Negroes Are Antisemitic Because They’re Anti-White,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 1967, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-antisem.html>

41. Clive Webb, “Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow,” *Southern Jewish History* 2 (1999): 55-80.

42. Harry Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963).

43. Webb, “Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow,” 55-80.

Once again, ambivalence reigned, starting in the post-Civil War South as African Americans transitioned from rural areas, where Jewish peddlers went out of their way to accommodate the freed people—in Tennessee, in 1868, suffering lynching as a consequence—to cities where the situation was more complex. Did Jewish peddlers and merchants catering to a black clientele charge too much? Historian Clive Webb has raised the question, but exactly what should low-capital/high-risk Jewish businessmen have charged black customers to whom they advanced credit, which almost non-Jewish merchants did? No doubt some drove a hard bargain. But then there's David Pearlman, arriving in Georgia in 1880, who actually charged his black customers less than he charged whites. Jewish merchants were often the only option for black tenant farmers or sharecroppers who wanted to stretch their purchasing power to buy, not only seed and farming tools, but consumer goods ranging from wedding rings to calico dresses to a new pair of shoes. Webb condescends to as "sentimental" or "romantic" Louis Schmeir's sympathetic, well-documented account of Jewish peddlers in the Jim Crow South, but withholds appropriate adjectives as "vicious" and "undocumented" the aspersions cast by African American antisemites such as Harold Cruse, whom he quotes.⁴⁴

Credit was welcome, but ambivalence was reflected in North Carolina black folklore, where Jim Jones buys from a Jewish merchant a suit that shrinks as soon as he goes out in the rain. Returning to the store, he asks the merchant, "Do you remember me?" The merchant responds: "Sure, I remember you. How you's grown!" More chilling, the African American sociologist St. Claire Drake remembers a hot day when he and his grandmother passed the house of a Jew, who invited them in for a cold drink. As soon as they returned home, his grandmother warned him that "they" clearly cheat blacks: "You've got to be careful." Mark Twain—not a friendly observer—generalized: "Whites detested the Jew, and it is doubtful if the Negro loved him."

In early twentieth-century Atlanta, propinquity sometimes meant serious crime. Peters Street clothier Morris Greenblatt was shot and killed by a repeat thief. Two Jewish women were stabbed outside Grady Hospital. The following year, Jacob Hirsowitz, one of the leading members of the Russian community, was murdered by several Negroes who attempted to steal a revolver from his pawnshop. Aaron Morris, a recently arrived barber, was killed after trying to protect his landlady from assault. One again, there's no evidence of antisemitic motivation—but, given neighborhood friction, one

44. Louis Schmier, "For Him the Schwartzers Couldn't Do Enough: A Jewish Peddler and His Black Customers," *Southern Jewish History* 73 (1983), 39-55; Webb, "Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow," 57, 76.

can wonder. It is no surprise that if in a racial tinderbox like Atlanta—after a white riot in 1906 against African Americans was wrongly blamed on a Jewish saloon keeper selling to black customers—Black-Jewish relations took a turn for the worse, culminating in the Leo Frank case, when African American and Jewish newspapers recriminated against each other. Historian and educator Horace Mann Bond remembered a childhood taunt—“nigger, nigger, nigger”—from the son of an Atlanta store owner, to which he responded “You Christ killer.”⁴⁵

Booker T. Washington combined private reservations about Eastern European Jewish immigrants with public praise for assimilating American Jews as a role model for aspiring African Americans. In his home county of Tuskegee, Alabama, black voters reputedly helped elect Sam Marx sheriff.⁴⁶

In New York City, the Eastern European Jewish influx was making the East Side a world in itself at the same time that native-born black New Yorkers, supplemented by the first Southern arrivals, were moving to the West Side. Not until Harlem was transformed after 1900 was there a large-scale interaction. Even so, there was enough contact to generate both cooperation and conflict. The first collaborations between mostly German-Jewish managers and African performers predate the Jazz Age, dating back to the 1890s. In terms of conflict and prejudice, immigrant Jewish merchants sometimes stereotyped their black customers, while “Colonel Hardscrabble,” a columnist for the African American *New York Globe*, reported to his readers how “a fork-nosed Jew” victimized him on the East Side. In 1905, Jessie Fortune, a black schoolteacher, told readers of the *New York Age* about her sojourn to the East Side: “The [Jews’] sole aim seems to be earning money.” And, according to a columnist in the *New York Age* in 1912,

45. Webb, “Jewish Merchants and Black Customers,” 60; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), 181-201; Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends*, 138n3. I know of only one instance of a Jew accused of participation in racist violence against African Americans. After Springfield, Illinois, erupted in a race riot in 1908, Abraham Raymer, a Russian immigrant peddler from St. Louis, was indicted for murder for allegedly inciting the mob that stabbed and lynched African American William Donegan. Ironically, the mob also attacked a Jewish-owned pawnshop. Raymer was the only Jew among 115 identified rioters. He may have been guilty of incitement by yelling “nigger!,” but was acquitted. See Roberta Senechal de la Roche, *In Lincoln’s Shadow: The 1908 Race Riot in Springfield, Illinois* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), 73, 97, 107, 168-71.

46. Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington in Perspective* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1988), 152-63.

“Because the [Russian] peasant is sometimes slow witted and uneducated, the Jew if allowed a free hand could devour him.” “Negroes are fleeing from the American Kishineff [*sic*], Evansville, Indiana,” another African newspaper had declared in 1903; “shall the Negroes look to the czar of Russia for protection, since neither the President of the United States nor the Mayor of Evansville seems interested in protecting them?”⁴⁷



W. E. B. Du Bois during his antisemitic phase, ca. 1896

It was from the status-conscious, race-conscious milieu of late nineteenth-century America that Massachusetts-born W. E. B. Du Bois emerged. Later, after working closely with Jews for years in the NAACP and admiring 1917's Balfour Declaration, Du Bois developed into a paragon of Black-Jewish cooperation, opposing the antisemitic demagoguery of Marcus Garvey in Harlem as well as Hitler in Berlin. But earlier, his attitude had been quite different.

Though Joel E. Spingarn, Arthur Spingarn, Henry Moskowitz, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Lillian Wald, and other Jews were prominent in the formation of the NAACP, Du Bois' brainchild, he began his career tinged with *fin-de-siècle* antisemitism. Studying at the University of Berlin in the 1890s, he returned to the United States imbued not only with the latest in German scholarly methods but also with his own version of the *Volkisch*

47. Isabel Boiko Price, “Black Response to Antisemitism: Negroes and Jews in New York, 1880 to World War II” (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1973), 35; Shankman, *Ambivalent Friends*, 133; Philip S. Foner, “Black-Jewish Relations in the Opening Years of the Twentieth Century,” *Phylon* 36 (1975): 363.

nationalism associated with historian Heinrich von Treitschke. Described by Du Bois as “the fire-eating pan-German” and “by far the most interesting” of his professors, Treitschke modernized Martin Luther’s lament that “the Jews are our misfortune.” Du Bois rejected Treitschke’s disparagement of Africans as a race without a history and mulattoes as an inferior breed, but absorbed to some degree Treitschke’s view of Jews as degenerate internationalists incapable of assimilating into the organic nation state. Though Du Bois recollected that he “followed the Dreyfus case” and was aware of “Jewish pogroms and segregation in Russia,” his interest did not then translate into fellow feeling. When visiting Poland during a summer recess, he was light complexioned enough to have a question whispered in his ear by the driver of a rickety cab in a town north of Slovenia. The driver asked whether Du Bois wanted to rent a room in the part of town “*unter die Juden?*” He “stared and then said yes. I stayed at a little Jewish inn.” Yet despite being mistaken for one, Du Bois found Jews to be “a half-veiled mystery” lacking a “strong middle class,” and, as he complained about the Jewish passengers on the ship that carried him back to America, typified by “the low mean cheating *Pobel* [rabble].”⁴⁸

The same sentiments pervaded the unsettling passages in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), removed from the 1953 edition, disparaging as “heir[s] to the slave baron” the “shrewd and unscrupulous” Eastern European Jewish immigrants to the South who, together with the “thrifty and avaricious” Yankees, “could squeeze more blood from debt-cursed tenants.” The putative victims of Jewish-Yankee exploitation were Du Bois’ fellow African Americans, who figured in his romantic racialism as the newly chosen people, destined to infuse America’s Anglo-Saxon civilization with desperately needed spirituality, passion, and “soul.”⁴⁹

48. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of the German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1964), 200-2; *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 164; David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 136, 241, 248; Michael P. Kramer, “W. E. B. Du Bois, American Nationalism, and the Jewish Question,” in *Race and the Production of Modern American Nationalism*, ed. Reynolds J. Scott-Chidress (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 184-86.

49. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 112-5, 136-7, 157, 209-10n20; Kramer, “W. E. B. Du Bois, American Nationalism, and the Jewish Question,” 171, 180, 187-89; Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 461-3.



Marcus Garvey, ca. 1920

MARCUS GARVEY, AKA BLACK MOSES

A movement that had elements of Black Nationalism, but would be more accurately called Pan-Africanism, emerged in the late nineteenth century. Founding father Edward Wilmot Blyden, whose career triangulated between the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa with visits to the Holy Land, embraced Theodor Herzl and “that marvelous movement called Zionism” as a model for African liberation. W. E. B. Dubois—in the wake of the Balfour Declaration after he outgrew his callow antisemitism—joined this same tradition. But this black perspective became a very different matter with Jamaica-born Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey.⁵⁰

Arriving in the United States in 1915, Garvey may then have seen African Americans and American Jews as Diaspora peoples each destined to renew ties with their ancestral homelands, but this was a view he later deemphasized. The year 1919 witnessed Garvey’s meteoric rise as leader of probably the first authentic African American mass movement—a movement that with “Black Zionism” raised the banner of “Back to Africa.” Jailed for mail fraud, he blamed his conviction on Jewish prosecutors and judges and the NAACP. He defied the NAACP by cultivating the support of the KKK. Deported as an undesirable alien, Garvey was an exile in London

50. Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot, 1832-1912* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 64-65; Benyamin Neuberger, “Early African Nationalism, Judaism, and Zionism: Edward Wilmot Blyden,” *Jewish Social Studies* 47 (Spring 1985): 151-65.

by 1933, when he declared "Hats off to Hitler the German Nazi" and "What the Negro needs is a Hitler." Only later, after Nazi Germany blessed Italy's Ethiopian aggression and revealed its own African colonial ambitions, did Garvey have second thoughts.⁵¹

ATTITUDES: PRE-POST HOLOCAUST

"World politics . . . are, in the final analysis, of secondary importance to American Negroes," Gunnar Myrdal observed during World War II, "except as avenues for the expression of dissatisfaction. What really matters to . . . [the American Negro] is his treatment at home, in his own country." Myrdal's conclusion is in need of elaboration and qualification.⁵²

The rise of Hitler came at the trough of Great Depression in the United States, when isolationist sentiment was in the ascendant among the African American public as well as the general American public. This was true even of Paul Robeson, later the personification of Black-Jewish unity against fascism. In London in 1933 for the opening of *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, he maintained his persona as an apolitical artist and did not immediately see the significance of Hitler's installation as German chancellor.⁵³

Back in the United States, starting in March 1933, the black press carried stories about "the new Germany." Within a week of the Reichstag election of March 5, the capitol's black newspaper, the *Washington Tribune*, featured the headline: "Jewish Massacres Feared Soon in Germany," with the subhead: "6,000,000 Are Living in Fear with Action Imminent, London Paper Says." Just after the first official boycott of Jewish shops and businesses in Germany, on April 1, the *Pittsburgh Courier* editorially deplored "Jewish Pogroms in Germany." Also appearing on April 1 was a widely syndicated column by Howard University sociologist Kelly Miller, entitled "Hitler—The German Ku Klux," describing Hitler as "the master Ku Kluxer of Germany."⁵⁴

51. Harold Brackman, "Just Another Klansman?" *Midstream* 47 (January 2001): 19; Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 198-99.

52. Gunnar Myrdal with Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, *The American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 106.

53. Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 132-33, 626n48.

54. Lunabelle Wedlock, *The Reaction of Negro Publications and Organizations to German Antisemitism* (Washington, DC: Howard University Studies in the Social Sciences, 1942); 63; "Jewish Pogroms in Germany," editorial, *Pittsburgh*

The NAACP crystallized anti-Nazi sentiment among African Americans during the summer of 1933, the year of the beating death, seen as racially motivated, of leftist Hilarius "Lari" Gilges by Nazi thugs in Dusseldorf. At the behest of executive secretary Walter White, Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*, drafted "a strong statement" denouncing "the vicious campaign of race prejudice directed against Jews and Negroes by the Hitler Government."⁵⁵

White newspapers in both the North and the South refused to equate Nazi antisemitism with American racism. African American opinion journals, which accused white America of a double standard, insisted precisely on this linkage. Traveling to Germany aboard the S.S. *St. Louis*, the same ship that three years later carried German-Jewish refugees on their ill-starred odyssey to Cuba, Du Bois toured Hitler's Germany in 1936 at the time of the Berlin Olympics. He was appalled by the pervasive antisemitism, and not taken in by Nazi attempts to obscure it.⁵⁶

Unfortunately, other African American opinion makers continued to make the invidious distinctions that led Lunabelle Wedlock to conclude at the time that black newspapers "are either indifferent to German antisemitism or view with evident pleasure the degradation of a minority other than their own." In the wake of Kristallnacht, *The Crisis* editorialized that "it is doubtful if any section or group has sympathized more whole-heartedly . . . [with the Jews] than Negro Americans, for they have known the same type of persecution ever since the beginning of America." Yet the *Philadelphia Tribune* put a different gloss on the comparison: "To be a Jew in Germany is hell, for one to be a Negro in America is twice as bad."⁵⁷

The vein of invidious resentment of the attention paid to Jewish victims was mined by the so-called "Black Hitlers"—Sufi Abdul Hamid, Robert O. Jordan, and Carlos Cooks—whose antisemitic rabble-rousing was a

Courier, April 1, 1933, 10; Kelly Miller, "Hitler—The German Ku Klux," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, April 1, 1933, 2: 6.

55. Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 302; Richard Jonathan Seth Rosenberg, "'How Far the Promised Land?': World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam" (PhD. diss., Harvard University, 1997), 243-47.

56. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 397-99; Werner Sollors, "W. E. B. Du Bois in Nazi Germany," *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 44 (1999): 207-22.

57. Gilroy, *Against Race*, 292; Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 334-37; Wedlock, *The Reaction of Negro Publications and Organizations to German Antisemitism*, 184, 228.

facet of the New York street scene during the era of the Harlem riots of 1935 and 1943. The so-called Harlem Labor Union declared: "Harlem's worst enemies are the Jews. . . . Jews and leprosy are synonymous." A letter writer in the *New York Amsterdam News* exclaimed, "Why everyone knows the Jews own Harlem, and they're doing to us what they did to the Germans. But at least Hitler is throwing them out." In 1941, a situation-wanted ad in the *Cincinnati Enquire* read: "Colored woman wants week work; neat; with references; no Jewish people." Later, Robert O. Jordan, a former follower of Marcus Garvey, declared that Hitler was "the greatest man of all times." Such sentiments led Ralph Bunche, who directed Lunabelle Wedlock's Howard University study of wartime black antisemitism, to conclude that "no people in the world today is immune from the contagion of racial stereotypes and race hatred."⁵⁸

Sympathy for Tojo's Japan was commonplace among African Americans before and even after Pearl Harbor. But not so Hitler's Reich. Pro-Japanese demagogue Robert O. Jordan was unusual in declaring: "I'll cut my throat if Hitler doesn't win the war." During the Popular Front, New York City councilman Ben Davis, Jr., an African American communist, declared, "Show me an antisemite, and I'll show you a Negro-hater." Unfortunately, Harlem in 1943 erupted in a black-on-white riot that even Davis' comrade Mike Gold denounced as "an anti-Jewish pogrom."⁵⁹

Track star Jesse Owens held no grudges against that "nice man" Hitler, who had avoided shaking hands with black medal winners at the 1936 Olympics. Even so, the reluctant Owens was recruited along with the genuinely antifascist Joe Louis, who knocked out Germany's Max Schmeling in

58. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 205; Wedlock, *The Reaction of Negro Publications and Organizations to German Antisemitism*; Hasia R. Diner, "Between Words and Deeds: Jews and Blacks in America, 1880-1935," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (New York: Oxford University Press 1997), 87-106; Winston C. McDowell, "Keeping Them 'In the Same Boat Together'?" Sufi Abdul Hamid, African-Americans, Jews, and the Harlem Jobs Boycotts," in *African-Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century: Studies in Convergence and Conflict*, ed. V. P. Franklin, Nancy L. Grant, Harold M. Kletnick, and Genna Rae McNeil (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 208-36; Greenberg, "Or Does It Explode?," 126-27.

59. Reginald Kearney, *African-American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88-91, 102; Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming*, 334-36; Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., *Riots and Ruins* (New York: Richard P. Smith, 1945), 48; Ernest Kaiser, "Racial Dialectics: The Aptheker-Myrdal School Controversy," *Phylon* 9 (1948): 299-300; Kenneth Clark, "Group Violence . . . : A Study of the 1943 Harlem Riot," *Journal of Social Psychology* 19 (May 1944): 329.

1938, as a pop cultural icon by the biracial liberal-left coalition. The NAACP reciprocated for the support of Jewish liberals and leftists by striking a sympathetic stance regarding European refugee relief. At the time of the futile 1938 Evian-les-Bains Conference, NAACP executive secretary Walter White ignored strong anti-immigrant sentiment among African Americans and applauded the Roosevelt administration's efforts to provide a haven for Jewish refugees from Hitler.⁶⁰

The revival of the Popular Front after the Nazi war machine invaded the USSR, in June 1941, dissipated isolationist sentiment among African American elites. After US entry into World War II, the Popular Front came to see the war as a Janus-faced global struggle against racism at home as well as fascism abroad. This "Double V" campaign provided common ground for reinforcing Black-Jewish cooperation around a home-front civil rights agenda. Yet, few African American intellectuals displayed W. E. B. Du Bois' intense interest in Hitler's "war against the Jews" and his unwavering sympathy for the Zionist cause.⁶¹

After World War II, a time when Stalin's Russia still favored the fledgling Jewish state, African American communists, or fellow travelers like Du Bois and Paul Robeson, saw no contradiction between their leftist internationalism and pro-Zionism. At the other end of the political spectrum, the small number of African American conservatives such as George Schuyler, Joel A. Rogers, and Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad opposed both. In 1938, columnist George Schuyler, Harlem editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, described Kristallnacht as "heartless, unreasonable and unjust," but added that "the Nazis have actually been moderate in their murder compared to Stalin's Asiatic Tammany." Until very late in World War II, Schuyler ignored reports of the Nazi death camps except as an argument

60. Gerald Horne, "Black, White, and Red: Jewish and African-Americans in the Communist Party," in *The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism*, ed. Maria Brettschneider (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 123-35; William J. Baker, *Jesse Owens: An American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 3-4, 90-91; Chris Mead, *Champion: Joe Louis* (New York: Scribner, 1986), 136-38, 145, 159.

61. Bat-Ami Zucker, "Black Americans' Reaction to the Persecution of European Jews," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 3 (1986), 188-89; Cheryl L. Greenberg, "Negotiating Coalition: Black and Jewish Civil Rights Agencies in the Twentieth Century," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, ed. Jack Salzman and Cornel West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 157; Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press during World War II* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

against the internment of Japanese Americans and as a potential cause of trouble if the Jewish survivors tried to resettle in Arab Palestine. Then in June 1945, he shed crocodile tears for the 250,000 Polish Jews forcibly relocated to wartime Siberia and reiterated to his readers that, compared to Soviet gulags, "Buechenwald [*sic*] and Dachua [*sic*] seem like YMCA summer camps." Finally, in 1948, Schuyler voiced concern that UN mediator Ralph Bunche was a Jewish pawn who was "likely to increase [the] hostility of the colored people of the East for American Negroes." Characterizing the Hebrew Bible as "the Jewish Mein Kampf," he denounced Zionism as "hogwash . . . steeped in a religious and racial exclusiveness . . . not unreminiscent of the barbarous days of the so-called Mosaic period," and accused the Zionists of prejudice against dark-skinned Jews.⁶²

Novelist James Baldwin drew the very different lesson that Hitler had established a precedent that might be applied "on the day that the United States decided to murder its Negroes systematically instead of little by little and catch-as-catch-can."⁶³

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki two months later, ending the war in the Pacific, further increased the unease of African American observers like poet Langston Hughes about the racial balance of blame for World War II atrocities. And African American sociologist Horace R. Cayton predicted that America might someday be "accused of another and, in a sense, more horrible war guilt" for its "conspiracy of silence" about racism at home. The destruction of European Jewry was usually not treated as the malignant core of Hitler's crimes in either the black or the white press.⁶⁴

The NAACP's *The Crisis* editorialized as late as February 1947 that "The Jews mattered only incidentally to Hitler & Co. [as] an instrument of power." This view facilitated the desire to move as quickly as possible beyond a focus on the Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide.⁶⁵

But what really distinguished African American press reaction to Nazi genocide was not so much the common tendency of the time to blur Jewish

62. George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1966), 248-49; Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 59.

63. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dial Press, 1963), 74-75.

64. Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986-88), 2: 103-04; Horace R. Cayton, "War Guilt," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 17, 1945, 9; Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 256-59; Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 64-66.

65. "Watch Out America!," editorial, *The Crisis* 54 (February 1947), 41.

and non-Jewish victimization but rather the preoccupation with the black experience in Nazi Europe as well as with the special meaning that the Holocaust might have for African Americans. In 1946, *The Crisis* captioned pictures of an antiblack bombing in Tennessee as a "Kristallnacht."⁶⁶

Yet even before V-E Day, the black papers carried reports about the Third Reich's racism as exhibited by German prisoners of war. The *New York Age* passed along a report that prewar boxer and captured wartime paratrooper Max Schmeling—"no better than Hitler, Goering, and the rest"—still "sneered at the mention of Joe Louis when . . . seen in a prison camp." On the other hand, *Pittsburgh Courier* correspondent Roi Ottley, who personally interviewed German prisoners in the European theater in March 1945, reported that "they never looked nor acted like arrogant, preening, boot-strutting supermen" and were "free of anti-Negro feelings." His iconoclastic report was a precursor of the portrayal in postwar black newspapers and also in novels of the conquered Germans treating African American soldiers stationed in Germany better than they were treated by their white fellow soldiers or had been treated back in the United States.⁶⁷

Robert W. Kesting unearthed almost a half century later in US Army war crimes archives evidence of Nazi atrocities against black POWs. The commander of the 1st Battalion of the 17th SS Infantry near Raids, France, in June 1944, ordered that "no Negro prisoners of war were to be taken alive," and that near Tours, in August 1944, "100 Negro prisoners of war [were ordered] to be executed" once they completed the task of digging their own graves. Such incidents, if then widely known, might have muted the tendency found in postwar African American writing to imagine Germany as a sort of "paradise of equality" for nonwhites.⁶⁸

Favorable images of postwar Germany—transmuted from hell for Jews to heaven for African American expatriates—once again raise questions about African American ambivalence toward Jews as the two minorities were about to partner as never before in the civil rights struggle.

66. "Editor Sees Parallel of Nazi Germany in America," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 26, 1945, 2; "What Happened at Columbia," *The Crisis* 53 (April 1946), 110.

67. Ludlow W. Werner, "Across the Desk," *New York Age*, May 25, 1945, 6; Roi Ottley, "No Race, Theory Political," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 2, 1945, 1.

68. James E. Smith, "Hero Found No Jim Crow in Nazi Camp," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 3, 1945, 1; Albert Duckett, "No Color Line in a Prison Camp: Inhuman Cruelty Meted Out Equally," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 12, 1945, 2; Robert W. Kesting, "Forgotten Victims: Blacks in the Holocaust," *Journal of Negro History* 77 (Winter 1992): 30-36; Leon C. Standifer, *Binding Up the Wounds: An American Soldier in Occupied Germany, 1945-1946* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 150-73; Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 176-78.



Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., ca. 1965

KING VS. BLACK NATIONALISM

In the 1960s, African American opinion shifted increasingly away from a liberal integrationist agenda toward the emphasis on the Black Nationalist militancy and Pan Africanism that had always been the essence of “Black Zionism”—yet attitudes toward the Jews’ parallel Zionist project deteriorated rather than improved.

Amid efforts by black separatists to expel white (mostly Jewish) members from its ranks, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) set off a firestorm in June 1967, when it published a newsletter full of antisemitic articles and cartoons, including a photo of Israelis shooting Arabs during the 1967 war over the caption: “This is the Gaza Strip, Palestine, not Dachau, Germany.” Readers were told, “Zionists conquered Arab homes and land through terror, force, and massacres.” The magazine of the violent Black Panther Party followed with an “anti-Zionist” poem threatening: “We’re gonna piss upon the Wailing Wall.”⁶⁹

In September 1968, at the National Convention on New Politics in Chicago, the Black Caucus forced through a resolution (later rescinded) condemning “Zionist imperialism” that profoundly embarrassed Rev. King, who spoke at the event. Even before SNCC entered the fray, the Nation of Islam sharply denounced Israel. The irony was that Israel’s harshest critics

69. Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance* (New York: Scribner, 1988), 80-81; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 267-68.

among Black Nationalists refused to give up their own claim on Zionism. In 1964, the year before he was felled by an assassin's bullet, Malcolm X declared: "Pan Africanism will do for the people of African descent all over the world, the same that Zionism has done for Jews all over the world." A few years later, Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panthers averred: "The Jews did it. It worked. So now Afro-Americans must do the same thing." Following the rise of the Black Power movement in 1965, *Midstream* editor Shlomo Katz tried to reach out halfway by urging "Jews who think along Zionist lines [to be] more sensitive to the emerging pattern of Negro evolution . . . because of the numerous similarities between the two groups."⁷⁰

No rapprochement proved possible because of a radical reorientation of Black Nationalist thought toward Israel in relation to Africa. Previously, Psalms 68:31—"Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands to God"—had been read to emphasize the prophetic role of Ethiopia as a bridge between Black Africa and the Holy Land. Now, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) of SNCC and the Black Panther Party rejected biblical Ethiopianism as "ignorance manipulated by Zionism," and enlisted instead under Nasser's banner: "We are Africans wherever we are. [Israel] is moving to take over Egypt. Egypt is our motherland—it's in Africa." The transformation of Israel was complete—from an anticolonial David battling the British Goliath to an imperialist ally of America's Philistines, intent on conquering the Egyptian frontier of African anticolonialism. What began as a political identification with Egypt as an anti-imperial bastion gradually evolved over the following decades into the new Afrocentric cultural mystique glamorizing ancient Egypt as the "black" inspiration of all civilization.⁷¹

One account by an African American of the 1965 Watts riots—the start of the decades-long black-on-white violence—saw a group of rioters "with rifles, trucks with gas on them burning in a selected fashion . . . Jewish stores." This was the time when Amiri Baraka, formerly known as

70. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land*, 161; Theodore Draper, *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* (New York: Ramparts Press, 1970), 116; Shlomo Katz, introduction to *Negro and Jew: An Encounter in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), reprinted in *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations between Blacks and Jews in the United States*, ed. Maurianne Adams and John Bracey (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 643.

71. Stephen Howe, *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes* (London: Verso, 1998), 122-37; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 205-07.

Leroi Jones, expressed his attitude in verse: "I got the extermination blues, jewboy. I got the hitler syndrome figured."⁷²

Malcolm X—who announced in 1964 that Hitler's Jewish victims "brought it on themselves"—continued to harbor such views while his *Autobiography* (1965) was being heavily edited by Alex Haley, to tone down the antisemitism. There is some evidence that, just before his assassination, Malcolm decided that his new authentic Islamic faith required him to embrace "the brotherhood of all men . . . Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike."⁷³

Gary T. Marx's five-year study for the ADL, *Protest and Prejudice*, appeared in 1967. Marx did everything under the sun to explain away the significance of his findings that seemed to show disproportionately high levels of African American antisemitism. He scored blacks with "no opinion" or only "moderate levels" of prejudice as "non-antisemites." This allowed him to come to the conclusion that only 30 percent of Northern blacks were antisemitic—in line with the white percentage. Had he used the same classification procedures that Kenneth Clark had used in 1946, the percentage would have jumped to 70 percent! Not surprisingly, Lucy D. Dawidowicz raised Cain about the credibility of such polls.⁷⁴

By the end of the 1960s, novels like Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) and Bernard Malamud's *The Tenants* (1971) contained plot lines about Jewish-Black confrontations that would have been unimaginable a decade before. In Bellow's novel, it's the shocking mugging by an African American of a Holocaust survivor. In Malamud's novel, it's the surreal neighbors' struggle between Jewish novelist Harry Lesser and crazed black writer Willie Spearmint, whose novel (which Lesser retrieves from the gar-

72. Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1995), 109-10; Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America*, 8, 330-31.

73. Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 246, 398, 407; Manning Marable, "Rediscovering Malcolm's Life: An Adventure in Living," in *Black Routes to Islam*, ed. Manning Marable and Hishaam D. Aidi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 311-12. For an attempt to explain away Malcolm's antisemitism, see V. P. Franklin, ed., "The Portrayal of Jews in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*," in *African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century*, 293-308.

74. Gary T. Marx, *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 147, 183; Gary T. Marx, "Negro Antisemitism," *The Nation* 206 (January 1, 1968): 11-13; "Study Proves Negroes Not Strongly Antisemitic," *Christian Century* 83 (October 19, 1966): 1265; Lucy D. Dawidowicz, "Can Antisemitism Be Measured?," *Commentary* 18 (July 1970): 36-43; Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong?: The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 272-73.

bage) contains a story—"The First Pogrom of the U.S. of A."—in which the pogrom occurs at warp speed: "There is none of the Hitler shit of smashing store windows, forcing Zionists to scrub sidewalks, or rubbing their faces in dog crap." Instead, there was immediate execution of American Jews and their black helpers.⁷⁵

This increasingly inhospitable political and intellectual environment presented acute problems, not only to Jewish intellectuals, but also to African American moderates like Whitney Young, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King, Jr., who subscribed to the old pro-Israel gospel. Just before the Six-Day War began, King signed on to an open letter in *The New York Times* by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and others urging President Lyndon Johnson to honor the American commitment to Israel. Yet King was sharply criticized from within as well as without his inner circle for too closely identifying with "the Zionist Jew" and compromising his pacifist principles. Though shaken and forced to abort a planned Mideast trip, King did not retreat. Responding to a hostile question during a 1968 speech, he declared: "When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You are talking antisemitism."⁷⁶

Interviewed by *Conservative Judaism* in Memphis on March 25, 1968—ten days before his assassination, King declared:

I see Israel, and never mind saying it, as one of the great outposts of democracy in the world, and a marvelous example of what can be done, how desert land can almost be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy. Peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality.⁷⁷

After the King assassination, a black mob broke into Cincinnati's Rochdale temple; a Boston synagogue almost suffered the same fate. A 1970's *New York Times* article began with "An Appeal by Black Americans for United States Support for Israel." But public opinion polls already reflected the pattern of racial divergence that has prevailed ever since: *high*

75. Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land*, 161-68, 412-22, 432.

76. Marc Schneier, *Shared Dreams: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Jewish Community* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999), 159-70; David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 561; Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters*, 229.

77. Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), 670. The fulsome testimonial to Israel by King that ostensibly appeared in the *Saturday Review* about this time (and is quoted by Rabbi Marc Schneier) is bogus.

levels of black antisemitism coupled with lukewarm support for Israel compared to whites. Meeting in Gary, Indiana (March 1972), the National Black Political Convention passed a resolution (subsequently toned down) blaming Israel for “fascist aggression” in the Middle East and “working hand in hand with other imperialistic interests in Africa.” The outbreak of the 1973 War precipitated a counterreaction with 15 African American congressmen cosponsoring a resolution urging US military resupply of Israel, and 75 black labor leaders calling on African Americans to “stand with Israel in its struggle to live and be free.” In the same spirit, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin spearheaded the formation of Black Americans in Support of Israel Committee (BASIC) in 1975.⁷⁸

In the wake of the Arab oil embargo that resulted in 21 Black African nations suspending diplomatic relations with Israel in November 1975, the UN General Assembly passed its “Zionism equals racism” resolution. Only five African nations voted against the resolution—the Central African Republic, the Africa Coast, Liberia, Malawi, and Swaziland—nine nations abstained, and nine others tried unsuccessfully to stall the vote. (The month before the passage of the resolution, Uganda’s Ida Amin spoke before the General Assembly calling for “the extinction of Israel.”) When America’s UN ambassador called Amin “a racist murderer,” African American press reaction was split. New York City mayor Abe Beame refused Egyptian president Anwar Sadat the city’s hospitality, and the *Amsterdam News* noted pointedly that “many New Yorkers feel the two [Zionism and racism] are connected.”⁷⁹

Spurned by virtually all the Third World countries, including Black Africa, Israel had decided in 1974 to reinstate diplomatic relations with South Africa. In 1976, Bayard Rustin challenged the American Jewish community to speak out against Israel’s South African ties.⁸⁰

Much worse acrimony followed when American Jews in general and Zionists in particular were unfairly blamed in 1979 for the resignation of Andrew Young, the first African American to serve as US ambassador to

78. Marvin Weitz, “Black Attitudes to Jews in the United States from World War II to 1976” (PhD diss., Yeshiva University, 1977), 289-92, 294, 297; *The New York Times*, October 21, 1973, 17; Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 321.

79. Weitz, “Black Attitudes,” 319-24; *Amsterdam News*, editorial, October 30, 1975, A4; Wilkins in the *New York Post*, November 8, 1975, 27; Seymour Maxwell Finger, “The United Nations,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 829-30.

80. Naomi Chazan, “The Fallacies of Pragmatism,” in *Jews in Black Perspectives*, ed. Joseph R. Washington, Jr. (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 151, 167; Richard L. Sklar, “Africa and the Middle East: What Blacks and Jews Owe to Each Other,” in *Jews in Black Perspectives*, 141.

the UN, following revelations that he had a secret meeting against American policy with a PLO representative and lied about it. Even Bayard Rustin was among 200 prominent black leaders signing an angry statement. Jesse Jackson spoke for many when he said: "The real resistance to black progress has been coming not from the Ku Klux Klan but from our former allies in the American Jewish community."⁸¹

Having received a \$3 million nonrepayable "loan" from Libya's Qaddafi in 1972, the Nation of Islam stated "the fact" that Tel Aviv was responsible for Young's ouster. The NAACP adopted a resolution urging the Carter administration to reexamine its pledge to Israel not to negotiate with the PLO.⁸²



Rev. Louis Farrakhan, ca. 2002. Photo: Jim Wallace, Smithsonian

LOUIS FARRAKHAN RISING

Had Farrakhan's battle with prostate cancer ended soon after 1996's Million Man March on Washington, his legacy would have been quite dif-

81. Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 24; Robert G. Weisbord and Richard Kazarian, Jr., *Israel in Black American Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 124-126; Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 372; Kaufman, *Broken Alliance*, 246.

82. Arthur J. Magida, *Prophet of Rage: A Life of Louis Farrakhan and His Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 102; Claude Andrew Clegg III, *An Original Man: The Life of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 255-56.

ferent from what it is now. Then, he staged a political triumph by attracting about 700,000 African Americans around such goals as reducing gang crime and drug use. Despite his bizarre three-hour speech at the march—free of antisemitism but replete with conspiracy theories right out of the UFO and anti-Masonic playbooks—his controversial career would have culminated in a milestone of African American cultural renewal. Instead, Farrakhan lived on after the march, but failed to carry through on his renewal program and to continue his prior career as a serial bigot, vilifying not only Jews but Korean and Arab storekeepers, gays, single mothers, and of course the United States.⁸³

Born Louis Eugene Wolcott in the Bronx in 1933, Farrakhan first tried a career as a pop singer, billed “Calypso Gene” or “The Charmer,” before emerging into prominence under the name Minister Louis X (later changed to Farrakhan). He rose as a disciple of Malcolm X in Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam. Farrakhan’s NOI career had elements of a Shakespearean tragedy, with him self-cast as the betrayer of his mentor, Malcolm X, whom Ossie Davis eulogized as “our own black shining prince!”⁸⁴

When Malcolm X left the NOI for orthodox Islam, Farrakhan attacked Malcolm as “an international hobo” who should come home “to face the music” and have his head “on the sidewalk.”⁸⁵

In 1993, when Malcolm’s widow, Betty Shabazz, repeated her conviction that Farrakhan was involved in her husband’s assassination, he shot back: “We don’t give a damn about no white man law if you attack what we love. And frankly, it ain’t none of your business. . . . And a nation gotta be able to deal with traitors and cutthroats and turncoats. The white man deals with his. The Jews deal with theirs.” Not until 2000 did he admit: “I may have been complicit in words that I spoke” regarding Malcolm’s assassination. Karl Evanzz, a former reporter for the *Washington Post*, wrote a book arguing that Farrakhan’s complicity involved more than rhetoric.⁸⁶

83. Magida, *Prophet of Rage*, 192-202; Robert Singh, *The Farrakhan Phenomenon: Race, Reaction, and the Paranoid Style in American Politics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1997).

84. Magida, *Prophet of Rage*, 1-57; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 458-59.

85. Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 540.

86. Alona Wartofsky, “‘Brother Minister’: The Martyrdom of Malcolm X,” *Washington Post*, February 17, 1995; “Widow of Malcolm X Suspects Farrakhan Had Role in Killing,” *The New York Times*, March 13, 1994; Karl Evanzz, *The Judas Factor: The Plot to Kill Malcolm X* (New York: Thundermouth Press, 1992).



Rev. Jesse Jackson, ca. 2000

Farrakhan's rise began with his alliance to Rev. Jesse Jackson in the late 1970s. Starting in 1979, African American critics of Israel went on the offensive through the new medium of "peace missions" to the Middle East that invariably embarrassed the Jewish state. Grasping the blood-stained body of the mortally wounded Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the balcony of the Memphis Lorraine Motel in April 1968, Jesse Jackson also seized his leadership mantle. By 1979, he was ready to seize the opening presented by the Andrew Young debacle. Having already visited Libya in 1972, Jackson went to the Middle East, in September 1979, in response to an invitation from Yasser Arafat. Leaders of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference were also invited, but Jackson dominated, visiting Israel as well as Arafat in Lebanon and other Arab countries. He was denied a meeting by prime minister Begin, but was hoisted on the shoulders of Palestinian youths in Nablus shouting "Jackson! Arafat!"; Anwar Sadat and Hafez Al-Assad treated him like a visiting head of state. Though his attempt to broker Israeli recognition of the PLO in return for a pause in terrorist violence went nowhere, he proclaimed his mission a triumph. Returning to the United States, he abandoned any pretense of even-handedness by announcing that he accepted substantial Arab donations to his Operation PUSH-Breadbasket and declaring Zionism "a poisonous reed." (Jackson subsequently repudiated such rhetoric.)⁸⁷

87. Richard L. Sklar, "Africa and the Middle East: What Blacks and Jews Owe to Each Other," in *Jews in Black Perspectives*, 141; Marshall Frady, *Jesse: The Life*

Jackson's 1979 peace mission proved just a trial run for his bombastic foray in 1984 to Syria to retrieve captured black pilot Robert O. Goodman, Jr., shot down by the Syrians over eastern Lebanon. By this time, Jackson's "rainbow coalition" was preparing his run in the 1984 presidential primaries. Ultimately, his candidacy was fatally embarrassed by his association with Farrakhan. In 1978, after Elijah Muhammad's son, Warith Deen Muhammed, moved in the direction of authentic Islam, Farrakhan had broken with him and reconstituted the Nation of Islam. He became notorious in the 1980s for calling Judaism a "gutter" or "dirty" religion and Hitler "a very great man"—statements his apologists continue to explain away—while also warning: "I am your last chance, Jews, when God puts you in the oven. (A decade later, Farrakhan's right-hand man Khalid Abdul Muhammad asked: "Everybody talks about Hitler exterminating six million Jews. . . . But doesn't anybody ever ask what did they do to Hitler?")"⁸⁸

Providing security for Jackson's campaign, Farrakhan exploited his relationship with Jackson to catapult himself into the spotlight as an African American leader in his own right, staging, in 1984, his own high-profile pilgrimage to Qaddafi's Libya, which gave the NOI another \$5 million "loan." Jackson referred to New York as "Hymietown," but Farrakhan's inflammatory antisemitic, anti-Israel statements strained Black-Jewish relations even more. Calling Hitler "a very great man," Farrakhan claimed that his equally notorious statement—"There can never be any peace structured on injustice, thievery, lying, deceit, and using God's name to shield your dirty religion"—was aimed not at Judaism but at Zionism. This interpretation gave little solace to friends of Israel. The 1980s were also the decade when Steve Coakley—with Farrakhan's approval—accused Jewish doctors of injecting black babies with the AIDS virus.⁸⁹

Following 1996's Million Man March, the Simon Wiesenthal Center prevailed on a reluctant Pasadena Rose Parade Committee to include the center's float commemorating the fiftieth anniversary in 1997 of the breaking of major league baseball's color line by Jackie Robinson, whose hometown was Pasadena. Wiesenthal Center associate dean Rabbi Abraham

and *Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson* (New York: Random House, 1996), 297-98, 334-54.

88. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism*, 220-21; Louis Farrakhan, *Back Where We Belong: Selected Speeches*, ed. Joseph D. Eure and Richard M. Jerome (Philadelphia: International Press, 1989), 121; Vibert L. White, Jr., *Inside the Nation of Islam: A Historical and Personal Testimony* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2001), 120.

89. Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakhan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 207-11, 255; Friedman, *What Went Wrong?*, 329-30.

Cooper and I have continued to track Louis Farrakhan, looking for a heart-felt change-of-mind that would result in a forward-looking dialogue with the Jewish community. No such luck. Typically, Farrakhan would combine promises to meet with rabbis, with self-justifying declarations that he's "only told the truth" about Jews—followed by renewed outbursts of antisemitism.⁹⁰

At 2012's Nation of Islam's Saviours' Day conclave, Farrakhan had harsh words directed at President Barack Obama for "assassinating" Osama bin Laden as well as helping to take out the Nation of Islam's long-time, multimillion-dollar sugar daddy, Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi. Invoking his crackpot, pseudo-Islamic theology, Farrakhan explained that America was on the receiving end of heavenly wrath in the form of obesity and climate change.⁹¹

As for the Jews, most belong to "the Synagogue of Satan," whose members "were not the origin of Hollywood, but took it over." Farrakhan nevertheless tipped off "brother" Obama that he is headed for assassination—by Zionists.⁹²

At the NOI convention, Farrakhan's organization continued to push the libel that Jews dominated the slave trade and masterminded sharecropping and segregation, the subjects of Vol. 1 and now Vol. 2 of the anonymously authored Farrakhan-published product: *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*.⁹³

Farrakhan's conspiracy theories have run the gamut, ranging from the evil scientist Yacub, who created the malevolent white race, to the evil Jews who invented AIDS and caused the hole on the ozone layer, to the evil Jews who orchestrated the recent global financial meltdown as well as world wars and Mideast conflicts. Regarding potential military conflict with a nuclear-armed Iran, he said: "I advise white and black America, Hispanic and Asian America, why would you send your children to die in a war

90. Steven G. Norwood and Harold Brackman, "Going to Bat for Jackie Robinson," *Journal of Sport History* 26 (1999): 118-44.

91. Abraham Cooper and Harold Brackman, "Farrakhan: Still Hateful—But Increasingly Obsolete," *New York Daily News*, March 15, 2012, <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/louis-farrakhan-hateful-increasingly-obsolete-article-1.1038975>

92. Louis Farrakhan, speech, "Where Is Satan's Synagogue and What Is His Plan," April 25, 2012, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctqt4QdcK38>

93. Nation of Islam's Historical Research Department, *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* (Chicago: self-published in 2 vols., 1991, 2010).

engineered by Zionists who love Israel more than they love the United States of America?"⁹⁴

At the University of California, Berkeley, he told students attending the Afrikan Black Coalition Conference not to enter coalitions or dialogue with the evil Jews, saying: "I personally don't care if I ever get along if I've got to hide the truth to win a friend."⁹⁵

In other speeches, Farrakhan has declared that: "The Federal Reserve is the synagogue of Satan. The Rockefellers, the DuPonts, the House of Rothschild, these are the people that have corrupted the entire world." And that "the Black man and woman have always been looked upon as the 'property' of White America; and particularly, members of the Jewish community. They've always looked at you as 'belonging' to them."

Farrakhan's allies, the New Black Panther Party, used the divisive Trayvon Martin tragedy to sow more seeds of Black-Jewish discord. They offered a \$10,000 bounty for the capture of Zimmerman and called for the mobilization of 10,000 black men to capture him. When one of their leaders, Mikhail Muhammad, was asked if he were inciting violence, he simply said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Their Florida representative called Zimmerman "a wicked white beast" and falsely claimed that "his father is a Jew; he's a no-good Jew."⁹⁶

Around Christmas, Farrakhan said the Sandy Hook school massacre was God's payback: "Could it be that God wants us to see that until you can feel the pain and suffering of others that has been inflicted upon them on the basis of a lie, and America's reach for the resources of that area of the world, then maybe you will understand that this may be 'chickens coming home to roost.' 'For as thou hast done'—the Book says: 'So shall it be done unto you.'"⁹⁷

94. Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*; Cooper and Brackman, "Farrakhan Still Hateful," *New York Daily News*, <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/louis-farrakhan-hateful-increasingly-obsolete-article-1.1038975>

95. Cooper and Brackman, "Farrakhan Still Hateful."

96. Anti-Defamation League, "Louis Farrakhan Puts His Antisemitism on Full Display; Deepens Conspiracy Theories About Jewish Control," March 19, 2010, <http://archive.adl.org/NR/exeres/E1F02C20-88E6-4ACC-A258-C60803BD216C,0B1623CA-D5A4-465D-A369-DF6E8679CD9E.frameless.htm>. Amanda Susskind and Nolan Rollins, "Is the Civil Rights Movement Over?," *Los Angeles Jewish Journal*, August 23, 2013, http://www.jewishjournal.com/opinion/article/is_the_civil_rights_movement_over

97. "Farrakhan Claims CT Shooting Massacre Could Be a Lesson from God: 'Chickens Coming Home to Roost,'" *The Blaze*, December 21, 2012, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2012/12/21/farrakhan-claims-ct-shooting-massacre-could-be-a-lesson-from-god-chickens-coming-home-to-roost/>

Now, in 2013, he offers his latest post mortem for the United States: "This nation has been built on violence. Uncivilized, uncultivated, brutal, wild . . . and that's why the prophet gave America one of those names as a beast—both of the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Revelations."⁹⁸

At a time when Americans are increasingly concerned with the dangers of incivility and name calling, the NOI's supreme leader remains a prime example of how not to treat people who differ from you in race, religion, or sexual orientation.

With a backward-looking message of hate, Farrakhan's UFO—the "mother ship"—navigates cyberspace spewing noxious emissions designed to poke a hole in the ozone layer protecting tolerance. According to ADL polls, the percentage of African Americans "unquestionably antisemitic" is around twice the national average. Yet younger, better educated African Americans are less—not more—prejudiced against Jews than were their elders.⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

It's premature to call in the mourners for America's promise of tolerance. But it remains to be seen when the post-Barack Obama era comes which legacy—that of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., or that of Minister Louis Farrakhan—will inspire the next generation of African American leaders. Despite serious tensions, mostly over his Mideast policies, Barack Obama has managed to keep both African Americans and Jews in his column. Will such unity persist?

In 1948, James Baldwin argued in *Commentary* that African Americans were profoundly "ambivalent" about Jews. He was right. Jews, I think, have made decisive progress in overcoming their own historical "ambivalences" toward blacks. It's time for African Americans to reciprocate for the sake of mutual benefit.¹⁰⁰ Otherwise, African Americans and Jews are likely to strive to reposition themselves by forging new intergroup alliances—particularly with Latinos. The question is whether this repositioning

98. "Farrakhan Promises God Has 'Execution' Planned for America: A 'Savage,' 'Brutal' and 'Uncivilized' People and Nation," *The Blaze*, January 14, 2013, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2013/01/14/farrakhan-promises-god-has-execution-planned-for-america-a-savage-brutal-uncivilized-nation/>

99. Anti-Defamation League, "ADL Poll Finds Antisemitic Attitudes on Rise in America," http://archive.adl.org/PresRele/ASUS_12/6154_12.htm; Hubert G. Locke, *The Black Antisemitism Controversy: Protestant Views and Perspectives* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), 56, argued on the basis of then-current polling data for a decline in levels of African American antisemitism.

100. Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 68.

will positively supplement—or instead supplant—the historic Black-Jewish civil rights alliance. The answer may hinge on whether American Americans are ready to turn their back on Farrakhan's legacy of antisemitism.¹⁰¹

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101. Steven P. Erie and Harold Brackman, "At Rainbow's End: Empowerment Prospects for Latinos and Asian Pacifics in Los Angeles," in *Racial and Ethnic Politics in California*, ed. Michael B. Preston et al. (Berkeley: IGS Press, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California at Berkeley, rev. ed., 1998), 73-107; Rex Weiner, "Jews and Latinos Seek Common Ground," *Jewish Daily Forward*, October 7, 2011, <http://forward.com/articles/143986/jews-and-latinos-seek-common-ground/>