

# LJJ

Spring  
2016



# Letters from the Editors

When I first joined *Leviathan* in Winter 2013, I was riddled with uncertainties about what this new space had to offer, and what I had to offer it. At the time, staff writer and soon-to-be Editor in Chief, Amanda Botfeld, asked me to submit a piece for the publication. The first piece I submitted was a poem fittingly titled, “Stages”. Then, I took on a dauntingly complex topic for my next piece. I remember sitting through editing sessions, one after another, feeling like my writing was polished enough. But the editors kept pushing me: *Why? How? When? Where? So, what?* It seemed that journalism was a never-ending list of questions with few answers. So began the adventure into a world of critiquing, parsing, deconstructing, and doing it all over again.

Now, here I sit--or rather, here *we* sit. Zach and I, our incredible staff (folks who we are lucky enough to call close friends), continuously doing the hard work of producing something that we are proud to lay on the table--and not just something we are proud of, but something that we hope starts the conversations that we want to hear more people having. When Van Jones visited UCSC this May, he spoke to the great task of learning to reconstruct a new future once you've deconstructed the past. We at *Leviathan* have taken the time to step back, evaluate, and learn from our community's legacy. We hope that the space we have constructed this year invites you to the ongoing conversation.

-Kelsey

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When I look back at this great year with *Leviathan*, from our shaky start and inconsistent attendance at meetings to the strong, loving, and creative group we are now, I am grateful for our perseverance. Stepping into the role of Co-Editor this year was tough for me, as I wasn't sure I could unite and inspire our group to do the best work possible. What helped me through my anxieties was knowing that I could consistently rely on Kelsey. She reminds me why we do this: because our voices matter, whether it be through writing, art, or meaningful conversations in the Press Center. I'm reminded that we are never alone in our creative and bold pursuits, that there are always people to turn to for advice, confidence, and laughter. I cannot imagine a better group and Co-Editor to have collaborated and grown with this year.

I look to the future with a bittersweet taste in my mouth. I know we will continue to learn and produce great pieces together as a strong group of passionate individuals, but it is never easy saying goodbye to a member who has provided the group with such character and heart. I will be forever grateful for this year in *Leviathan*, and look forward to many more nights at the Press Center, grinding away at InDesign, remembering that I get to do this with some of my closest friends.

-Zach

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*Many thanks to Susan Watrous, Scott Leiserson, and Nathaniel Deutsch*

*Leviathan Jewish Journal formally endorsed Measure 66, and we continue to support student governed spaces.*

## Statement of Intent

*Leviathan Jewish Journal* is a medium through which Jewish students and their allies may freely express their voices.

We are committed to responsibly representing the views of each individual author. Every quarter, we try our best to publish a full and balanced spectrum of media, exploring Jewish identity and social issues.

**The opinions presented in the journal do not always represent the collective opinion of the *Leviathan* staff, the organized Jewish-American community, or the University of California, Santa Cruz.**

# Table of Contents

<b>“Centuries of Sinai”</b>	
Joshua Frank .....	5
<b>Activism on the Frontlines</b>	
Kelsey Eiland .....	6
<b>Opening the Door</b>	
Rose Teplitz .....	8
<b>Interviews:</b>	
<b>A Conversion with Alma Heckman</b>	
Joshua Frank .....	11
<b>From Tel Aviv to Santa Cruz</b>	
Natalie Friedman .....	14
<b>An Interview with the Chancellor</b>	
Zachary Brenner .....	16
<b>The Challenges Facing the Next President</b>	
William Sump .....	20
<b>10 Ways to Reduce Your Waste</b>	
Eva Jason .....	22
<b>Observations from the Outside</b>	
Evan Harris .....	24
<b>Do Jews Run Hollywood?</b>	
Zachary Brenner .....	28

# “Centuries of Sinai”

With unleavened bread  
They rushed towards the Red  
Sun baking above  
Desert welcomed love

For trust led them through  
What only the Lord knew  
A long journey called  
‘Exodus of the Jews’

Plagued with confusion  
Questions, illusion  
Time in between  
Space all that is seen

Centuries passed  
Yet Jews here still fast  
Asking, “Why is this year  
No different from last?”

-Joshua Frank

# Activism on the Frontlines:

## A Holocaust Survivor's Call to Action

By: Kelsey Eiland

On August 15, 2014, Holocaust survivor Hedy Epstein turned ninety. Three days later, she was arrested in St. Louis, Missouri for protesting Governor Jay Nixon's deployment of the National Guard. Nixon's action came in response to the unrest in Ferguson after the death of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager who was shot to death by white police officer Darren Wilson on August 9.



Epstein and her fellow protesters, many of them from the Organization for Black Struggle, gathered in downtown St. Louis not far from where Brown was killed. Their intention was to visit Governor Nixon at his office in the Wainwright Building and request he take steps to de-escalate the situation in Ferguson. The group chanted slogans such as, "Hey, hey! Ho, ho! The National Guard has got to go!" When Epstein and her allies reached the steps of the building, officers and security personnel banned them from entering. The officers asked the protesters to evacuate the premises, but Hedy and eight others remained in front of the building. They were arrested for failure to disperse and given

later court dates. Epstein was walked off site by two officers while wearing a shirt that read, "STAY HUMAN".

men were placed in protective custody. Eventually, nearly every Jew was taken to a camp. Six million Jews and five million non-Jewish individuals died in such confinement.

At the beginning of World War II in 1939, Hedy and 10,000 other children were sent to England by train after the country had committed to taking them in. Hedy made it to England, but her family did not. In 1940, her parents were deported to a camp in Nazi-controlled Vichy France. Her parents were separated then eventually both sent to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Her mother sent her

“ Epstein was walked off site by two officers while wearing a shirt that read, ‘STAY HUMAN’. ”

Epstein is no stranger to systemic injustice. In 1933 when Hedy was eight, Adolf Hitler came into power in Germany. Slowly but surely, anti-Semitism took hold as Jews were revoked German citizenship, synagogues were burned, and young Jewish

a postcard in 1942, reading, "Traveling to the east ... Sending you a final goodbye." She never heard from them again.

Hedy gained a school education and found work in England but returned to

Germany once the war ended. For three years, she worked on the Nuremberg Medical Trial, which tried the doctors who had led medical experiments on inmates in the concentration camps. In 1948, she moved again, this time relocating to the US to stay with family who had emigrated before the war began.

After a few decades of working in the US, Hedy became involved in various civil

Palestine”, according to *The Jewish Journal* online. The talk was sponsored by the women’s studies department, and was critiqued by many publications as a talk that promoted UCSC’s historically “leftist” agenda. The website claims that UCSC has a history of sponsoring Jewish voices who are critical of Israel without also giving a platform for pro-Israel voices.

Then, just this March,

as well as in solidarity with the Palestinian community. While many are critical of “leftist” bias in the UCSC’s women’s studies department, the very backlash Epstein has faced for her perspective is likely a key reason as to why she continues to be given platforms to speak about her work. The OBS website asserts that state violence, “...is a manifestation of a system of policing that is unaccountable, out of control and acts from its

“ ‘We need to stand up today so that people won’t have to do this when they’re 90.’ ”

and human rights campaigns. She fought for the end of multiple wars, for safe abortion services, and for fair housing opportunities in the US. In 1989, she traveled to South America and Southeast Asia as a peace delegate. She also visited the Occupied West Bank numerous times during her career, participating in several non-violent demonstrations protesting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian communities. She has also traveled back and forth between the US and Europe giving talks in German and English on her experiences during the Holocaust.

In 2004, Epstein visited the UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) campus to give a talk titled, “The Question of Israel/

Epstein was planning to speak on a panel titled, “In Grandmother’s Words” during International Women’s Day in Austria. According to the independent website *Mondoweiss*, the panel was intended to bring together eight women who bore witness to grave injustices of WWII in order to share their stories with attendees. After slurs like “Israel Hasserin” (“Israel Hater”) were used to describe Epstein in Austrian news outlets, the event was canceled. It was presumed that Epstein’s support of Palestinian freedom incited the comments from the press.

As an intersectional activist, it only makes sense that Hedy stood by the Organization for Black Struggle’s (OBS) protest in her own community,

worst impulses of racism and aggression. It sees black and brown citizens as individual targets and whole communities as collective threats”. It can be argued that this statement also rings true in the Middle East, and on campuses such as UC Santa Cruz. For Hedy, systemic violence as a result of racism is a familiar history. So long as people in positions of power and privilege are excused of their insidious discourse and policies, the injustice will continue.

As Epstein told *The Nation* following her arrest, “I’ve been doing this since I was a teenager. I didn’t think I would have to do it when I was 90.... We need to stand up today so that people won’t have to do this when they’re 90.”

# Opening the Door

Written and Illustrated by Rose Teplitz

When I first opened the door, I believed I did not fit *Leviathan* at all. A quiet first-year, I sat around the table while I listened to juniors and seniors debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With only a brief experience playing with a *dreidel* as a child, I neither had the knowledge to speak on Jewish-related

issues nor the courage of an older student to admit that I felt lost. So I sat and let the names of foreign places I had never heard of, political conflicts

I never knew existed, and vocabulary I could not pronounce wash over me.

I had joined *Leviathan* to take a position as an artist since I had a passion for drawing. I decided, while walking home one night after a two hour meeting where I only spoke twice (once to say my name and then to ask where the bathroom was) that I would submit my artwork and then search for

another organization. What could I contribute to the space?

A couple weeks later, after I had submitted my piece, Amanda, the Editor-in-Chief at the time, approached me before the meeting had begun and said she needed to speak with me privately. I followed her outside, bracing

**“So I sat and let the names of foreign places I had never heard of, political conflicts I never knew existed, and vocabulary I could not pronounce wash over me.”**

myself to hear her say that it would be best if I moved on to another publication. Instead, she smiled and said, “So what do you think about becoming our Art Director?”

More than a year later, there are still foreign places I’ve never heard of, political conflicts I never knew existed, and vocabulary I cannot pronounce. There are times when I do not

say much. There are times when I am still confused.

However, no matter how immense and overwhelming the amount of information I receive is, the Jewish culture and its history is fascinating to me. I have learned to absorb as much as I can and accepted that there will be times when things

are not clear. I have eaten my first Shabbat dinner, become part of the publication’s editorial board, and learned about Jewish cultural practices. I have made wonderful

friends, expressed creativity in my artwork, and continue to feel as if I can contribute to the conversation in my own way.

Perhaps I do not have a Jewish background or an expert understanding about how a publication operates, but I continue to expand my knowledge each quarter. I have grown to love *Leviathan*, and I no longer regret opening the door on the first day.





**Don't YOU want to be A PART OF THIS? Of course you do!**

**We're awesome. You're awesome. Join us.**

**\*Mic drop\***

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# INTERVIEWS

*Conversations  
Across  
Campus*

# A Conversation with Professor Alma Heckman

BY JOSHUA FRANK  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ALMA HECKMAN

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Professor Alma Heckman started teaching at UC Santa Cruz in the Fall of 2015. Her area of expertise is Jewish/Middle Eastern Histories, and she currently teaches within the History and Jewish Studies Departments. This quarter she is teaching a Senior Seminar called, “Jewish Radical Movements”, focusing on prominent thinkers like Karl Marx. She also teaches a lower division course titled, “Jewish Life in North Africa and the Middle East”. Professor Heckman holds a Bachelor’s degree in French and Middle Eastern Studies from Wellesley College, as well as a Master’s and Ph.D. in History from UCLA. She is fluent in English, French, and Arabic.

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**Josh Frank:** What has been your most enriching experience at UCSC?

**Alma Heckman:** I have been at UCSC for seven months at this point. I have enjoyed getting to know my colleagues in History and Jewish Studies while learning more about their research. I began teaching in the winter with a survey course on Jewish history of North Africa and the Middle East. Working with the students in that class as well as [in] my current seminar on Jewish Radical Movements has been highly rewarding.

**JF:** Have you encountered any challenging questions from students or other teachers? How

did you respond, and in any applicable cases, diffuse the tension?

**AH:** Inevitably, researching and teaching in the field of Jews in North Africa and the Middle East comes with controversy. Many students have had little to no prior exposure to the history of Jews in a region that is often in the news, and many have strong opinions on a number of controversial issues and the many upheavals in the region over the 20th century. It is important to emphasize the fluidity of identity, and above all, historical context devoid of teleology (explanation of a phenomenon through its purpose instead of purported causes). I encourage students to think of the perspectives of historical actors in situ, without the privilege of knowing the future, considering moments of

historical possibility, conjuncture, and contingency. . . . dates to the late 19th century/early 20th century, the Chicago headquarters of the Rainbow PUSH coalition (of Reverend Jesse Jackson), Muhammad Ali's house, and Barack Obama's house. Such an

“ Thus, Judaism for me has always been a strong cultural force, and very much part of my identity. ”

**JF:** Tell me about some of the texts you've published. Are you currently working on something new?

**AH:** A couple of years ago, I published an article with one of my undergraduate mentors, Fran Malino, about the Alliance Israélite Universelle at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. [The Alliance is] a Jewish philanthropic organization that was founded in Paris in 1860 with the goal of “regenerating” the Jews of North Africa and the Middle East and the Balkans through education. I just finished edits on an article about Moroccan Jews during the Vichy period, and I'm working on another about theoretical frameworks to address the trajectories of Moroccan Jewish Communists in the 20th century. I'm transforming my dissertation, *Radical Nationalists: Moroccan Jewish Communists 1925-1975*, into a book manuscript.

**JF:** Where did you grow up? Do you think your environment has influenced your passion for researching and teaching themes like syncretism in history?

**AH:** I'm originally from Chicago, and the house I grew up in is a few blocks away from the following institutions: Louis Farrakhan's house (of the Nation of Islam), a Sunni mosque that is not affiliated with the Nation of Islam, a reform temple that

environment, plus growing up with two academic parents working at the University of Chicago, certainly influenced the way I conduct my research and the overlapping, syncretic, and synchronic questions I find so fascinating. I've also been drawn to studying different languages and grew up in a bilingual environment with English and French. When I decided to enter the realm of International Relations, I was torn between studying Chinese and Arabic. I ultimately decided to learn Arabic.

**JF:** Do you have a personal connection with Judaism, or is Judaism strictly an area of intellectual exploration?

**AH:** My mother's family is *Ashkenazi* Jewish. My grandfather's family emigrated from Prussia in the late 19th century, while my grandmother's family came from Buchach, Poland, arriving in the US in the early 1930s. My father's family is a combination of Okie and Appalachia--very religious Baptist. My parents themselves are not religious, but growing up we celebrated every holiday. My mother in particular wanted to make sure my brother and I were familiar with the major holidays, basic prayers, and above all, foods. Thus, Judaism for me has always been a strong cultural force, and very much part of my identity.

# From Tel Aviv to Santa Cruz

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY NATALIE FRIEDMAN

*In the last issue of Leviathan, I wrote about a time when I explored Israel for two months. This experience prompted me to explore someone else's experience in a reverse situation: coming to Santa Cruz from Israel. I met with Galia Rosen and Mor Fischman, a pair of friends who met when Galia's husband showed Mor around Santa Cruz. Rosen moved to the US in 1997 and teaches Hebrew at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Fischman moved to Santa Cruz in 2014 and stays home with her young children. We sat down at the Kresge Provost's home and spoke about their transitions from Tel Aviv to Santa Cruz. Throughout our conversation, I began to realize that while Galia and Mor feel they need to actively pursue Judaism in Santa Cruz, Israel can provide an environment in which it is natural to fully embrace one's Jewish identity. This interview has been condensed and paraphrased for clarity.*

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**Natalie Friedman:** Where in Israel did you grow up?

**Galia Rosen:** I grew up in central Tel Aviv until age twenty-nine.

**Mor Fischman:** Rishon Lezion, a big city near Tel Aviv.

**NF:** What were you doing in Israel before you came to America?

**GR:** I went to Tel Aviv University for Hebrew Literature and Education. I switched to Computer Programming at twenty-six and worked at startup companies in Israel. I wrote patient education software that tells patients how to take care of their health. I still do a little bit of computer programming in Santa Cruz.



**MF:** I was working on information system engineering. Now I am working in Israel [from Santa Cruz] on the computer.

**NF:** What prompted you to move?

**GR:** We came to Seattle, Washington so my ex-husband could do his post-doc at the University, and we stayed for twelve years. Then, he moved to become a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz for computer engineering. Now he works at University of California, Los Angeles.

**MF:** I moved two years ago because of my husband. He worked for an Israeli company that was bought by an American company. They needed someone in the US, so we chose the West Coast. We had Israeli friends in Silicon Valley which was an “anchor”, but I didn't like what I heard about the area of Silicon Valley. At first, I studied information systems at Be'er Sheva University. Then I studied Waldorf education, which is a method of teaching I use with my

children. My older daughter was educated at a Waldorf center in Israel. The private [Waldorf] school in Santa Cruz is less expensive compared to other cities, so it seemed right for us. We also saw the hippies and sea surfers. My husband came for a visit and Gali gave him a tour. Gali knows everyone. Luckily, it was an easy transition. I have two daughters and one son, and my two daughters miss our family and friends in Israel. My younger daughter still wants to go back to Israel. I don't know how; she came here when she was three. It may be related to TV shows she sees at her grandmother's in Israel. My other daughter is scared to go back because she already started school and is now comfortable here.

NF: Did you feel welcomed?

GR: Santa Cruz is more warm and welcoming than Seattle was. Everyone is outdoors, and a neighbor is willing to talk to you.

MF: Very welcomed. At first, at places like Trader Joe's, people asked me what language I was speaking. People would say, "Are you Israeli?" or, "I'm Christian, but I love Israel!" Everyone was interested. My 25-year-old sister and her 28-year-old boyfriend love Santa Cruz for the surfing. They were here for three weeks. After a hike, they found a paper on their car with really harsh words about Israel. They think it was someone that they bumped into during the hike. It was a surprise because we thought we were in La La Land here.

NF: What do you see as your "identity"?

GR: Israeli-American. Two of my kids were born here and I have already gotten used to the American culture. At the beginning in Seattle, there were always Israelis around me. It was more about my friends and not about the kids. Now, my children are older and going to public schools so my circle of friends is American. To be Jewish, you have to work for it more here than in Israel. My Israeli identity is stronger than my Jewish identity. When I was in Tel Aviv twenty years ago, I found that there was more distance between

professors and students than in Santa Cruz. We did not speak of personal stuff. I am getting a lot of, "I broke up with my boyfriend, I cannot come to class" or, "I lost my cat, I looked for it at night and I couldn't see." At Tel Aviv University, I would never hear such a thing. In both small and big classes, there was no relationship between the teacher and student. I like it here. It is more personal, people come to my office hours, and we are talking about other stuff. I love it, I think it's very important.

MF: Israeli, totally. My daughters had Judaism in their kindergarten in Israel. We used to have grandparents' Shabbat dinners. We had these rituals. But you come here and you don't have it, so we have to create it for ourselves. You get more 'Jewish' here than in Israel. I found myself making *challah* on Fridays. I wanted it to be a special day because in Israel, it is a special day. We tried a few temples and found Kadesh Yamenu. We found ourselves coming for the children's programs--a place where you can feel the holidays, including Shabbat. You have to be active about it. It was surprising for me to meet Jewish Americans. To me, it feels like Jewish Americans and Jewish Israelis came from the same place and then there was a split. We became different groups and now we have different cultures. When we came to the temple, we were sure we would hear the songs we knew, but--nothing. Kadesh Yamenu had completely different melodies. It's interesting to see.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CHANCELLOR

By Zachary Brenner

*On a rainy day in early March, I sat down with George Blumenthal in his pleasant office at Kerr Hall to discuss his experiences in Israel as an educator and his views of Israel discourse on campus. This interview has been condensed for clarity.*

**Zachary Brenner:** When did you spend your year in Israel? Where did you stay?

**Chancellor George Blumenthal:** I've been to Israel maybe a half dozen times, so the year [my wife and kids and I] spent in Israel was maybe the third time I had been there. I was at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the physics department. My wife, who is a professor at Hastings College in San Francisco, was a visiting professor at the law school at the Mount Scopus campus in Jerusalem. They are on either sides of the city. We lived in East Jerusalem on French Hill, which is close to the Mount Scopus campus. We put our kids into one of the public schools.

**ZB:** Did you visit the West Bank or other areas beyond the Green Line? What were your experiences outside of Israel proper?

in the West Bank. In fact, there were areas that I avoided. I remember one time I gave a talk at Ber Sheba University. It was pointed out to me that there were two ways to drive there. One took three hours and one took two hours, but the two hours was through Ramallah, and I decided that there was no way I wanted to drive through Ramallah, so I took the longer way. I think the most serious exploration I did in the West Bank was when I went with the college presidents. When Mark Yudof became the president of the UC about seven or eight years ago, he lead an annual trip of university presidents to Israel. The point of those trips was to introduce university presidents to Israel. My wife and I joined him, his wife, and about eight or ten other university presidents and their spouses on this trip. We did visit the West Bank, the wall, and a number of universities and colleges, and we saw firsthand both the aspiration of some of those colleges as

“That discussion has been going on for a long time... Now, I'll say something controversial.”

**CGB:** I was in the West Bank a number of times. When you travel to the north of Israel, one of the fastest paths to get there is through the West Bank. I went through the West Bank on a couple of trips down to Eilat. I didn't spend a lot of time

well as some of the difficulties that they face in terms of having meaningful academic exchanges with universities within the Green Line.

**ZB:** You said you were able to see some of the

difficulties and aspirations of those schools.  
What did it look like to you?

**CGB:** First of all, it looked pretty poor. They didn't have a lot of money. Israel has a way of funding universities so that if you're at an Arab University in Israel proper, you basically get the same funding as Hebrew University or Tel Aviv University. But for universities in the West Bank, I think it's a different funding model, and so they are much less well-funded. But I think even more difficult is the difficulty of travel. Let's say a scholar is giving a great talk in Jerusalem. Even if Jerusalem is only an hour away, it's not easy for them to be able to go across the wall and go to that talk. It's a major deal for them to be able to travel, and so they don't. This inhibits the interactions between the two. I just felt that the colleges and universities in the West Bank were much more isolated from Israeli intellectual life.

**ZB:** Was there anything within the Israeli university system that was inspiring or disheartening to you? Perhaps a policy that you decided to implement once coming back to the United States?

**CGB:** First of all, I have a lot of admiration for Israeli universities, partly because Israel has a lot of really bright students and scholars. Those that [sic] actually get positions at Israeli universities are the *crème de la crème*. Secondly, I learned a little bit about the awkwardness of funding in Israeli universities. It's always a contentious issue, but I know that when I was there, which was in the 90s, Israeli higher education had been going through a really tough time. We saw a situation where some universities, like Hebrew University, cut their expenses dramatically. When times got even worse, Hebrew University came through in much better shape than some of the other Israeli universities. For me, that was an important lesson. I think I can draw some analogies between what is going on today here at Santa Cruz and the financial travails at Berkeley. There are some lessons to be learned. I really liked the



productivity of Israeli universities. The students are an interesting lot as well, because most Israelis do their army service before they go to college. So, undergraduate students are typically three years older than undergraduate students that we would see here. I taught a few guest classes while I was there and I was struck by the fact that the students just seemed so mature, so driven.

**ZB:** I'm sure you've heard of the recent BDS resolution. I'm curious whether you have noticed a change in rhetoric toward Israel and or Jews since then.

**CGB:** I think that's a really complicated question. First of all, it isn't really BDS that passed the SUA, it was a divestment resolution. I did send around a campus message, which has been much discussed. That was motivated in part because I really don't like to see any group of students feel that they are disenfranchised or unwelcome on the

campus. That email for me did cause considerable controversy because it was perceived as some that I was picking on one group of students over others, which actually was not my intention at all.

Do I actually see the situation for Jewish students being worse on campus or more challenging on campus now as a result of that resolution? I think we had issues before that resolution and we have issues now. I don't perceive that it's worse, but that doesn't mean that I'm necessarily right in that perception. I just don't see evidence of it. But not seeing evidence doesn't mean it's not true. I think that this is an issue that continues to challenge us, and I don't think we are alone as a campus in that regard. I think it's going to be very interesting to see the Regents' meeting this month in San Francisco. It's a meeting I have jokingly referred to as "March Madness" because they will be considering a number of very controversial issues that will raise a lot of passions. One of those issues that you probably don't care about that much is the penchant issue for faculty and staff.

**ZB:** (Defensively) I care about that!

**CGB:** The faculty and staff care a lot about the penchant issue. So that will be a point of real contention. The other issue that this group that the Regents formed to look at is some form of a regental statement about intolerance, which was motivated by an anti-Semitic incident at UCLA. That discussion has been going on for a long time. At the moment, I don't have a position about whether they should or shouldn't adopt that particular statement. Now I'll say something controversial. I put a lot of effort into encouraging the Regents to not adopt the State Department definition of anti-Semitism, which I think would be adverse not just to Jews on campus. I would have feared that it would make our culture even more anti-Semitic. That's my personal opinion, and I can justify it if you want.

**ZB:** I'm sure students are curious why you chose that particular stance.

**CGB:** Opposed to the State Department definition? There are lots of definitions of anti-Semitism that I'm perfectly fine with. I'm happy with the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition. I'm happy with the Anti-Defamation League definition of anti-Semitism. I'm happy with the Simon Wiesenthal definition of anti-Semitism. The State Department definition, in my view, crosses a line. The reason is that in addition to trying to define anti-Semitism, it uses, as a part of its definition, some examples of anti-Semitic behavior. One of those examples calls criticism of Israel that compares Israeli policy to Nazi Germany policy as being intrinsically anti-Semitic. So for example, I am not a supporter of Israel having built a wall. I could easily imagine myself arguing that the wall that Israel built to separate Palestinians and Jews is analogous to the wall in the Warsaw Ghetto that the Nazis built to separate Jews from everybody else. But based upon the State Department definition, that would make my feelings or my statement anti-Semitic.

**ZB:** What I hear you saying is that there is a clear line between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

**CGB:** Yes.

**ZB:** Actually, my next question is whether you think the typical student at this school understands or has heard of the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

**CGB:** \*Sighs\*. I'm not going to give you a direct answer. Because I think it's a hard question and it's a loaded question. I think that there is a distinction. There is no question about it. I think many students, when they come to college, are experiencing a diversity of culture for the first time and never before had to even think about those issues. And so I think one of the purposes of the university is to bring those issues to the fore so students can think about them.

**ZB:** Have you been informed that at the divestment resolution vote, there were accusations that a letter you wrote encouraging the voters to not pass the bill was fraudulent? Have you responded to this?

**CGB:** Sort of. That's at a certain level of detail that I don't want to get into. I'm not in a position to do fact-finding. I don't think it's my job to look at everything that anyone does or says and criticize it. I'm trying to stay at somewhat of a bigger picture level.

**ZB:** Looking back upon your time as a student in college up to your experience on campus today, what would you say are the biggest differences in terms of Jewish sentiment or Israel-related politics?

**CGB:** That's a tough one. It's a really interesting question. So first of all, we need to contextualize this a little bit. You know, I'm pretty old...

**ZB:** Thirty-one, right?

**CGB:** \*Laughs\*. Yeah, thirty-one. I was a student in college before the '67 war. This wasn't all that long after the independence of Israel. Certainly among Jewish students, there was great pride in the establishment of Israel, great pride in many of the values that Israeli life encompassed at the time. When I was in graduate school, the '67 war broke out. And then it was an existential question. I remember coming home from my classes and turning on the news and hearing that the initial reports were that the Arab countries were invading Israel and that Israel had bombed Damascus, Amman, and Cairo. I remember thinking, Oh my G-d, this must be awful if they are bombing the three biggest cities. This must mean this is probably the end of it all.

Well, very soon on the news they did a more detailed, careful analysis and I remember some American general got on and said the bombing that the Israelis did destroyed the Air Force of

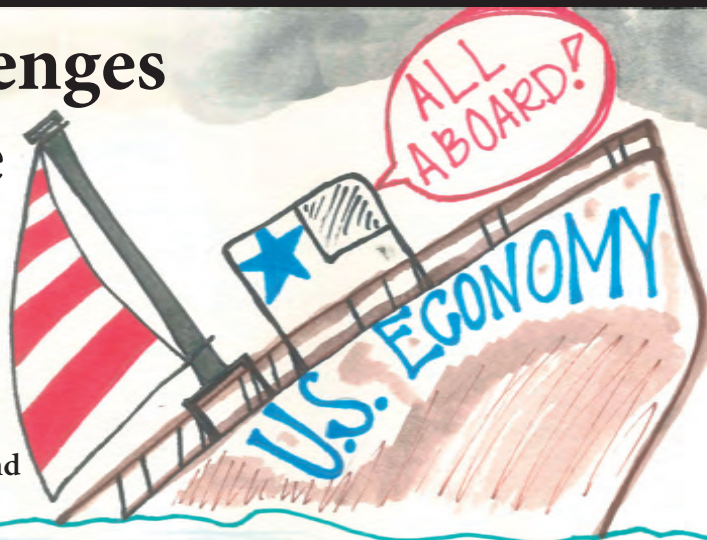
the three major Arab countries and therefore the war was over. It was a very cold-blooded analysis and he was absolutely right. Israel won that war in six days. And I remember thinking afterwards, *I sure hope Israel does the logical thing and uses this opportunity to find a way toward peace in the territories that they captured.* I was hoping that they would create an economic boom that would raise the standard of living of all the people that lived there in the hopes that that might be the way forward. Well, obviously that didn't happen. Now here we are many decades later and we're further away from the potential for peace than we were then. We have people in places like Gaza living in abject poverty. Back when I was a student, there was some optimism about the idealism about the establishment of Israel. Even after the '67 war, at least I felt some optimism that the opportunities were there to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Today, I feel very cynical about the likelihood of peace in our time in the Middle East. I'm not seeing progress. And I'm not seeing the likelihood of immediate progress. One of the things I find particularly inspirational is what happened with the fall of the communist regime in Russia. Two things I found were particularly notable there. One was the rapidity. Once the Berlin Wall came down and Germany reunited so quickly, it was just astonishing to me after all of those years of hostility. The other thing that really astonished me was (what happened) in Russia, which had been under Communist rule since 1917. Suddenly all of the ethnic minorities reestablished themselves as important ethnic minorities. They had not homogenized the country, even after all of that time. In a way, human beings kept their origins, they kept to their culture and traditions. The fact that those traditions and cultures could survive I think said a lot about society. And it gives me some optimism that no matter how much hatred there is now, it may still be possible in the future to find a way past that. But it will take some inspired leadership.

# The Challenges Facing the Next President

By: William Sump

Illustrated by: Kelsey Eiland



The next president could be stepping into a global recession and will have many obstacles to overcome in order for the United States to increase economic growth. “Make America Great Again” is a campaign slogan of one candidate, an ambiguous statement that implies transition back to the previous economic prosperity that this country once knew. One must ask, however, if this is actually achievable.

Consider that post-WWII America contained less than 5% of the world population, but produced 50% of the global gross domestic product. This extreme growth was the result of America’s transition from an agricultural society into an industrial society, the impact of labor mobilization, and the power of women joining the workforce. The middle class of this time experienced wealth like no other middle class has ever known. Perhaps our current economic position is just the right sizing of our place in the global economy; the result of trade deals,

globalization, mechanization, and technological innovation. It does not seem reasonable in the present time to assume America could experience such a level of global dominance.

Many economists argue that to achieve such economic growth, something must be done to decrease the inequality that currently exists in this country. A recent report by the Federal Reserve Chair, Janet Yellen, estimates that the middle class has dropped from 25% to less than 14% of the population. Post-war, a high school graduate could go work for an assembly line with cradle to grave benefits, opportunities for advancement, and above market wages. Restoring the middle class of today will require improvement to our educational system and retraining of the labor market for the needs of the future. Anticipating the needs of the future will make the American people more adaptable.

America needs at least 100,000 jobs to be created each month in order to just maintain the current rate of

unemployment. If the president plans to make progress, he or she will need to create nearly half a million jobs a month. This task seems unachievable. Since the end of the last recession, America has had only two solid months with employment growth. Creating new jobs at the desired rate will require vast investment and restructuring of the current student debt crisis; individuals must be encouraged to pursue college without the fear of drowning in debt. For America to grow, the president must increase the availability of education and job training to the American people.

In addition to the next president helping Americans find jobs, he or she must also increase the availability of housing. Housing is extremely important to the economy for several reasons. Development of housing creates numerous jobs in the field of construction. Furthermore, a home is the most valuable asset owned by the typical middle class household and the purchase of a home is usually financed with debt. However, increasing

housing costs means increasing debt which makes the housing market more volatile. When problems occur in the housing market they can harm the entire financial sector. The president must increase housing through stable and efficient regulation.

It can be argued that the largest problem facing this country is the ever increasing national debt. It is troubling that this topic has gained very little discussion in this presidential race. The national debt is well over 19 trillion dollars and is possibly the biggest threat to our economy. Some economists argue that the true amount of the debt is overstated because some of the debt is just one side of the government owing the other side.

A primary contribution to this problem is that the US is a country that borrows money in its own currency from US and foreign investors. The currency is borrowed from entities who buy notes, bonds, and Treasury bills. Nonetheless, promises of social security and Medicare for the largest retirement population this country has ever witnessed are now due.

It is this very reason that many economists argue that the true amount of the debt is grossly understated because future entitlement spending will be proportionally the largest slice of our national debt. American people have been actively misled about social security, as it is the working adults of today that paid for retirees of yesterday. But who will pay for retirees of

tomorrow? In order to tackle this massive debt, the share of income dedication to the debt payment must be increased. The debt to gross domestic product ratio must be stabilized in order to be made manageable.

Attention to the national debt is not normally discussed unless it is during a financial crisis. The president must work to remove some of the unfunded liabilities and find a way to decrease defense spending without sacrificing national security. Yet the American people are endorsing proposals from both political parties that could greatly increase the national debt, such as building a wall or providing free education. If any of the candidates are serious about the national debt they should be proposing plans on how they will effectively manage discretionary spending, increase taxes, minimize defense spending, and fund future entitlements.

Many American people often shriek at the idea of increasing tax rates, but it is unrealistic to assume we can manage the debt solely through economic growth. Increasing taxes seems inevitable because our income portion that is used to pay the debt is well below where it needs to be. Shortly after the financial crisis of 2008, the Federal Reserve slashed interest rates from over 4% to nearly 0% and initiated a practice known as quantitative easing. After these actions, top economists estimated quarter after quarter that the US would

experience robust growth, but the growth we have experienced is anemic at best. However, it is difficult to estimate what the growth would have been without these changes in monetary policy because of the lack of a counterfactual.

Conceivably a very terrifying issue that the next president could face would be a slowdown of global demand which could cause a global financial crisis. It seems inevitable that this is to happen and there are not many tools left in the monetary toolbox for the Federal Reserve to fight back because of the loose monetary policy that has been used to fight recessionary pressures. Contradictory to Keynesian economics, the country could tread into new territory with negative interest rates. The concept seems bizarre; imagine the bank charging you, rather than paying you, to hold your money. To overcome all of these challenges the next president will have to carefully plan and work to develop a strategy to promote the middle class.

The American people must embrace change, work together and accept that they will only get a portion of what they want in order to increase the nation's prosperity. We need a congress that is united, not one that is divided. The growth of our economy will be dependent on sacrifice and compromise, regardless of which political party is nominated into the White House.

# 10 Ways to Reduce Your Waste

By Eva Jason

*Photo Courtesy of Eva Jason*

בל תשחית (*Bal tashchit*) is the Jewish commandment from the Torah that tells us not to destroy or waste unnecessarily. The Torah explicitly forbids the cutting down of fruit trees because fruit trees are a source of food that should not be wasted. This commandment rests upon the idea that God created the Earth and we must respect it. Also, it is important to note that the Earth does not have infinite resources and we should treat it with respect and care. Here are some tips to incorporate the idea of בל תשחית into your life.



**1. Forgo packaging.** Grocery stores will often sell produce in unnecessary plastic or styrofoam packaging. Try to buy stuff that doesn't come in a cardboard box covered in plastic. In fact, many times the packaged items will be more expensive or a bad avocado might be grouped with 3 good ones. Plus, buying in bulk can also lead to unnecessary waste because fruit will ripen at the same time before you can eat it all. If you pick out your own fruits and vegetables, you will probably pay a lower price, get better quality food, and make less waste!

**2. Thrifting is not only trendy, it's environmentally friendly!** New clothing is a big source of waste, from the fabric, dyes, transportation and packing of that single garment. "Fast fashion" retailers tend to make low quality clothing with no thought into the environmental impact nor the factory conditions for their workers. If you end up buying a used piece of clothing, you cut all of that out and you will look chic! A way to cut down on costs and environmental impact is to organize a clothing swap with some friends. Not only will you get a cool new wardrobe, it will be completely free.

**3. Just skip the waste!** Bring a reusable bag with you to the grocery store, or just bring one around with you in general! Skip the receipt at check out. A lot of times, coffee shops

will give you a discount for bringing your own mug. Use a reusable water bottle to avoid disposable plastic ones that sit in landfills for millions of years before decomposing.

**4. Use it all!** Freezing food that you think you can't eat before it goes bad is a great way to reduce your waste. Don't let that spinach go in the trash. You can freeze it and cook it up later or add it to a smoothie. We tend to scrap vegetable peels, but the skin actually contains many nutrients. Leave the carrot skin on to give roasted carrots an earthy taste. Ginger peels give steamed rice a nice kick. Onion roots, potato peels, and herb stems make a great soup base when simmered together. Just make sure to clean the skins of carrots, potatoes, and other root vegetables very well. An apple or banana with a lil' bruise tastes just as sweet. Produce doesn't have to look perfect to taste great.

**5. Challenge consumer culture!** Buy a multi-use product, such as a lotion that can be used for your face, body and hands. Baking soda can be used as a teeth whitener as well as shampoo. Coconut oil is a great moisturizer that doesn't contain any aluminum, sulfates, or parabens. These additives can be toxic to our body and the environment. Buying fewer products cuts down on the waste produced from plastic containers. Glass containers are more recyclable than plastic, while aerosol cans (containers for mousse or shaving cream) are often difficult to recycle.

**6. Carpooling and ridesharing can be a great way to reduce your carbon footprint.** Not everyone needs to drive to the party--go together and use less gas. Public transportation is another great way to get around. The bus or train is already heading in that direction, so might as well hop on! By not driving your own car, you save gas and you will get to where you need to be. Or you could bike/skateboard/rollerblade/walk and have zero carbon footprint.

**7. Share resources with your neighbors.** Borrow a lawn mower or vacuum from that nice old couple next door. If they already have one, they will most likely let you borrow it for a day of use. Share straighteners and blow dryers with roommates to avoid costs and clutter. If you are only using items such as mops, lawn mowers, car washing supplies or a weed wacker a few times a year, it is definitely worth it to swap with neighbors and friends.

**8. Turn off the lights and unplug outlets when you are not home.** Even a charger plugged into the wall without a phone attached uses energy. Don't be an energy vampire.

**9. Make every drop count.** If it's yellow, it is mellow. If it's brown, flush it down. Do I need to explain this one? Use grey water to water your garden. If you are waiting for the shower to heat up, stick a bucket underneath to collect the excess downpour, then use it to water your beautiful California Golden Poppies. Only run the dishwasher and washing machine when it is completely full, and run it cold when you can. Investigate how much water is used to produce your favorite foods. Tofu is a great source of protein that is far less water intensive than meat. Take back the tap!

**10. Find which rules to reduce waste work for you and implement them into your daily life.** No matter if it is for financial, environmental, or personal health reasons, know that your effort to reduce waste is vital!

# Observations from the Outside

By: Evan Harris

Illustrated by: Rose Teplitz

I'm sitting criss-cross in one of our wooden chairs at the kitchen table. The lights are on. The sun has set a few hours ago, and a small clutter of things lay scattered before me on the worn, wooden tabletop: textbooks, used cups, Comcast bills, crumbs, homework, a pair of headphones, and my mug of now cold mint tea from this morning.

"Okay, where is everybody?" my roommate Zach calls out, standing at the head of the table on my right. I watch as he slides over the accumulated clutter and sets down what I think is called a *menorah* in the empty space he has just made.

Responding to his call, my housemates Annie, Jess, Natalie, and Eva trickle in from their various corners of the house and join us around the table. I've never done this before, and I'm a little nervous. I think, Hanukkah's a big deal, right?

"I have a lighter," Eva exclaims as she begins helping Zach place tiny pastel-colored candles in the holes of the *menorah*. Jess and Natalie, seated across from me, are talking with Annie as she stands near Eva and Zach.

"Oh my gosh, I was watching this live stream concert of Jason Mraz and..." begins Natalie, a Mraz fanatic. I remain silent and relatively still, listening and watching. My housemates Jess and Annie join in the discussion, and Eva and Zach continue setting up. Mr. Mraz is more than wonderful, but I'm not sure what is appropriate for me to do as I prepare for the religious celebration I'm about to attend. Remaining silent seems like a safe call. This is my first time experiencing Hanukkah and I'm the only non-Jewish person here. In fact, I want to be here. Religion is fascinating to me, but I don't want to mess anything up during this new celebration.

With candles lit, and the lighter set down, the conversations come to an end.

"Ready?" Eva cheerfully asks us, looking around at each face gathered there at the table. *Oh gosh what? What's happening? Should I stand up? No, it's fine. Jess and Nat are sitting down, maybe I should...*

Then, all at once, my housemates begin to sing. This isn't English I am hearing, so I assume it must be Hebrew. Everyone is singing, some louder than others, but everyone is singing the same song, a song I've never heard in a language I don't know. Their tune is not joyful, but rather dull; maybe even content sounding:

*"Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-olam..."*

With my lips sealed in a respectful smile, I glance around at the faces of my singing housemates. Everyone is focused on the small burning candles before us, some more intently than others, but each repeatedly breaks this concentration to childish peer around at one another. Giggling when wandering eyes meet, more glance up, then join in the tittering. My housemates appear to be having fun.

Smiling eyes return their gaze to the flames and more serious countenances return. The cycle repeats: stare at candles, look up, giggle, back to the flames. All the while, no one looks at me, and I feel rather disconnected. I don't know the song, I'm not sure what the words even mean, and I can't understand this sort of inside joke that keeps making my housemates smile. But of course I feel this way. I'm not Jewish. This is their celebration and I remember I'm an observer.

Then, the minute or so of singing stops. Chairs are scooted back, and people begin to disperse, moving towards the fridge or back to their rooms. Wait, is it over? Still criss-cross in my chair, I look up at Zach who is near the table.

"It's over," he says as he makes his way over to the kitchen to join Eva and Annie who are now on the hunt for food.

*Cool, I just celebrated Hanukkah,* I think to myself, fixing my eyes on the colored candles that remain lit in their fixture.

End scene.

Who the heck am I? I'm so glad you asked. My name is Evan, Evan Hawkins Harris. This year, my sophomore year of college, I find myself living in a house with five wonderful people who are all Jewish. I wonder often, what does that mean? Not for me, but for them, what does that mean, to be Jewish? What does this label immediately bring to one's mind? How does one understand Judaism, if they are Jewish or otherwise? I myself was raised as a Catholic, and I know what that is, I know for myself what being a Catholic feels like. I have been on the inside. Here, let me show you.

As many children do when born into a religious family, I went through the motions of my faith for many years without really understanding it. For me, this meant grace before dinner, mass on Sunday morning, Christmas in the winter, Easter in the spring, sacraments when old enough, prayers for those who suffer, and more church. For a while, all I knew for sure about my religion was that it was something huge and invisible, something powerful and loving, and something run by a man named God, but his son Jesus was a big deal too.

In elementary school, I remember feeling--as a Catholic--like I was on some sort of secret team, a team that had a whole bunch of players. They were players I saw at church every Sunday, and it was nice. It was comforting knowing that all these people were doing this "Catholic" thing, too. However, by the time I reached middle school, I had begun questioning many of the fundamental teachings of Catholicism. Who is this God and how do we know He's there? Why are there so many rules? What about the beliefs of other religions? Questions led to doubts, doubts led to discouragement, and discouragement led to a rebellious attitude toward my faith. But I was still seated in a pew every Sunday.

Then, came high school. I could have chosen to go to a public school, but a lack of decisiveness combined with parental influence lead me to enroll at Cathedral Catholic High School, my first private school since Pre-K. As opposed to the public schools I was used to, where classroom decorations for holidays had to solely represent the seasons to avoid conflict, Cathedral was an environment where Morning Prayer was said after the Pledge of Allegiance, school masses were held regularly, and Catholicism was a required subject of study.

At the beginning of my freshman year, I battled with the nun who taught my first religion class. I was unwilling to take the leap of faith needed to read religious texts in the manner she required. I disagreed with my classmates who had gone to Catholic school their whole lives. However, as my stay at Cathedral lengthened and my understanding of Catholicism grew, my thoughts began to change.

Slowly at first, but then with multiplying speed, the friendly and caring faith community Cathedral offered began to foster in me a deep and profound faith life. I began to love religion class and started to truly believe in the teachings of Jesus, paying close attention to what was said on Sundays. Prayer became an everyday occurrence as I dove deeper into my faith, and by junior year I was helping run school mass. Senior year, I became a retreat minister leading my peers through powerful overnight religious retreats. My entire being became grounded in Catholicism. I was a role model on campus, I dated a lovely girl who sang in the choir at church, and I went on mission trips to the Dominican Republic in the summer. My faith was on fire.


Then came college, which meant leaving Cathedral, leaving my faith community, and enrolling in Stevenson Core. These three factors combined progressively undermined the totality of my faith, and I could not believe it (no pun intended). My solid Catholic foundation was quickly shot to pieces as Stevenson Core introduced me to a wide range of religious and philosophic texts. My whole religious upbringing had solely been in the exploration of Catholicism, and therefore, the only doubts I was ever really trained to have in high school (and then overcome) was the existence of God.

With this introduction to a vast array of new belief systems, some alarmingly similar, and others uncomfortably honest, the prestige of Catholicism slipped away. From Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism Is a Humanism* to the *Bhagavad Gita*, countless new thoughts and ideas about the world bombarded my mind, drowning me in a state of confusion and discovery. As my horizons expanded, my prayers dwindled and my faith gradually became just a memory. I wanted it back, but I could not find the truth that I so craved in Catholicism any longer.

I now find myself, still very much confused, but contently enjoying my recently declared major, Philosophy. I do not devalue religion now that I have separated from my own. Rather, I find religion incredibly fascinating and thoroughly enjoy hearing about the experiences of others within their own religion. Now, I find myself surrounded by Jewish people, but what does that mean? I have a firm grasp of Catholicism, but I'm not sure what it's like to be Jewish because, unlike Catholicism, I've never been on the inside.

# Santa Cruz: Through a Student's Eyes





# Do Jews Run

BY: ZACHARY BRENNER  
ILLUSTRATED BY: ANNELISE ASCH

When I think of my aspiration to become an influential filmmaker within the system of Hollywood, I often think of the question, *do Jews run Hollywood?* What comes to mind immediately are names such as Charlie Chaplin, Steven Spielberg, Woody Allen, and Joel and Ethan Coen. To me, these figures are perceived as highly powerful, which might lend to the bias that because one can name five prominent directors who are Jewish, Jews must run Hollywood. And further, do Jewish men run Hollywood? The reflexive answer is, *Yes*, although exploration of the question is necessary before succumbing to assumption.

What qualifies someone as “Jewish”? Are they observant? Are they culturally Jewish? It seems to be a popular assumption that someone is Jewish when they are not, maybe because they are influential, white, wealthy, and have a last name that could be arguably “Jewish sounding”. There are some instances where an assumption of a “Jew running Hollywood” might end up being accurate, and other cases where it is ludicrous. In any case, assumption of anyone’s identity is problematic at best.

One instance of accuracy would be the ever-powerful Weinstein Brothers, of the Weinstein Company. Since their creation of Miramax Films in 1979 and spanning until their present day leadership of the Weinstein Company, their films have received 303 Oscar nominations and 75 victories.

A ludicrous instance of an assumption that Jews run Hollywood would be a part of that same idea that the Weinsteins run Hollywood. This is a case of two Jews running a part of the establishment, but also engaging in other Jewish spaces outside of the industry. They are both active in the Jewish community and recognize their upbringing in a Jewish household. But, I don’t know whether I, as a Jew, would identify with all of their values. Even if I do identify with their work in the film industry, it doesn’t mean that our identities as Jews who happen to be interested in film should be conflated.

What does it mean to “run” Hollywood? An easily measurable way to determine if someone can actually have a foothold in the corporate film world is by how many movies they produce and how much money is made



from them. However, Hollywood filmmaking often requires hundreds of individuals with various technical and creative abilities working together. Often, if one of those individuals were to be absent from the film crew, the movie would turn out very differently. So, I would argue that you can never determine whether Jews run Hollywood or not, because one cannot determine how much influence a single figure actually has on a film, whether it be the director, director of photography, producer, writer, grip, or electrician. Further, one cannot determine whether the majority of people working in the industry are, in fact, Jewish, because there is no accurate measure for the “Jewishness” of a person. The Weinsteins are just one element of a larger force that continually produces influential and lucrative films.

According to the LA Times, only 22 percent of Americans believe that the industry is run by Jews, down from a poll taken in 1964 that claimed that 50 percent of individuals believed that Jews ran Hollywood. The article then lists

many influential Hollywood producers who are Jews. Among them, leaders from Paramount Pictures, Walt Disney, Sony Pictures, Warner Bros., CBS, and MGM. The article even addresses that the CBS Corporation Chief Executive Leslie Moonves is, “so Jewish his great uncle was the first prime minister of Israel”. I fact checked this, and it is indeed true: Leslie Moonves is related to David Ben Gurion.

A writer reacting to these polls, Joel Stein, was upset by the perceived decrease of a Jewish dominance in Hollywood. He claims he has, “... never been so upset by a poll in [his] life”. What I take issue with is this most-likely Jewish writer taking immense pride in the idea that Jews run Hollywood. That makes me think about my own career aspirations.

Let’s say Jews do run Hollywood. Am I bothered by the idea that Jews just fell into a position of power? On the one hand, yes, I am upset because I believe that Jews worked tirelessly to adapt to American culture and steer away from the label of “outsider”. However, how can I

be upset by Jews falling into power in Hollywood when among my most influential directors, many are Jews? Perhaps those Jews would not have been filmmakers had they not easily obtained their positions. And to be honest, yeah, it would be great to just “fall into power” in order to start my career. Still, I know this is a highly problematic way to gain a public voice.

Modern filmmakers such as the Coen Brothers, Woody Allen, Steven Spielberg, Charlie Kaufman, and Bryan Singer are all highly influential. Shouldn't I be excited to carry on this legacy? To be honest, I feel guilty about being excited. By being a part of this legacy, I am potentially becoming a part of a history of an established, capitalist system that hands out power to certain individuals, usually men. They have perhaps worked less tirelessly to achieve their power compared to their peers such as women, people of color, queer individuals, or non-English speaking individuals.

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“ Jews in Hollywood...must recognize their privilege. ”

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If Jewish directors stop “running” Hollywood (or, rather, stop getting all the good projects and recognition), I wouldn't be upset. Now, I'm not saying that Jews (many of whom identify as cultural Jews) do, in fact, get all of the popular movies to direct. I am simply basing this argument off of common stereotypes I hear. I don't think that being Jewish is the only mark of a great filmmaker, or of how they gained their success. The mark of a great filmmaker is thoughtfulness, persistence, ambition, and creativity. If Jewish directors stopped getting preferential treatment, it would not especially bother me because I am not an aspiring filmmaker as a Jew, but as a person looking to make an influence on the world, whether it be with my Jewish identity in mind or not.

Let's say that Jewish individuals worked very hard and earned their place in Hollywood by making good films, studying business, and pursuing interpersonal connections with powerful people. That is no excuse for the lack of progress that the film industry has displayed.

Just because Jews have been disenfranchised in the past, does not mean that all Jews can continue to claim that they are underrepresented and disempowered. Specifically in Hollywood, Jews are in a unique position of power. Many people are desperately trying to get a powerful foot in the door but the lack of progress by the predominantly white (and maybe Jewish) men leading Hollywood are not doing enough to open up the space for consistently diverse voices. How many movies a year are actually about non-males--and of those about non-males, how many are non-white? How many movies pass the Bechdel test, which stipulates that at least two named female characters hold a conversation over a couple minutes long that doesn't pertain to a man? You'd be surprised how many mainstream movies fail this test. How many non-white actors and actresses have been nominated for an Oscar? Whether or not the blame falls upon the voters for the Oscars, there is a significant problem with homogenized roles in Hollywood.

Jews in Hollywood, as perceived influential and lauded individuals, must recognize their privilege. Jews must not hold on to the idea that a history of anti-semitism in Hollywood, such as during the years of the blacklist, remains a constant threat. Jews will survive. And now, Jews must stand in solidarity with other groups of individuals who share histories of oppression.

As an aspiring, Jewish filmmaker, I must address my discomfort with the idea that Jews run Hollywood because it reminds me that I am a privileged individual--and, to be honest, I often feel less sympathetic of people who are privileged. I frequently respect individuals who struggle to claim their success more than people born with greater opportunity for success in the capitalist workplace. But, I am Jewish and I am privileged. It's time for me to confront those realities and vow to change the corrupt system by allowing for space for other groups to have an equal shot. I must play to my strengths as a human with unique opinions and privilege. That's all we, as Jews who have achieved certain advantages, can do. This is the point of privilege--not to make more money and buy fancier cars, but to realize what is corrupt and infuriating about the system and change it for others who have been historically disenfranchised by systems of power.



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