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SISTERHOOD WAS LIMITED: JEWS, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND THE SECOND WAVE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

Susan Roth Breitzer, Ph.D.

(Fayetteville, NC, USA)

Correspondence should be addressed to: susanbreitzer@ncis.org

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Abstract

Decades before Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, the concept of interlocking oppressions was emerging in the Second Wave Feminist movement that by the 1970s was beginning to confront the limitations of strictly gender-based sisterhood. But in what I describe as the proto-intersectional feminist movement, Jewish women found their Jewish identities marginalized on account of being identified (and initially identifying) as simply white. This article, therefore, addresses the paradox of Jewish identification in a time of increased racial consciousness, and how this paradox complicated the place of Jewish feminists during the 1970s and 1980s. It argues that the emergence of this white/not-white enough status of Jewish women began with the Second Wave Feminist movement and highlights the troubling developments at the United Nations Decade of the Woman conferences, and Jewish feminist responses to these developments. The article connects these historical issues with the more recent troubles concerning the uneasy place of Jewish women in the contemporary feminist movement.

Keywords: Feminism, Jews, Antisemitism, Whiteness, Intersectionality

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INTRODUCTION: THE ORIGINS AND LIMITATIONS OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

At the 1981 National Women's Studies Association conference, Annette Kolodny attended a consciousness-raising (CR) group for Jewish women, rather than one for white women, the way many of her Jewish colleagues attending the conference had. Initially, she wondered why. But as the group moved beyond introductions to share experiences, it soon became clear to Kolodny precisely why this group was needed. She recounted, "we began to talk about feelings of hurt and confusion at finding ourselves, because Jewish, an especial target of Black rage," especially for those with an activist background in a variety of social justice causes. "There was a painful sense of double isolation," she continued, "from a Black political community that sometimes seemed to identify us as the enemy" adding "to them we were simply 'white,' or worse, still stereotypically rich Jews." Kolodny and the other women in the group likewise struggled with conflicting feelings about Israel and its role in their Jewish identity. Recalled Kolodny "No one in the room, I think, condoned much of current Israeli policy, nor of, course, the sexism in Israeli society." Nonetheless, Kolodny suggested that another woman in the group spoke for others in that "she wanted Israel to exist because upon that depended her sense, as a Jew, of being 'safe' in the world." In the end, Kolodny concluded that this consciousness-raising meeting had fallen short, pointing out that "we hadn't, in fact, spent sufficient time on exploring our own racism, nor had explored workable techniques for interrupting racism. Kolodny nonetheless insisted that the meeting that took on more of a support group function was nonetheless valuable, recognizing "the hard fact that, for Jewish women, there is a rather special agenda for such work," concluding "we need to understand as much the ways that we have been victimized by anti-Semitism as we need to root out our own racisms and prejudices, and we need to understand the interface between those two."[1]

This account, which sounds so disturbingly contemporary, took place much earlier. The 1981 NWSA followed two United Nations Conferences on the Status of Women, in 1975 and 1980, both of which devoted much time to attacking Israel, and by the second UN conference, Jewish women delegates. The NWSA conference would then be part of the American Jewish feminists' effort to affirm their own Jewish identity as opposed to accepting the simply white identity assigned to them during the peak period of the Second Wave Feminist movement that began in the 1960s in the United States, and coalesced the 1970s to the 1980s, as well as to raise antisemitism as an issue within an American feminist movement that was increasingly moving towards what would eventually be known as intersectional feminism. This essay, therefore, focuses on the rise of antisemitism within what I am describing as the proto-intersectional Second Wave Feminist movement.[2] It examines why Jewish inclusion in the politics of diversity has historically been so elusive and focuses on the issue of Jewish whiteness and why Jewish women in Second Wave Feminism were considered white, and hence were excluded from the discussion of diversity. This exclusion has ranged from the denial of the oppressed status of Jews to the willingness of non-Jewish "sisters" to engage in antisemitism that was ostensibly about Israel but did not end there. It demonstrates how what seems like a contemporary problem

[1] A. Kolodny (1981) "A CR group for Jewish Women" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 9:3, p. 15

[2] I am defining "proto-intersectional" feminism here, as the feminism developed and practiced by feminist activists from this period that emphasized interlocking identities and oppressions before it was named as intersectional feminism.

in many ways began with the Second Wave Feminist movement, highlighting how it became especially egregious during the series of conferences organized to mark the UN Decade of the Woman.[3]

In recent times, the term "intersectionality" has become popular in the contemporary American feminist movement, even as it has tended to stray far from the meaning originally laid out by the African American thinker who coined it, Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw connected different (but interlocking) forms of oppression (racism, sexism, etc.) to explain why (to use Crenshaw's example), Black women were oppressed in ways that neither Black men nor white women were. Although Crenshaw's theory, which was originally presented as a legal concept in a law school context, was intended to be about the experience of Black women, intersectionality has proven useful in giving a name to the multiple oppressions of other groups of women that the Second Wave Feminist movement was initially slow to address.[4] This slowness was the result of both the Second Wave Feminist Movement initially being based primarily on the experience of white, middle-class women, and the tendency of African American and other minority liberation movements at that time to dismiss gender as a lesser concern. In some cases, these liberation movements were actively hostile to women who demanded more equal roles within them.[5] Jewish organizations and movements had historically been no exception to the latter phenomenon, long subordinating women's issues to what were perceived to be the more important Jewish issues.[6] And before a distinctive Jewish feminist movement emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, the Second Wave Feminist movement, initially centering the experience of presumably non-Jewish white women, featured a significant number of assimilated Jewish women who were, at best, minimally in touch with their Jewish identities, even while some cited their Jewish backgrounds and/or religious beliefs as their inspiration for taking part in the feminist movement. Joyce Antler has addressed this topic at length in her recent work, Jewish Radical Feminism.[7] Antler, however, gives less attention to the issue of whiteness and its controversial role in modern American Ashkenazic Jewish identity. Likewise, Marc Dollinger's masterful Black Power/Jewish Politics chronicles the true depth of the breakdown of the Black-Jewish alliance of the Civil Rights era and resulting rise in Jewish consciousness only gives limited attention to how gender affected this issue or the ways it played out in the women's movement.[8]

The sisterhood emphasis of the Second Wave feminist movement, expressed in the movement's most famous slogan, "Sisterhood is Powerful" (which first became popular as the title of a feminist anthology edited by Robin Morgan and Eleanor Holmes Norton), promoted the assumption that gender trumped all

[3] "Second Wave Feminism," (1993) *Oxford Reference*. Retrieved from https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100451509; P. Chesler (2019b), "The Women's March in a Con Job." Retrieved from https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-womens-issues-that-the-womens-march-refuses-to-address-and-the-jewish-question/ ; G. R. Hammond, (2017) "More than 1,500 at Dyke March in Little Village, Pride Flags Banned (Updated June 26)," *Windy City Times*,. Retrieved from http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/More-than-1500-at-Dyke-March-in-Little-Village-Jewish-Pride-flags-banned-UPDATED-June-25-/59621.html; and M. Oster (2019), "D.C. Dyke March Bans Jewish Pride Flags," Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Retrieved from https://www.jta.org/quick-reads/dc-dyke-march-bans-jewish-pride-flags.

[4] "Kimberle Crenshaw on Intersectionality Two Decades Later," (2017). Retrieved from https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later; and K. W. Crenshaw (1991), "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43: 1, pp. 1241-3.

[5] B. Roth (2004), *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-6, 28-30; and P. Chesler (2018), *A Politically Incorrect Feminist: Creating a Movement with Bitches, Lunatics, Dykes, Prodigies, Warriors, and Wonder Women*. St. Martin's Press, p.134.

[6] L. C. Pogrebin (1991), *Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America*. Crown Publishers, pp. 239-52.

[7] J. Antler (2018), *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement*. NYU Press, pp.1-3, 4-8.

[8] M. Dollinger (2018), *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s*. Brandeis University Press, pp. 129-31.

other considerations when it came to women's lives.[9] It in many ways implied that the experience of white middle-class women, as expressed in Betty Friedan's otherwise groundbreaking The Feminine Mystique, spoke to all women. The limitations of this assumption first became clear in regard to race, but factors such as class and sexuality would soon expose other limits of gender solidarity. The movement whose best-known slogan became "the personal is political," was in fact slow to address, let alone recognize the political nature of differences of race, class, ethnicity, etc., but would have the biggest trouble with Jewish identity, despite the presence of many Jewish women in the movement's leadership. This trouble developed over the next decade through both domestic and international politics. The Second Wave Feminist Movement's "Jewish Problem" was shaped by Cold War politics, but also by the 1967 Israeli victory in the Six-Day War and accompanying takeover of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. One of the strongest effects of this international event was the turning of the Black Power movement against Israel and Zionism, that alienated many Jewish left activists and steered them towards closer alignment with their own communities during a time of increased Jewish ethnic revival.[10] This development stood as a counter to an earlier de-ethnicization that reclassified Jews as whites with a different religion, similar to descendants of other European immigrants, paving the way for (incomplete) Jewish acceptance in in white American society, but also increasing the possibility of Jewish complacency/complicity in the marginalization of non-whites even within social justice movements. These issues would move to the forefront by the changing geo- and internal politics of the late 1960s onward, bringing Jewishness forward as an issue in diversity, and eventually intersectionality.

Long before Crenshaw wrote, the black, Chicano/a, and other minority liberation movements of the 1960s all contributed to the growing awareness of the limitations of the Second Wave Feminist movement's concept of sisterhood that failed to recognize not only the particularity of women within these groups, but the multiplied forms of oppression they experienced. Crenshaw's original conception of intersectionality therefore not only spoke to the experience of Black women but proved expansive enough to speak to the experience of women in many groups, including Jewish women, who throughout most of Jewish history have experienced both antisemitism at the hands of the non-Jewish majority and a secondary place within Judaism and the Jewish community. This proto-intersectional emphasis, it should be noted, also emerged in response to the marginalization of women's concerns from many leftist movements of the 1960s, who dismissed women's issues as selfish, bourgeoise, or not germane to the revolution male leftists were seeking to create. But as intersectionality and its predecessor developed, it proved broad enough to embrace almost all forms of oppression and to connect them with each other, sometimes profligately. The notable exception to this greater awareness remained antisemitism, largely on account of Jewish whiteness (perceived or actual), which even then was being used to erase Jewish particularity, sometimes even among other white ethnics. These proto-intersectional efforts were mainly about challenging the "universality" of women's experience that in the Second Wave Feminist movement was based on the experience of most of the leaders of the women's movement, most of whom were white, middle-class, and well-educated.[11] That many of these leaders in the feminist histories who identified as white were also Jewish is something that is left out of many accounts and assessments of the movement. Indeed, many Jewish feminists themselves initially identified simply as white, and downplayed their Jewishness, even while many derived their passion for activism from their Jewish background and upbringing. It would take the emergence of overt antisemitism in the women's movement to force a rethinking of this status, as well as the development of a distinctly Jewish feminist movement, as well as a concerted effort to renegotiate the place of Jewish women in the diversifying Second Wave Feminist movement.[12]

[9] Chesler 2018, pp. 113-114, 215. According to Chesler, credit for the phrase should go to Kathie Sarachild, who coined it for an anti-Vietnam War protest in 1968,
[10] Dollinger, pp. 158-61.
[11] Roth, pp. 6, 26-27, 62-70.
[12] Antler, pp. 2, 14-17.

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JEWS AS WHITE—AND NOT

The issue of Jewish whiteness has become one of intense scholarly and popular discussion in recent years and has included efforts to backdate when Jews in America were considered simply white to the beginning of American history and reflects demographic realities of most American Jews having had ancestral forbears from Europe. The reality was a bit more complex and nuanced, with Jews periodically falling on the white side of the white-Black racial binary that developed in America, and periodically being classified, along with other Southern and Eastern European immigrants, as an entirely different race. Which meant that while from the establishment of the United States, Jews counted as the "free white immigrants" who were generally welcome on American shores, for most of American history, whiteness did not mean equality. The position of the Jew in American society ebbed and flowed, affected by the rise and decline of twentieth-century American racialism, which categorized Europeans by "stock" when it came to desirability or undesirability. But while Jews enjoyed the unprecedented improvement in their situation, their whiteness for most of American history was conditional, and only gradually (and sometimes ambivalently) achieved, thanks to the anti-Black racism that relieved Jews of the status of the most hated group that characterized their place in other diaspora societies.

In practice, well into the twentieth century, Jews were not treated equally with other white-presenting Americans in terms of housing, educational opportunities, and employment opportunities. These prejudices slowed the movement of most Jews into the American social mainstream (then, by definition, white) until after World War II. This was separate from the economic upward mobility that was already manifest by the early 1920s that included increased levels of education that facilitated movement into white-collar and professional occupations. This economic movement away from the working class was accompanied by geographic mobility beyond immigrant neighborhoods, with the Jewish rise into the economic middle class only interrupted for many by the economic vicissitudes of the Great Depression.[13] As a result, for the first half of the twentieth century, upward mobility into economic middle-class status well preceded social acceptance by the white non-Jewish American mainstream, bringing into question current historical backdating of Jews being identified as simply white. While the uncovering of the Holocaust contributed to the declining acceptability of viewing Jews as a separate race, the whitening of American Jews was a gradual and initially uneven process, with the differences of perception and self-perception very much generational. Indeed, in the 1940s the first references to "white Jews" were referring to Jews who did not have stereotypically "Jewish" looks and there for could pass as White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, who embodied the most traditional standard of American whiteness. Furthermore, seeking whiteness as a path towards mainstream acceptance was not entirely voluntary or desired and had its own gendered dimensions in the changing views of what Jewish women were supposed to be like—or not. Jewish women's prescribed roles in twentieth-century America, which emphasized homemaking and caring for the family (and not working for pay), were very much shaped by an assimilation that included an assimilation into whiteness.[14] And when the Second Wave Feminist movement challenged these white-sanctioned gender roles, it did so, ironically with a universalist feminism that assumed the white middle-class experience and need for feminism to be the norm. In fact, Betty Friedan, a Jewish woman from Peoria, Illinois, would end up being the most important promoter of this white middle-class iteration of feminism with her publication of the groundbreaking The Feminine Mystique. And even other Jewish Second Wave Feminists, who had much stronger Jewish backgrounds than Friedan, initially built their feminism on the Jewish values they had been raised with as well as passion for justice engendered by the experience of antisemitism, but not on Jewish identities, in an

[13] H, Diner, pp. 205-215, 226-232, 240-241, 246-47; and H.M. Sachar (1992), *A History of Jews in America*. A. A. Knopf, pp. 417-25.

[14] K. Brodkin (2004), *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says About Race in America*. Rutgers University Press, pp. 11-14, 150, 162; and E. Goldstein, (2006) *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*. Princeton University Press, pp. 5-6.

era when Jewish ethnic identity tended to be downplayed, especially by progressive activists who saw Jewish particularism as parochial and detracting from the universalist social justice goals they sought to pursue.[15]

In the post-World War II decades, but especially from the 1960s onward, Jews became increasingly accepted as simply white, at least in most situations where it mattered, in terms of equal access to housing and education and employment opportunities that sometimes took acts of Congress to make possible for Blacks and other non-whites, and even then, incompletely. But as Eric Goldstein points out, this acceptance of Jews came at a price—namely their consciousness of themselves as a minority. As a result, Jewish participation in the Civil Rights movement (and similar social justice movements) may have been motivated in part by the need to maintain some sort of "minority consciousness," even if only by proxy.[16] Jewish participation in these movements, and especially the Civil Rights movement, therefore, was a double-edged sword, especially as Blacks and other non-white groups began to demand more of a voice and more control in these liberation movements. In that light, the breakdown of the much-heralded Black-Jewish alliance of the 1960s was less than surprising. For Jewish activists in multiple movements from the 1960s onward, it occasioned a rethinking regarding Jewish identity, along with a reckoning of the tension between the genuine white privilege Jews in America had accrued, and the limits of this privilege in movements that found new ways to "other" Jews, sometimes using the very assumptions of Jews being simply a subset of whites.[17]

This new ethnic identification itself contributed to the diversification of the Second Wave Feminist movement. And decades before Crenshaw fully articulated the theory of intersectionality, some Black feminist activists began writing about their double identification as Black women and why the necessary challenge to a white-centered feminist movement would bring more Black women into the movement. For example, Diane K. Lewis wrote in 1977 that initially the exclusive focus on sexism "has been of limited applicability to minority women who subjected to both the constraints of racism and sexism," leading to mistrust of the Second Wave Feminist movement during the early 1970s. However, according to Lewis, Black women began to find their voice in the movement, drawn in partially by feminist concerns that were sometimes even more of interest to them than to white women, such as daycare and maternity leave, reflecting the economic realities of Black women.[18] And though, as Phyllis Chesler recounts, white feminist efforts to bring in women of color were uneven and sometimes insincere enough for Black and non-white feminists to initially stick to their own feminist and ethnic movements, over time there was at least a growing understanding that feminism couldn't be limited to white women's concerns.[19] This resulting diversification of the women's movement towards greater inclusiveness, however, still fell short for Jewish women, even when it managed to honor the particularity of other white ethnics. At the same time, the whiteness of Jewish feminist activists appeared to remain conditional in that it did not prevent expressions of antisemitism within the women's movement. And Jewish feminist activists at this time largely appeared to accept this assignment as straight up white, contingent on the lack of antisemitism—a situation that that would rapidly change in the coming decade.

The stirrings of a global feminist movement, helped along by the United Nations Decade of the Woman and its three Conferences on the Status of Women, held between 1975 and 1985, would further leave Jewish feminists in what might be called a no-woman's land, when it came to categorizing women as white or non-white, or relatedly, as part of colonial powers or decolonizing people. And while the nascent international identity politics were shaped by the Cold War, with the then Soviet Union encouraging anti-Westernism among newly independent nations as part of presenting itself as their supporter, and Israel after 1967 increasingly aligning with the United States, the divisions would go much deeper and manage to outlast the Cold War. And as Israel became increasingly identified with Western powers, these developments became

[15] Antler, pp. 11-12; and Brodkin, pp. 167-169.
[16] Goldstein, pp. 5-6.
[17] Antler, pp. 16-17.
[18] D. K. Lewis (19770, "A Response to Inequality," *Signs* 3: 2, pp. 339-340.
[19] Chesler, 2018, p.136.

part of the origins of the scapegoating of Israel—and by extension Jews—for the legacy of colonialism. And at these conferences, this initially Soviet-goaded impulse to scapegoat would prove stronger than any notion of sisterhood.[20]

ISRAEL AND THE RISE OF MODERN FEMINIST ANTISEMITISM

The State of Israel, since its founding, and especially since 1967, has been a complicating factor for the place of Jewish women in a multicultural/intersectional/international feminist movement. Both on account of its misdoings and its very existence, the Jewish state has become the most popular excuse for marginalizing Jewish concerns in the feminist movement, especially when criticism of Israel spills over into condemnation not applied to other countries. Although this assessment appears (and in many ways is) very contemporary, especially in the wake of Israel's most recent war, it was very much part of the scene in earlier decades, with most of its origins traceable to the 1967 Israeli victory in the Six-Day War. In it, Israel fought off multiple Arab countries, wresting East Jerusalem and other territories from Jordan and Egypt. This victory shored up Israel's borders and established the Jewish state's new strength in the Middle East. But it also cost Israel the underdog status that had previously granted it a largely positive image among leftist activists.

The Israeli victory in the Six-Day war therefore spurred positive identification among Jewish activists, including Jewish feminist activists, but also pushed some towards the anti-Zionism that identified Israel as an example (if not the number one example) of colonialist oppression, instead of the liberation of the Jewish people, along with the erasure of the racial and ethnic diversity of Israel, which in its early years become heavily populated by Jews who had been expelled from the surrounding Arab and North African countries.[21] One of the immediate results of these changes were the split between Radical Jews, who like their more recent counterparts, were proudly Jewish but anti-Zionist (believing that Jews could survive perfectly well without Israel) and Radical Zionists, emphasizing both the rightness of Jewish self-determination and the necessity of Israel as a Jewish refuge. The radical Zionist movement was also visibly anti-assimilationists and provided the first Jewish counterpoint to the Black and Latina feminist movements, both emphasizing the need for Jewish women to embrace their distinctiveness in order to better fight oppression and pushing back against both the assimilated Jewish establishment and the male-dominated radical left's assumptions about Jewish women, and lack of attention to the needs of Jews who didn't fit the stereotyped molds.[22]

The Six-Day War, and the subsequent controversies over the West Bank and Gaza Strip long before the most recent war, however, were far from the only reasons behind the changing definition of who was included or excluded in an increasingly multicultural feminist movement. Jewish women in the movement were comparatively late in creating a separate movement, and then mainly in response to growing awareness of the limits of the rising multiculturalism. This awareness came, ironically, after the mainstream Jewish establishment that many of these Jewish feminists had distanced themselves from had embraced and encouraged a more assertive and particularist Jewish identity in response to the Black Power movement that disturbed the previous Black-Jewish civil rights alliance. But antisemitism spurred the creation of a Jewish feminist movement that was parallel to but did not totally separate its adherents from the mainstream "white feminist movement." Along the way, among individual Jewish feminists, two distinct, contrasting responses to multicultural (and later intersectional) feminism would emerge from Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Phyllis Chesler, respectively. I will compare their responses later in this article.[23]

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[20] H. Milstein (undated) "The United Nations Women's Decade and Jewish Feminist Identity," unpublished paper. Retrieved from https://history.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/ExPostFacto/Hanna_Milstein_United_Nations.pdf.p. 200.

[21] Diner, p. 205.

[22] Antler, pp. 250-53; and A. Cantor (1995), *Jewish Women, Jewish Men: The Legacy of Patriarchy in Jewish Life*. HarperSanFrancisco, pp. 353-354.

[23] Antler, p. 2; and M. Kaye/Kantrowitz (1986), *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology*. Beacon Press.

Antisemitism might therefore have been considered the dirty little secret of a feminist movement that tolerated Jewish exclusion, ironically as it became more inclusive. But there is evidence of Second Wave Feminist antisemitism being expressed quite openly. During this period, the international feminist movement that emerged has had a long history of conflating what Pogrebin has described as "selective nationalism" with feminism, making the Israel-Palestine conflict a feminist issue, casting Israel in the oppressor role, denying the legitimacy of the Jewish State, and paying little regard to the women's issues specific to Israelis or Palestinians. Ultimately, the Israel-Palestine conflict would become a litmus test of true belief in multicultural (and later intersectional) feminism, placing many Jewish feminists in an embattled position, especially as this trend involved a leftist anti-Semitism that both marginalized Jewish women and denied the particularity of their experience.[24] Many non-Jewish feminists, including white ones, showed little compunction about referencing antisemitic stereotypes, both gender-specific and general. For example, Chesler recounted in her recent memoir, A Politically Incorrect Feminist, how her friend and colleague, Jill Johnston "was not pleased…that I was a Jew at a time when Jill believed that 'the Jews' seemed to have taken over the feminist movement." Chesler also recounted how Johnston asked her if she thought that the Jews were taking over the feminist movement. The two ended up arguing about it, inspiring Chesler's first resolve to visit Israel. Chesler and Johnson somehow managed to remain friends, but this anecdote was emblematic of the hostility that Jewish women could encounter among self-described radical feminists.[25] Feminist antisemitism drew on a lot of sources of Jew-hatred, including religious (Christian feminists identifying sexism and patriarchy solely with Judaism, or neo-pagans blaming Jews for killing the pagan Goddess).[26] But by the mid-1970s, antisemitism in the Second Wave Feminist movement would take on an increasingly political edge—and be increasingly influenced by anti-Zionism.

THE EFFECTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES

For Jewish activists in the Second Wave Feminist movement, the most brutal awakening therefore came at the conferences of the United Nations Decade for Women that took place between 1975 and 1985. These conferences, arranged by the United Nations to study and report on the conditions of women worldwide, began by focusing a singular spotlight on the State of Israel, and declaring it the worst offender in all the human rights and women's issues raised in the conference. It also, for the first time, formally made anti-Zionism a feminist criterion. This began at the Mexico City conference of 1975, when activists of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) introduced the infamous "Zionism is racism" resolution, approving it at the conference for its subsequent introduction to the U.N. General Assembly. This and other attacks on Israel soon dominated the conference and was also the formal beginning of an international/intercultural feminism that seemed determined to not only exclude Jews, but to make anti-Zionism a litmus test. It also heralded the beginning of modern anti-Zionism[27] as a phenomenon that was linkable to antisemitism, as well as the beginning of the association of Zionism with apartheid at a time when apartheid still held sway in South Africa. Although the shell-shocked Jewish women delegates received some support among other delegates, they proved helpless to prevent the passage of the resolution, with African American delegates not only refusing to sign the petition but asking what was wrong with it. This betrayal brought out the growing reality of competing identity politics as well as the increased Black identification with the Palestinians in the name of the solidarity of international peoples of color, which brushed aside the possibility of Israeli Jews being something other than white. In the end, not only did the "Zionism is racism" resolution pass, but so did the Declaration of the Conference that included Zionism along with "colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, foreign domination and occupation" as forces that "men and women should work to eliminate." The

[24] Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 205-208, 216, 218-23, 244.
[25] Chesler, 2018, pp. 53, 73.
[26] Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 205-208, 216, 218-23, 244.
[27] As distinguished from pre-Statehood anti-Zionism, that opposed Jewish statehood for a variety of reasons, ranging from religious to practical, but dealt with a potential Jewish state rather than an existing one.

conference also passed Resolution 32, specifically calling for the elimination of Zionism and blamed Israel for the oppression of Palestinian women and children. Curiously, while the American women delegates reacted with understandable shock and dismay, their Israeli counterparts took these anti-Israel displays almost in stride, as something half expected, and to be dealt with best by pushing for both Israeli security and Palestinian self-determination. But it may have been a case that the Israeli women could stand confident in a Jewish identity that their American counterparts were still coming to terms with, and perhaps bring the sense of perspective that came from living in the embattled Jewish state.[28]

Although many of the American women delegates to the conference already identified as Jewish to varying degrees, the Mexico City conference had the effect of bringing out a Jewish (and liberal Zionist) identification as never previously. Letty Cottin Pogrebin, for example, had always identified as Zionist, but the shock of the Mexico City spurred a grappling with her Jewish identification and where it fit in with feminism. This grappling continued when she and the other Jewish women delegates to the Mexico City conference were invited to Israel for a government-subsidized tour in appreciation of their efforts to petition against the "Zionism is Racism" resolution. The tour was notable in that while it was designed to highlight the "best of Israel" and its institutions, participants were allowed the freedom to break from the set itinerary and see what and talk with whom they chose. This resulted in Pogrebin and others learning about Israel's own then-nascent feminist movement, at the time approximately twenty years behind its American counterpart, and furthermore hampered by factors ranging from the official control of Israel's religious life by the state-appointed rabbinate to the dismissal of feminism as a side issue when Israel's survival appeared at stake. The tour also featured an engrossing, but for these feminist activists, disappointing meeting with former Prime Minister Golda Meir, whose pioneering role as a female head of government had not sensitized her to feminist concerns. Nonetheless, Pogrebin and her colleagues came away with a new appreciation of Israel, though hardly an uncritical one, whether it came to women's issues or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[29]

In the years between the Mexico City Conference and the mid-decade UN Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980, Jewish feminist activists hoped that increased awareness of this phenomenon of antisemitism in the international women's movement could help them avoid getting blindsided a second time, and thus organized and built coalitions against a repeat of the isolation they experienced. But their efforts proved unable to head off the problems that if anything became worse at the Copenhagen conference, fulfilling the worst fears of some of the American Jewish women delegates, a few of whom were reluctant even to go. And once there, as Chesler wrote about, under the pseudonym "Regina Schreiber," there was what amounted to a hijacking of women's issues at the conference, all to advance the agenda of the then Soviet Union, with Israel as the convenient scapegoat in what was underneath an anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-capitalist agenda. But regardless of the motives behind it, the conference became a site of terror for the Jewish women delegates.[30]

If anything, at this conference, the hostility was more overt, with even less pretense that it was simply about Israel and included such tactics as shouting down delegates and repeating canards, so that facts and viewpoints favorable to Israel could not be articulated, as well as using roving bands intended specifically to disrupt panels that might include Jewish and/or Israeli speakers. And contrary to popular stereotypes of Jewish female aggressiveness, the Jewish women were not at all prepared to push back, as Chesler suggested, because they were too concerned about becoming like their enemies. Chesler also spoke of the "castration done to Jewish women are more privileged economically, who are volunteers, who are not yet feminists," and who were unable to speak up for themselves, the Jewish people, or Israel. She also acknowledged the general shellshock the Jewish women delegates experienced, paralyzed as they were by

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[28] Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 219-20, 223.

[29] Pogrebin, 1991, pp.167-81, 186-94, 219-220, 223; and Millstein, p. 200.

[30] P. Chesler (1981), "Copenhagen One Year Later," *Lilith Magazine* 22. Retrieved from https://lilith.org/articles/copenhagen-one-year-later/.

the expectation and even pressure not to push back. Only later into the conference were they able to mount a rearguard effort with the formation of a Jewish Women's Caucus and "truth squads."[31]

Some of the Jewish women's experiences were downright physically threatening, as was the case with the declaration of Palestinian airplane hijacker Leila Khaled, who responded to the Israeli delegate Shulamit Aloni's offer to talk with the reply that she would do so only "through a gun." Similarly, American Jewish delegate Phyllis Chesler overhead an Egyptian delegate declare "You cannot sit down at a table with the Israeli unless you have a knife. You stab her under the table. You stab her over the table." That remarks like these were aimed at the Israeli rather than the American Jewish women made them no less chilling, especially when accompanied by ones that did, notably the assertion that "the only good Jew is a dead Jew" and a call to "kill all Jews" in order to rid the world of Zionism. One event at the conference that made the overall agenda particularly clear was a panel on refugees from which Jewish voices were officially excluded. During the rare moment when Jewish women got an audience microphone, one delegate handed it to Simcha Chorish, an Iraqi Jewish woman who had been a refugee, and would likely have qualified as person of color in this setting. But even Chorish's non-white identity did not help her get recognized—one of the Jewish delegates had to threaten the moderator to allow her even to speak and when Chorish did, she was almost physically attacked and then interrupted in the middle of her two-minute speech. Although Chesler and others judged the Copenhagen conference to be even worse than its predecessor in Mexico City, they did not lack non-Jewish allies, among them ex-Mormon feminist activist Sonia Johnson. Nor was it due to the limits of their own rearguard efforts to fight back with the formation of a Jewish women's caucus. In fact, one of the Conference's most memorable moments came when Bella Abzug publicly pushed back against accusations that Israel's Law of Return, granting automatic citizenship to immigrating Jews, was racist with the assertion that the Law of Return was nothing more than "affirmative action on a national scale."[32]

In reflecting back on why these conferences were so blatantly hostile not only to Israel, but to Jews, it is important to consider several factors. First, the delegates reflected the composition and politics of the U.N. during this period, which saw a shift from the domination of Europe and North America to growing power and influence of non-white countries from the region now called the Global South (though this did not explain the antisemitism encountered in the subgroups). It also in many ways reflected the reality of a feminism that appeared to be less critical of anti-woman beliefs and practices among non-white and non-Western cultures, a phenomenon that Chesler has continued to write about nearly forty years later, immediately noting how this selective deference, along with the ostracization of Jewish and Israeli women, prevented even solidarity efforts on behalf of women who suffered oppression under Jewish or Islamic law. And beyond white feminist guilt, there was the reality of Black and non-Western activists tending to automatically side with the Palestinians when it came to Israel, accompanied by the general silencing of putative allies for "deferring to the Jewish agenda," and denying the legitimacy of Jewish identity. In addition, many non-Jewish American delegates, especially non-whites, were complicit in marginalizing Jewish concerns, and as in Mexico City in 1975, denied there was anything wrong with claiming that Zionism is racism. In fact, as Chesler reported, the Black women who supported the resolution accused the Jewish women opposing it of not caring about racism or Black women and of being privileged for being better off economically than Black women. And even many non-Jewish delegates who were not actively attacking Jewish women still refused to intervene in the attacks.[33]

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[31] Chesler, 1981; and Millstein, p. 201.

[32] Pogrebin, 1991, p. 156-7; and Antler, p 329.

[33] P. Chesler (2005), *The Death of Feminism: What's Next in the Struggle for Women's Freedom*. Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 1-9; Milstein, p. 202, 215-219; and Chesler, 1981.

EXPOSURE AND DIALOGUE

But for the American Jewish women who returned even more shell-shocked from Copenhagen than they had from Mexico City, their troubles were not over. They would experience disbelief, and accusations of exaggeration of the problem, and even of paranoia, as well as accusations of not being sufficiently feminist for bringing Jewish concerns to the forefront. Alternately, they experienced the indifference of sister feminists that by this time had become distressingly familiar. Chesler, however, partially blamed things on a lack of preparation by American Jewish and Israeli women. So the lessons learned from their experience included "Don't go it alone. Build bridges and networks." And in the years between Copenhagen and the UN's End of the Decade Women's Conference in 1985, Chesler and her colleagues would devote themselves to these very efforts, beginning in 1981 with the formation of Feminists Against anti-Semitism, a group designed to both raise consciousness about and offer support against antisemitism within the feminist movement and beyond. One of the group's first efforts was to present a panel on the topic of "Anti-Semitism: The Unacknowledged Racism" at the 1981 National Women's Studies Association Conference in 1981, an event that marked Chesler's "coming out" as a Zionist.[34] These efforts would be the beginning of a dedicated larger movement to integrate the experience of Jewish women as Jews into feminist circles, and moved many Jewish feminists to no longer tolerate an ideal of universal sisterhood that denied Jewish particularity, or even a feminism that recognized and honored every particularity except that of Jews. And it would be the beginning of a shift in the lives and outlook of many Jewish feminists who had previously regarded their Jewishness as something to be denied or downplayed.[35]

One of the most notable of the transformations was that of Letty Cottin Pogrebin, whose feminist credentials included being one of the founding editors of Ms. Magazine. As will be described later in this article, she was a comparative latecomer to Jewish feminism. But the ordeal in Mexico City and Copenhagen inspired her to write one of her best-known articles, "Antisemitism in the Women's Movement," which along with her later memoir, Deborah, Golda, and Me, made her one of the most prominent figures in the Second Wave Jewish Feminist movement. The article itself grew out of her awareness that the attacks at the conference came not only from international delegates, but from her own putative non-Jewish American "sisters." Although the article was specifically in response to the Copenhagen conference, much of what Pogrebin had to say became disturbingly timeless. For example, she was particularly critical of the Black women delegates' refusal to oppose the Zionism-is-racism resolution, likely as a quid-pro-quo to get an anti-Apartheid resolution passed, and her singling out Black women's inaction on behalf of Jews may have incurred Black ire. But even more saliently, she spoke about the still-distressing phenomenon of disbelief about "Jewish paranoia" among feminists who would immediately recognize "female paranoia" as unacceptable.

Her article also identified the key barriers to the inclusion of Jews in proto-intersectional feminism. Most notable among them was the failure to see the parallels between sexism and antisemitism, including the way women and Jews both served as the scapegoat-able buffers within power structures, and the reality that both prejudices transcended class considerations. Regarding the latter, Pogrebin called out leftist antisemitism for its failure to consider a hate that did not easily fall into class analysis the way racism did. While fully acknowledging the existence of antisemitism from the political right, she explained why the antisemitism of the left was "old and familiar" in its failure to acknowledge that a rise into the middle class did not equal the safety of a group or being simply part of the oppressor group. Implicitly addressing the exclusion of Jewish women from proto-intersectional feminism, Pogrebin spoke of "the three I''—Invisibility, Insult, and Internalized oppression. In explaining these, she described how Jewish women's specificity was not honored within the feminist movement the way other identities (including those of non-Jewish white

[34] "Women Respond to Racism: National Women's Studies Association Third Annual Conference," (1981), p. 9; and Antler, p. 331.

[35] Milstein, p. 219; and D. Pinsky (2001), *Jewish Feminists: Complex Identities and Activist Lives*. University of Illinois Press, pp. 68-79.

ethnics) routinely were, a phenomenon also recounted by other Jewish feminists from this period.[36] Pogrebin also reported shameless antisemitic stereotyping within the movement, often influenced by Jewish cultural differences that (ironically) did not fit into "white" norms. And Pogrebin did not mince words in pointing out how Jewish feminists could be their own worst enemies, having long internalized the expectation to fight for everyone's rights except their own, and to be the most universal in their outlook, even at the expense of their own people, something that the postwar social whitening of American Jews may have contributed to.

One of the most poignant sections of Pogrebin's article address the issues between Blacks and Jews that were in some ways at the heart of the controversy and illustrated the perils of (proto) intersectionality in the feminist movement of this period. She spoke of "the competition of tears" regarding the lingering effects of the Holocaust and slavery, and in the process, named the then unnamed intersectionality and identified why neither Black nor Jewish women could simply be feminists. She also spoke (with some understandable chutzpah) about the need for Black women to acknowledge their antisemitism, almost in counterpoint to (white) Jewish women "confronting their racism." She cited examples of Black antisemitism, some the product of stereotypes, others influenced by Black experience with white Jewish mistreatment. In trying to unpack certain Black assumptions about Jews, she also cited one area where intersectional considerations went unacknowledged—the presumed Jewish opposition to affirmative action, that Jewish women, as women, benefitted from. Pogrebin's conclusion—that non-Jews, regardless of race, need to take responsibility for ending antisemitism (just as much as whites must for ending racism), may have been part of what made the article so controversial, with its proto-intersectional pushing back and challenging the assumption that Jews were just another subset of whites.

Pogrebin's article became the one of the most widely read in Ms. Magazine's history and made Pogrebin a star within the then not very feminism-friendly Jewish establishment from which she had been previously alienated. The article also generated a good deal of backlash from the feminist movement, some supported by the rest of the Ms. Editorial board, which among the many letters received—most of which supported Pogrebin's thesis—printed only a handful, all of which (one written by Alice Walker) denied or minimized Pogrebin's arguments. The editorial board also invited "further dialogue" on antisemitism, something that as Pogrebin pointed out, none would have considered with a similar article about racism within the women's movement. Still, Pogrebin maintained that good came out of the article's publication, in that it forced out the feminist movement's "dirty little secret" into the open and inspired the first genuine attempts to address it. The article named many issues that continue to resonate in the intersectional feminist movement, including the particular issues that divided Blacks and Jews.[37]

THE BLACK-JEWISH DIALOGUES: THE PROMISES AND LIMITS OF INTERSECTIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Pogrebin's efforts to bridge this divide included convening a set of Black-Jewish women's dialogues, partially as a more concerted effort to head off problems at the approaching 1985 women's conference in Nairobi. In organizing the dialogues, she created two groups—one specifically devoted to preparation for the Nairobi conference and the other smaller group, intended as an ongoing effort to bridge the divide between Black and Jewish women that could negate the commonality of gender. These dialogues brought out of the question of why the focus on Jews and Blacks as opposed to Jews and any other non-white group. While it could be ascribed to the long and more troubled than acknowledged relationship between the two groups, along with the recognition that despite or sometimes because of these troubles, each group singularly mattered to each other. But just as significantly, each group's relationship to feminism could be described as "it's complicated." Decades before intersectionality was named, the dialogues would bring out the sometimes necessarily conflicting and competing loyalties of feminists on both sides. While these differing

[36] Dollinger, p. 130.
[37] Antler, pp. 333-35 L. C. Pogrebin (1982), "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement," *Ms. Magazine*, June 1982; and Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 203-231.

priorities would lead to impasses, they were also valuable in clarifying the issues at hand to create a more genuine basis for intergroup solidarity.

Probably the most palpable example of the gap appeared in the different sides' reactions to the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro as the first woman Vice Presidential candidate in 1984. Pogrebin noted how the Black women did not share the Jewish women's joy in her nomination, as an advancement for all women. Rather, Black women saw Ferraro's being white as diminishing her nomination's significance, reflecting the comparative lack of Black access to mainstream political power decades before Barack Obama became the first Black President and, most recently, Kamala Harris as the first Black and female Vice President. Pogrebin likewise acknowledged that a Jewish male candidate might not have brought Jewish women the same feeling of advancement for Jewish women (though the selection of Joseph Lieberman in 2000 likely brought a sense of advancement of Jews). The Ferraro issue, though, was in many ways a symptom of the chicken-and-egg question regarding Black women's lack of participation in mainstream feminism during this period—was it caused by middle-class white women dominating and shaping the agenda or the other way around? Yet some intersectional commonalities managed to shine through, especially regarding the necessary strength of both Black and Jewish women being seen as problematic, and how that influenced gender relations within each group. Conversely, Pogrebin came to acknowledge how for Black women, race was inescapable as an identity marker, whereas at least (not then named) white Jewish women had the white skin privilege to be able to "feel like women first." Likewise, she acknowledged how Black (Christian), and white (Jewish) women saw each other first by race, rather than by religion.[38]

The dialogues moved forward on the strength of the participants on both sides, all who were deeply committed activists, both within the women's movement and within their respective group's movements. The organizers sought to maintain an equal balance of Black and Jewish women and was moderated by then future Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, an Arab American. The key issues that the organizers sought to address included the competing priorities of race/ethnicity versus gender—that included the effects of racism on Black men and antisemitism on Jewish men, and "the politics of survival"—including different ideas of survival. While the Holocaust was a more recent and palpable reality then than now, there was difficulty conveying Jewish fears to the Black women in the group, who understandably saw Jews as having power and privilege, and did not immediately recognize the Jewish fear of a good situation ending, a fear that in recent times has sadly proven to be prescient. This in turn was part of each side's different worries—discouragement with the present vs. fear for the future and differing primary needs—acceptance vs. assistance. Not surprisingly, there would be unresolvable sticking points, about which the participants finally had to agree to disagree. And as Pogrebin noted, the Jewish participants reported greater satisfaction with the process than their Black counterparts, as the latter wanted the talk to lead to action, whereas for the former, being able to talk was enough. Nonetheless, most of the participants saw the value of the dialogues in making personal connections in which emotional and intellectual honesty prevailed and understood the limits when it came to seeing eye to eye.[39]

And in the dialogues finally did serve the purpose of preparation for the Nairobi conference, a preparation that when it came to dealing with anti-Israel forces at the conference, made the difference between disruption and derailment. Which is not to say that either these dialogues, or similar ones between Israeli and Palestinian women, were able to totally head off the anti-Israel efforts, especially in the wake of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon to root out Palestinian guerillas, which resulted in the deaths of many civilians at

[38] The White House Historical Association (2024), "Barack Obama." Retrieved from https://www.whitehousehistory.org/bios/barack-obama; Pogrebin,1991, pp. 277-78. 281-82; M Powell (2000), "Veep Choice Barrels into the Barriers: Unlike other 'Firsts,' Candidate Isn't Safety in the Mainstream." Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2000/08/08/veep-choice-barrels-into-the-barriers/8cad3217-33c3-48f2-9dac-eb1fa82dd386/; and E. Ralph (2020), "Finally, a Female VP Isn't Being Set up to Fail." Retrieved from https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/08/14/female-vp-395571.

[39] Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 286-96, 306-311.

the hands of a Christian group known as the Phalangists (for which Israel was blamed).[40] The Nairobi conference was not free of anti-Israel activism, which even included anti-Zionist Jewish delegates. But the presence of a record number of Jewish attendees helped to build bridges among each other and present a united front against the continued efforts to link Israel with South African apartheid. In the end, the Jewish delegates reported a mini victory in the removal of the "Zionism is racism" clause from the concluding report, which managed not to contain any references to Israel.[41] But the (mostly) successful efforts of American Jewish feminists to proactively deal with these problems, for better and worse, was not the end of the story.

CONTRASTING LONG-TERM RESPONSES TO FEMINIST ANTI-SEMITISM

If the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic attacks at the UN conferences left emotional scars, it also inspired many of the Jewish delegates to return to their roots and ended up further strengthening the existing secular Jewish feminist movement. In the decades following, however, some would take vastly different paths and different approaches to what would evolve into the modern multicultural and intersectional feminist movement. Although by this time, many Jewish feminist activists identified as Jewish, partially inspired by other separatist feminist movements as well as in response to antisemitism, their approaches to even proto-intersectional considerations varied widely.[42] And the two Jewish feminist activists from this era who are still voices in contemporary Jewish feminism, and illustrated the extent of this variance, were none other than Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Phyllis Chesler.

Both Pogrebin and Chesler grew up with strong, traditional Jewish backgrounds that they largely abandoned in early adulthood, only to return to them as a refuge in the wake of the outbreak of anti-Semitism in the international women's movement. Pogrebin grew up in a traditional Conservative Jewish household with an American-born father who was both Jewishly learned and a leader in the community and a first-generation immigrant mother who first concern was to Americanize and recreate herself as an American Jewish housewife, even to the point of keeping her previous marriage a secret. Pogrebin was raised in a mostly observant environment, and somewhat unusually for a girl of her generation, had a Bat Mitzvah, albeit the "traditional" limited version that took place on Friday night rather than Saturday morning as with a boy's Bar Mitzvah.[43]

Pogrebin would temporarily turn away from Judaism as a teenager, when her mother died and, like so many Jewish women mourners until recently, was denied the opportunity to say the kaddish (the traditional mourner's prayer). Her resulting alienation for a time also extended to a degree to Zionism, given that her father's leadership in the movement during her childhood took him away from his family in ways that included thinking nothing of taking a personal trip to pre-state Palestine just before she was born, leaving her mother alone with a baby on the way. Although Pogrebin married a Jewish spouse, she raised her children with minimal and mostly home-based Judaism, and professionally preoccupied herself with feminism. But feminism would also enable her to return to active Jewish participation, beginning with serving as an amateur High Holidays cantor for a vacationers' congregation on Fire Island, a barrier island off New York's Long Island.[44]

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[40] E. Ya'ari and Z. Schiff (1984), *Israel's Lebanon War*. ed. and trans. I. Friedman. Simon & Schuster, pp. 263, 273.

[41] Antler, pp. 338-41; Milstein, p. 206; and Pogrebin, 1991, p.161.

[42] Antler, pp. 354-8; and Pinsky, pp. 78-9.

[43] P. E. Hyman, "Bat Mitzvah," Jewish Women's Archive, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/bat-mitzvah-american-jewish-women (Accessed September 19, 2019); J. W. Joselit (1994), *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950*. Henry Holt and Co., pp. 129-32; and Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 3-6,9-11, 16-18, 20-23,33-36, 128.

[44] B. W. Cook (1998) "Bella Abzug, "In P.E. Hyman and D. D. Moore, *Jewish Women in America*. Routleldge, 6-7; and Pogrebin, 1991, pp. 42-43, 51-55, 89-95.

Chesler grew up in an Orthodox environment, and in her own words, eventually grew away from it. Even more than Pogrebin, she was alienated from organized Judaism upon realizing that it offered no place for her passion for learning. Unlike with Pogrebin, for Chesler celebrating a Bat Mitzvah was simply out of the question. On the other hand, Chesler grew up and remained well-grounded in Leftist Zionism thanks to her participation in the socialist-oriented HaShomer Hatzair youth movement. She became a licensed psychologist and pioneering scholar/professor in Women's Studies, and throughout her career has identified as a "radical feminist" and "liberation psychologist." But like Pogrebin, while her feminism was always guided by her Jewish background, her Jewish identification took a backseat to her feminist one in adulthood, until the outbreak of antisemitism in the Second Wave Feminist movement forced it to the forefront.[45]

Before that, her feminism was influenced by a disastrous marriage to her Afghan sweetheart that included a horrific sojourn in his home country, before managing to escape after several failed attempts, and getting the marriage annulled. The experience permanently soured her on what she would come to see as uncritical intersectional feminist deference to non-Western cultures. It also shaped her towards a belief in what she called "feminism without borders" that recognized that "women who live on different continents and belong to different cultures will transform feminist ideas to suit their needs." It additionally pushed her more closely to Judaism, and decidedly un-leftist (though not entirely uncritical) support for Israel. She first visited Israel in 1972, where she became one of the founding members of the International Committee for Women of the Kotel, the beginning of an ongoing movement for women's rights to group prayer services at the Western Wall, which remains run according to strict interpretations of Orthodox Judaism that restricts women's group prayer at this site. She also became a founding activist in the early Israeli feminist movement.[46]

Pogrebin and Chesler both came of age as Jewish feminists in the wake of the UN debacle, but also in an environment of both the decline of domestic antisemitism among the American mainstream and the rise of religious-based Jewish feminism. The changes resulting from the latter included the creation of new rituals such as the Women's Seder, initially an annual event by and for the core group of Jewish women activists including Pogrebin and Chesler, and subsequently copied to become possibly the most popular "themed" Seder in Jewish history.[47] But the unaddressed anti-Semitism of multicultural and later intersectional feminism caused Chesler and Pogrebin to make almost diametrically opposite responses that in turn have exposed both the pitfalls and promises of intersectionality in the modern feminist movement. I will examine each's response in turn.

Pogrebin, who in her memoir articulated her own succinct proto-intersectional philosophy that "forced choices are false choices," showed willingness to urge both her non-Jewish feminist and non-feminist Jewish critics to understand the difference an intersectional understanding of women's realities makes. She acknowledges that in the early years of the movement "millions of disparate women accentuated female commonality in order to create a unified feminist movement," likening this early stage "to the time when Blacks and Jews accentuated their common dream of justice in order to create a unified Civil Rights movement," a time that has since been acknowledged to be more brief and illusory than portrayed.[48] But now, she argued, "feminists are acknowledging that each woman has a different place and different needs," and that "racial and ethnic groups have had to face up to their unique circumstances, which give rise to different demands and solutions"—both of which have been the challenge of intersectional feminism ever

[45] P. Chesler (2019a), Statement, Jewish Women's Archive. Retrieved from https://jwa.org/feminism/chesler-phyllis; and T. Cohen (2021), "Phyllis Chesler," Jewish Women's Archive. Retrieved from https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/chesler-phyllis.

[46] Cohen; and Chesler, 2018, pp. 75-100, 130.

[47] L. Berkowitz (2016, "Celebrating Women's Seders vs. Celebrating Women at the Seder." Retrieved from https://jwa.org/blog/celebrating-women-s-seders-vs-celebrating-women-at-seder; E.M. Broner (1983), *The Telling: The Story of a Group of Jewish Women who Journey to Spirituality through Community and Ceremony*. Harper; Broner and N. Nimrod (1994), *The Women's Haggadah*. Harper; Chesler, 2018, pp,151-152; and Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, 119-27.

[48] Dollinger, pp. 5-8, 12, 15,18-20, 22.

since. And while she admitted her "utopian self" regretted the way identity politics had displaced the idea of commonality; her "pragmatic self" came to realize the necessity of just that. And while Pogrebin rejected a free pass for a Black embrace of antisemitism, she maintained the necessity of understanding different priorities for women of different races and ethnicities. She also still tried to emphasize the reality of Blacks and Jews as outsiders who "insist on being let 'in' without having to pay the price of conformity"—initially being slow to acknowledge that was always much easier for white Jews than for Black people. But she also eventually acknowledged the necessity of white Jewish women to be willing to give even in situations where understanding was not reciprocated—adding "this is not about comfort or social symmetry, it's about justice." By the 2000s, Pogrebin asserted that antisemitism was no longer a problem in the women's movement, a position that attracted Chesler's criticism and that may have predated the most recent problems for Jewish feminists, and that she has recently very much recanted in the wake of the international feminist community's devasting responses and non-responses to the sexual violence against Israeli women and girls in the most recent war.[49]

Chesler, by contrast, emerged from the battles of the Second Wave Feminist movement far gloomier about the prospects for Jewish inclusion in intersectional feminism. Early on, she had supported and provided the information for Pogrebin's groundbreaking article on antisemitism within the Second Wave Feminist movement. But in recent times, she has criticized Pogrebin for the latter's apparent leftward shift over the subsequent decades since the UN conferences, that has included Pogrebin's becoming more pro-Palestinian and denying that antisemitism was still a problem in the women's movement—at least prior to the recent Women's Marches, when Pogrebin spoke out against the March's exclusion of Jewish women, and most recently, when Pogrebin publicly decried the international feminist movement's non-response to Hamas's sexual violence against in the most recent war. Over the years, Chesler has decried the "political correctness" that she sees as privileging marginalized groups while marginalizing women within these groups. She has also noted the increased trend towards anti-Israelism among feminists, even Jewish feminists, and argues that Israel has become the scapegoat for white American feminist guilt. Though still identifying as a radical feminist and never disavowing feminism, Chesler can appear to many contemporary progressive feminists to have made a hard-right turn, through her willingness to call out what she sees as Western progressive deference to anti-woman Islamism. She has also become a passionate defender of Israel and Zionism and has continued to write about the challenge of being both a radical feminist and a Zionist. And ironically, after having earlier abandoned Orthodoxy as a Jewish feminist, as she deemed more and more intersectional "safe spaces" to be anything but for Jewish women, she has found hers in a friendly Orthodox synagogue, mainly because, "I do not have to fight about Israel's right to exist with any congregant and I am not subject to sermons which are essentially secular pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel propaganda." Chesler's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict, which has evolved to her becoming more unabashedly pro-Israel (as well as pro-United States) than most feminists, has included criticism of what she sees as too-automatic sympathy with the Palestinians that has put her at odds even with the left-leaning Israeli feminist movement. She has also, at great personal cost, focused on calling out the rising antisemitism that had emerged with little opposition, and sometimes activist encouragement, from the political left (including the feminist movement), and her principal work on this subject, The New Antisemitism, is now in its second edition. And in a political and intellectual journey chronicled in her recent, tellingly titled memoirs, A Politically Incorrect Feminist and The Death of Feminism, her most devastating critique of intersectional feminism is, ironically, that in privileging factors such as race, religion, and ethnicity, it ends up becoming not only not pro-woman, but actively harmful to women, by excusing oppression of women when it comes from those who are non-white and/or non-Western, and publicly laments what has gone wrong with the proto-intersectional Second Wave

[49] L. C. Pogrebin (2023), "Jew-Hating is not a New Feminist Phenomenon," *Forward*. Retrieved from https://forward.com/opinion/573448/israel-hamas-sexual-violence-feminist-oct-7/.

Feminist movement she had worked so hard to build.[50] Both Pogrebin and Chesler have long grappled with the problem of including Jewish women in a more diverse feminist movement, down to the present.

CONCLUSION: INTERSECTIONALITY AS PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

The problems of Jewish women in the pro-intersectional Second Wave Feminist movement have many lessons for addressing current problems with intersectional feminism. Jewish feminists of this era dealt with similar issues as their contemporary counterparts, including the even by then automatic association of Jewishness with whiteness. This association was perhaps even stronger palpably at a time when Jews of color, let alone Jewish feminists of color, were not yet a widely recognized presence, the way they are increasingly becoming as the percentage of Jews of color in the American Jewish population is currently estimated at twelve to fifteen percent (and that may be an undercount).[51] Also, Israel was a complicating factor even then, though in times past, the Cold War efforts of the Soviet Union to bring in Israel as part of the problematic West was a factor. And antisemitism as the one acceptable prejudice in a movement striving for inclusion and multiculturality has its origins in the Second Wave Feminist movement. Having uncovered the historicity of this issue, however, it may be concluded that the intersectional feminism that has developed over the decades is here to stay, and Chesler's rejectionism appears unlikely to gain much traction.

The way forward, therefore, for Jewish feminists may be a return to the essence of what intersectionality as Crenshaw first articulated it is, and a willingness to apply it to promoting understanding of Jewish women's experience in all of its diversity.[52] This means turning the lens of intersectionality inward to give attention to the voices and experience of American Jewish women who don't fit the white, heterosexual, middle-class Ashkenazi mold, voices that have been increasingly raised since the 1980s, and first formally articulated in the now-classic Tribe of Dina.[53] It also means using intersectionality to promote a more nuanced view of Jewish whiteness, by, as David Schraub has suggested, allowing for the way whiteness and Jewishness themselves intersect, but do not automatically go together.[54]

Intersectionality and its predecessors, in all their uses and abuses, have profoundly shaped the recent American Jewish narrative since the post-World War II era, and nowhere more so than when it comes to Jewish women's history.[55] Though Jews are hardly the only group who has faced pressure to shed differences to be accepted, they have been the most likely to feel this pressure from the revolutionary and progressive movements that allowed and encouraged most other minorities to maintain their identities. In addition, the American Jewish postwar identification as white made it possible for Jews to be classified that way by purported allies on the left, thus falling on the wrong side of the white/nonwhite and European

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[50] "Phyllis Chesler," (2019). Retrieved from https://muckrack.com/phyllis-chesler/articles; Chesler (2014), *The New Antisemitism*. Gefen Publishing House; Chesler (2018); Chesler (2009), *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*. Lawrence Hill Books; L. Perry (2019), "How a Feminist Prophet became an Apostate—An Interview with Dr. Phyllis Chesler." Retrieved from https://quillette.com/2019/06/20/how-a-feminist-prophet-became-an-apostate-an-interview-with-dr-phyllis-chesler/; and Pogrebin, 1991, p.308.

[51] I. Kaufman and A. Kelman (2019), "Jews of Color and Who Counts in the Jewish Community." Retrieved from https://www.timesofisrael.com/jews-of-color-and-who-counts-in-the-jewish-community/.

[52] J. Branfman (2019), "Teaching for the Coalition: Dismantling the 'Jewish-Progressive Conflict Through Feminist and Queer Pedagogy," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 40: 2, pp. 126-66; J. Kirchick (2016), "How Intersectionality Makes You Stupid," *Tablet Magazine*. Retrieved from https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/196754/intersectionality-makes-you-stupid; and D. Schraub (2019), "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *AJS Review* 43:2, pp. 1-29.

[53] Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Woman's Anthology*

[54] Schraub, pp. 3-6.

[55] C. Levine-Rasky (2008), "White Privilege: Jewish Women's Writing and the Instability of Categories," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 7:1, pp. 51-53.

colonial/indigenous dichotomy that has been further affected by the conflation of domestic feminism and the Israel-Palestine conflict.[56] One may conclude, therefore, that when it comes to anti-Semitism on the Left, there is disturbingly nothing new under the sun.[57] Intersectionality, as properly understood, can help break this impasse by educating activists about how all oppressions are not the same. But even with these lessons of history, doing so may be an uphill battle. As Pogrebin wrote much more recently, in response to the exclusion of Jewish women's concerns from the Women's March, "Until all of us understand that racism and anti-Semitism are the same toxic madness split at the root, and until we embrace intersectionality without defining any woman out, our struggle against sexism and racism will be hobbled by our squabbles with one another." [58]

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[57] Rosenblum; and Schraub, pp. 1-2.

[58] L. C. Pogrebin (2018), "Anti-Semitism and the Women's March," Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*.

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