

CONVERSATION WITH... **Gloria Z. Greenfield**

Producer of “Unmasked: Judeophobia: and the Threat to Civilization”
A film that reveals the rising tide of a resurgent and lethal antisemitism

GREENWICH — Jews are under assault by a force more menacing than terrorism or war. A new documentary film, “Unmasked: Judeophobia and the Threat to Civilization,” posits that Jews are facing the possible uprooting of the very idea that the Jewish people should have a nation-state. What are the implications for civilization of the political assault against the Jewish people and their right to self-determination?

On Jan. 30, director and producer Gloria Z. Greenfield of Doc Emet Productions will introduce the film and answer questions after the screening, which is co-sponsored by JCC Greenwich and ADL Connecticut. Recently, the Ledger spoke with Greenfield about the making of “Unmasked.”

Q: What does “Unmasked” introduce into the discussion on anti-Jewish racism that hasn’t been looked at before?

A: The 1975 UN Resolution equating Zionism with racism served as the global debut of a new, sophisticated, virulent, and lethal strain of antisemitism that portrays the collective body of Jews, Israelis, and Zionists as the evil power in the world and the Jewish state’s existence as the source of the world’s ills. And yet, in an era when human rights is considered by many to be the universal secular religion, there is silence about the resurgence of lethal antisemitism that, as Harvard professor Ruth Wisse expresses in the film, is being expressed in the Arab and Muslim countries, a generative force that we can see at work in the United Nations, which we can see working its way into Europe again, and which we can see coming home on North American campuses.

Q: Explain your choice of the title, “Judeophobia.”

A: Wilhelm Barr, a German who Bernard Lewis describes as “a minor Jew-baiting journalist with no other claim to memory,” coined the term “anti-Semitism” and “anti-Semite” in 1879. Today, these terms are not adequate descriptors. They were based on a racialist distinction between “Semitic” and “Aryan/Indo-European.” Furthermore, the term “anti-Semitism” implies a distinction against all “Semites.” So we face the absurd situation where Jew-haters like Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan claim the identity of “Semite” in order to make the case that they themselves are victims of “anti-Semitism” as a means of deflecting the fact of their being anti-Jewish racists themselves. While there is a growing movement in the academy to utilize “antisemitism” as a replacement for the problematic term “anti-Semitism,” “Judeophobia” is a more suitable term to convey the intellectualized and ideologized hatred of Jews that is encompassed in the anti-Jewish phenomenon flourishing in many parts of the world today.

Q: How did you choose the interviewees for your film and what did you learn from their responses that you weren’t previously aware of?

A: Judeophobia is a complicated, heterogeneous phenomenon and I invested a significant amount of time in researching current analyses by leading experts in the field. Several scholars and analysts, including Canadian MP Irwin Cotler, Professors Alvin Rosenfeld of Indiana University and Elchanan Yakira of Hebrew University, Philippe Karsenty and Nidra Poller of Paris, Andrea Levin of CAM-ERA, were very generous in their willingness to refer me to specific experts and in many cases to make the introductions.

The time that I spent in Paris, London, and Brussels interviewing scholars, analysts, and security experts was incredibly enlightening. I was both inspired by their courage and determination, and shocked by the reality and dimensions of the Jew-hatred being expressed – physically and verbally – in Europe, particularly Western Europe.

As important, having had the privilege of engaging in a three-hour interview with Prof. Robert Wistrich, who is without a doubt the leading scholar of the history of antisemitism, afforded me an invaluable context. Much can be said for every scholar, analyst, and expert that I interviewed. The caliber of expertise and brilliance of the commentators in “Unmasked” is outstanding, and the overall experience of making this film was personally transformative.

Q: Have you encountered anyone credible out there who’s saying, “It’s not as bad as we think”?

A: I interviewed 70 leading experts – who happened to be Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim – from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, England, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, the U.S., and Venezuela in the fields of history, law, literature, media, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology. As a documentary filmmaker, that’s one of the ways that I make sure I’m getting the whole and true picture. I also engage a scholar not associated with the project to vet the script after it is completed to verify accuracy. This is not how one sets up an echo chamber.

The actual danger is the delusion that “it’s not as bad as we think.” There were people – too many people – who said the same thing at other times in history while Jewish blood was flowing in the streets. When one of the most prominent Sunni theologians alive today, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the author of 50 books, who was hailed in Tahrir Square, instructs his followers to “kill the Jews wherever you find them,” and further instructs them to murder pregnant Jewish women so that there will be fewer IDF soldiers; when the leader of

Iran declares his regime’s intent to wipe the Jewish state off the face of the map; when Israel is the only state in the world today and the Jewish people the only people in the world today that are the standing targets of public calls, state sanction calls, religious calls, terrorist calls for their destruction and for the killing of Jews, at the same time that Israel and the Jewish people are themselves accused of being genocidal and seeking to destroy humanity – when you have situations like this, anyone who says “it’s not as bad as we think,” in my humble opinion, is either a complete idiot or a dangerous person, or possibly both.

Q: Is “Unmasked” a call to action? If so, what action/s do you hope viewers will take after seeing the film?

A: Doc Emet Productions made this film because it had to be made. It is meant as a clarion call, as a tekiah gedolah blast. In Biblical times, tekiah was sounded on the shofar to raise awareness, to sound the alarm, to assemble all good people to action. We live in historic times, a time of inversion and a time when state-sanctioned calls for killing Jews and wiping the Jewish state off the map is regarded as unremarkable; when antisemites at anti-Israel demonstrations on the streets of North America, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa can chant, “Send the Jews back to the ovens” and “Hitler was right” without repercussion. My hope is that viewers will have their individual and collective consciousness raised. The lights must get turned on. It is imperative for good, decent people to recognize and acknowledge what is happening. Only then can action effect change. We may never totally eradicate antisemitism, but at the barest minimum, it is imperative that antisemitism be diminished to non-lethal levels. Genocidal Jew-hatred – whether manifested against individual Jews, the Jewish collective, or both – must be scorned, prosecuted and eradicated.

A showing of “Unmasked: Judeophobia and the Threat to Civilization” can be arranged for your organization. Call Gloria Z. Greenfield at 617-694-4257 to find out how to make this happen.

