



Missing the '80s

Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

I am a child of the '80s. I was born a decade earlier when bell bottoms were in fashion and disco was the music of choice but my formative years were in the '80s. That's where my fashion sense stopped, where my music preferences lie (in addition to country and the Maccabeats!) and my TV life. "Cheers," "A Different World," "Beverly Hills 90210" and "Saturday Night Live." Now I know that a few of those are from the '90s, but bear with me.

Saturday Night Live was a favorite of mine; waiting up till 11:30, to see the opening monologue and the sketches. Billy Crystal. Robin William and Rosanna, Rosanna Danna, Baruch Dayan Emet.

I don't watch "SNL" anymore. The musical guests don't appeal to me and let's face it, I can't really stay up that late. So any sketches I see are from social media the morning after. And so, remembering my affinity for the show, all of the off color and irreverent jokes and all the poking fun, imagine my surprise when I watched a sketch that was making fun of the questions from the Senate committee to the Harvard, MIT and UPenn presidents. It was the irreverence for that questioner, and her disgust about the questions she had to ask and the answers she didn't receive.



Elise Stefanik, United States Representative from New York, asked, “Does your code of conduct prohibit students and faculty from calling for the genocide of a group of people, in this case, the Jewish people?” Now I can’t fathom that the answer from ANYONE would be anything but “Yes of course. Our code of conduct doesn’t allow for anyone to call for the genocide of a group of people.”

But that isn’t what the presidents of Harvard, MIT and UPenn said. “It depends on the context” was their response.

Of course, these highly educated university presidents (I say with a note of sarcasm) obviously don’t know what the terms, “Intifada” or “From the River to the Sea” actually mean if they can say that. How can these pillars of education allow for such rhetoric? How do these statements not violate their codes of conduct?

We have freedom of speech in the United States and I believe that people can say what they want. However, while it is OK for me, as an American citizen, to say pretty much anything, I can’t call for violence. I can’t yell, “Fire” in a crowded theater unless there is an actual fire. So how can these university students call for my genocide and not be sanctioned?



I watch and I listen. And I hear crickets coming from people who believe that the chant, “Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me” is no longer correct. Name calling has become tantamount to physical violence. Where is the outrage from people who believe that words have power? How do Jewish students feel safe on these campuses? Isn’t calling for the genocide of the Jewish people or any group, a call for violence?

So here we are, in 2023 with 2024 just around the corner. I am faced with the uncertainty about becoming a part of a university community in the near future. What does that landscape look like for my Jewish children? How will that community be a safe place for my Jewish children to learn? And if those communities can so easily discount the Jewish community, who is next? And “Then They Came For Me” takes on a very real context.

I long for the 1980s when a Boston accent elicited big laughs, “No you ahhh” and “You look mahvelous,” Wayne’s World, and “We’re going to pump, you up!”

Bring them home now!

Shabbat Shalom.