

Re: MY REMARKS AT LAST NIGHT'S CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Middleton, Mark-Anthony

Sent: Wednesday, April 18, 2018 2:26 AM

To: Cliff Rieders [rieders@icloud.com]

Cc: Jerome Fox [jeromesfox@gmail.com]; Sheri Hoffman [sheri@betheldurham.org]; Council Members; Ari Fox [arifox99@gmail.com]; Elana Lippa [elanafox@yahoo.com]; Alice Troy [bluegown13@sbcglobal.net]; averyl@betheldurham.org; Bridget Cabibi-Wilkin [bridget.4@gmail.com]; bestgrandma@me.com; carolefox@aol.com; Dgold867 [dgold867@aol.com]; Deborah G. Golomb [dggolomb@verizon.net]; goldebbie@gmail.com; Rena Katz [groovyrena@yahoo.com]; Jonathan [jonathan@feinlaw.com]; Josh Troy [joshtroy@gmail.com]; jplitman@gmail.com; Katie Crowe [kcrowe@trinityave.org]; lawrence.kodack@duke.edu; pchemla@nc.rr.com; Rachel Greene [rachel@betheldurham.org]

Peace to you Rabbi Fox,

Thank you so much for copying the council on your missive and for your passionate advocacy. Monday night was a long and emotional affair for all of us and my hope is that in the days and weeks ahead a time for coming together and reasoning will be embraced. I will not attempt to re-litigate nor defend the council's action in this context but I do hope you will allow me to express a few things:

1. I sincerely hope you do not leave Durham.
2. I did not feign "personal hurt" on Monday evening, I actually expressed genuine offense at having a decades long career of social engagement and activism distilled down to a charge of anti-Semitism.
3. If by Hutzpah you mean an unwillingness to be intimidated into silence about my truth even when it is uncomfortable for others then I am guilty as charged.
4. Your understanding of "our Jewish mayor" being caught between a "rock and a hard place" is confounding. What rock? What hard place? Why do you seem to offer a pass for a mayor that isn't seeking one? Our mayor LED this effort with great courage and erudition. Our mayor exclusively penned the statement we voted on. In fact when I personally raised the possibility of the council taking no action at all with the mayor, he firmly stood on the position of issuing a statement. No one on this council pressured the mayor to do anything. So I ask again sir - what rock and what hard place encumbered "our Jewish mayor" that would not have informed the decision making universe for all of my council colleagues? The final vote was unanimous yet you seem to have navigated a gentler path for "our Jewish mayor". May I respectfully suggest you search your own heart before judging others.
5. I am not only "one of the other male members" of the council, I am the only African-American male on the council. I am the one who was "most infuriating" to you. The vote of the council was unanimous yet I am the one who earns the moniker of most infuriating. For a long time America has been a dangerous place for black men who speak up. The "Uppity Negro" syndrome is one that can get you arrested in a Starbucks or hung from a tree. All of my colleagues rejected and continue to reject the label of anti-Semite. What was it about my particular rejection that incensed you so? Was it my word selection or is there something going on deeper in your heart?

Perhaps it is too early now, but in due season I would like to offer you and your colleagues an opportunity to sit down at a time and place agreeable to all and to share our views. In the tradition of Midrash we can go line by line through the statement and reason together. Then perhaps we can talk about a shared vision of what a Durham for all looks like.

I am a Christian minister. The New Testament writings are wholly unintelligible unless read in the light of the prophetic majesty of Hebrew Scriptures. Our beloved Durham can not fully be "understood" without the full embrace of our Jewish brothers and sisters. May we continue to struggle and strive together to create a beloved community.

All the best,

Mark-Anthony Middleton
Member, Durham City Council

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 17, 2018, at 6:48 PM, Cliff Rieders <crieders@icloud.com> wrote:

This is a brilliant and thoughtful piece. I will make sure that it is heard in the right places. Unfortunately, the left and right now meet when it comes to singling out Israel and Jews for recrimination.

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 17, 2018, at 4:33 PM, Jerome Fox <jeromesfox@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Sheri,
Please send this out to the BE Congregation:

Dear friends,

Last night Carole and I attended the Durham City Council Meeting. I am fuming. If it weren't for the fact that our son Ari lives here and because of this wonderful congregation, I would pack up my bags and leave this city !

There were fifty speakers last night about evenly divided between pro- and anti-Israel speakers. We in the pro-Israel camp simply asked the council to remove the gratuitous singling out of the State of Israel in their statement. Because of the fear of the "militarization" of the Durham police force the council could have simply stated that it prohibits the Durham city police from accepting training by any foreign police forces. As we expected, we lost the vote. What was most infuriating to me were the remarks of each city council member saying that of course they were not anti-Semitic, but with incredible political double talk they simply had to single out the State of Israel ! This political chicanery was even demonstrated by our Jewish mayor (although I realize that he was caught between a rock and hard place.) Most infuriating were the remarks of one of the other male members of the council who had the hutzpah to pretend that he was personally hurt that the pro-Israel criticism of the council's actions ! Accolades to the VOI –the Voice of Israel committee—to Bob and Laurie Gutman, Adam Goldstein and the others whom I'm just meeting. These people worked long, grueling hours advocating for Israel and I hope will continue to do so. I and Carole intend to join and help this committee. Each speaker was only allowed two minutes to speak, below is the text of my full speech:

My name is Jerome Fox, 13 Mandy Court, Durham 27707. I am a retired Reform Rabbi, a member of Beth El Synagogue here in Durham, and currently the interim rabbi of Beth El during Rabbi Greyber's Sabbatical. I am one of the ten area rabbis who signed a letter to the Durham City Council urging it to not to condemn the State of Israel in writing its policy concerning police training.

I am a life-long Democrat; I have always considered myself a liberal. However, since moving to Durham almost three years ago, I have been horrified by the machinations of the new, far left and have for the first time in my 70 years actually considered voting Republican !

I have worked as a rabbi for forty years. All my pulpits have been south of the Mason-Dixon Line: Clarksburg-Fairmont, WV, Roanoke, VA, High Point, NC, and Hot Springs, AR. The only southern state where I have experienced anti-Semitism in the

guise of anti-Zionism has been here in North Carolina. First in High Point during the early 2000's, and much worse, recently here in Durham.

During the last week I have been confronted by Jews representing the "Jewish Voice for Peace" Without hesitation I find these individuals to be Jewish anti-Semites. Yes, the phenomenon of Jewish anti-Semitism has been a sad reality during our long history. There are always individual Jews who, rather than rejoicing in having been born or converted into the community of Israel, are unable to stand tall and be proud of our legacy, and instead try to join up with the gentile haters of Am Yisrael.

By contrast, most of my contact with Christian and Muslim individuals has been very positive. In fact, I have experienced much more philo-Semitism than anti-Semitism.!

Why am I calling members of the JVP anti-Semites ? Last Thursday, one JVPnik attended my lunch and learn. She declared that Tzahal==the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) was as evil, brutal and violent as Hamas, Hizbullah, and ISIS ! Incidentally, I am wearing my Tzahal = IDF yarmulke tonight. My wife Carole wore it yesterday during our annual Durham Holocaust Remembrance Service, explaining to those who were curious about it that Tzahal—the IDF would have been the answer to the Holocaust had it existed in 1940. Had there been the IDF it would have confronted the Nazis, perhaps thwarting their murderous plans altogether, or managing to lessen the enormity of Jewish deaths.

After calling the IDF a terror organization, the young woman representing the JVP went on to proclaim that she favored a "One-State Solution" for the Israel/Palestine conflict—one state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. I pointed out to her that if that came about, in the next decade the Palestinians would outnumber the Jews. Such a state could then "democratically" begin to de-judaize our State of Israel. Perhaps the first institution to go would be the Law of Return, which allows any Jew , anywhere on planet earth to move to and become a citizen of the State of Israel. Then, perhaps, it would abolish Hatikvah Israel's national anthem that speaks of the Jews' yearning to be a free people in the Land of Zion and Jerusalem. Then the star of David on the Israeli flag and the menorah on Israel's seal. Perhaps last elimination would be official government according supremacy of the Hebrew language.

I pointedly asked her if she would be in favor of the scenario that I painted. She answered "YES". The only significant factor to her was complete equality between all of this hypothetical state's citizens. She also erroneously called the State of Israel a "theocracy."

The State of Israel, the only tiny sliver of land on Planet Earth, run for and by Jews would no longer exist. I believe unequivocally that anyone who advocates the de-judaizing of the State of Israel is an anti-Semite.

As for the Durham City council, if your final resolution continues to defame the State of Israel: Know well that the State of Israel will continue to defend itself and prosper; and this small city in the South will be held beneath contempt by millions of people around the world

Rabbi Jerry Fox