



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

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“Political correctness does not legislate tolerance, it only organizes hatred.”

Jacques Barzun

I can't help but recall the beloved Saturday morning cartoons of our youth, in particular the Super Friends, when our superheroes were transported to the world of Bizarro. There, Superman and friends found themselves in a place where everything is the opposite, and where, curiously enough, its citizens willingly accept this inverted reality as truth.

Sadly, sometimes politics is a lot like Bizarro, especially when political correctness has been allowed to run amok. Case in point is the so-called Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that has gained momentum in recent years. Started in 2005 by Palestinian organizations in the West Bank, it seeks to “impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid effort.” It supposedly seeks an end to Israel's occupation of the territory it secured when it was attacked in 1967, an area that remains a breeding ground for violence against it even today.

But let's be clear. Israel in no way, shape, or form remotely resembles South Africa or shares the history of those human rights abuses. While the ancient disputes in the Middle East are certainly genuine and complex, the BDS effort is, at best, veiled anti-Semitism that

has been embraced by the politically correct bandwagon. And while people are entitled to their own opinions, they are not entitled to their own facts, so let's take a look at them.

- Israel's Declaration of Independence ensures Arab inhabitants "full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions."
- In 1948, all Israel's Arab inhabitants were given citizenship. Today, they make up 20% of Israel's population.
- It is illegal to discriminate against Arabs at any level of Israeli society, and in fact, Arabs hold many government positions there, including serving on their Supreme Court.
- Israeli Arabs have their own political parties and serve in the legislative body, the Knesset. They also hold positions in all of Israel's major political parties.
- A full 20% of students at Israel's universities are Arabs, and Arab professors conduct research and teach at these universities as well.
- Arabic is an official language in Israel and more than 300,000 Arab children attend Israeli schools.

I could go on but the argument is obvious: Can this seriously be compared to Apartheid in South Africa? It cannot. Therefore it is simply inexcusable that Israel endure boycotts by those who seek only to undermine American support for her or by those who are plainly ignorant of these facts.

That's why along with Simcha Felder, a Democrat from Brooklyn, I've recently sponsored Anti-BDS legislation in the New York State Senate. My bill would prohibit New York from doing business with any individual or business that promotes or engages in boycotts, sanctions, or divestment in Israel or other allied nations. In essence, it prevents us from

becoming unwilling participants in a discriminatory agenda and it sends a very clear message to the world: New York supports those who have supported us. Thankfully this legislation has already passed in our state Senate and I hope that our Assembly and Governor will act quickly to approve it as well. Several other states including California, Florida, Illinois, and South Carolina have already passed similar legislation.

My friends, the facts speak for themselves. It's clear that the BDS movement is not a response to any actual apartheid-like conditions but rather a concerted effort to undermine American support for Israel, in particular among young people who might be quick to support anything labeled "politically correct." That's not only dangerous to Israel but it also jeopardizes the peace that a two-state solution promises the region. In the end, nothing is accomplished when we invert and mislabel the truth. Hopefully, New York can help set the record straight. We must choose to stand against hatred.