EdgeWork Books began like this: A room full of writers—women, most in their 50s. Some had written bestsellers, some were poets. Most of them were therapists, or teachers of some kind. And all of them, once they started comparing notes, were worried about the shape and direction of the publishing industry.

More and more, the really hot books were being turned down as “brilliant but too literary,” “too feminist,” “too unusual” to compete for market share. If this was happening to them, at the peak of successful careers, what was happening to the voices of emerging women writers? Who was encouraging, publishing, distributing, and marketing their best work?

EdgeWork Books began when this room full of women said, “We’ve got to have viable alternatives to the New York publishing machine,” and one of them responded “Well, if not us, then who?”

So that’s us. We’re trying to be the press we’ve been waiting for. We want to be part of the decentralization and democratization of the publishing industry—the structures that support it, the people who run it, and the work it produces. We publish well-written books with fresh artistic vision and, through our Web site, we offer, as possible, supportive writing classes, individual writing consultation, coaching, editing, and open forums.

But something else has happened along the way. As we gathered allies, we found not just writers, but filmmakers, playwrights, musicians, painters, cartoonists all facing the same challenges. We became a group of women of many ages with a striking cultural and racial diversity. EdgeWork Books turned out to be the heart of something larger. Please come join us—we look forward to meeting you online.

www.edgework.com
WE, THE WOMYN OF THE WORLD, STAND!

We stand here and here and here and here.
We stand with hope
We stand with dignity
We stand to love whomever we please!

We, the womyn of the world, stand
We stand here and here and here and here.

We stand for peace
We stand for justice
We stand for honorable reconciliations for every conflict in our world.

We stand for our mothers
We stand with our daughters
We stand for the streams and rivers and oceans
for clean water everywhere.

We, the womyn of the world, stand!
We stand here and here and here and here.
We stand to give birth
We stand to mourn
We stand for those who cannot stand.

We stand in New York City
We stand in Afghanistan
We stand
We stand

We stand in Jerusalem
We stand in Chiapas
We stand
We stand
We stand

We stand at Yucca Mountain
We stand at the Borders
We stand
We stand

We stand to sing, whisper, shout and pray for a just world.

Nagams Mabingin
Sharon M. Day
2002
This is a painful, scary time. I wrote most of "Parasites" in 1990-1991, and the essay closes with reflections on the U.S.-led war against Iraq—a war that has not ended, as U.S.-imposed sanctions still kill thousands of Iraqi children every month. But I write now in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, when four teams of hijackers brought sudden mass murder to New York; Washington, DC; and Pennsylvania. Since September 11, the U.S. government has embarked on a new round of war, this time centered on Afghanistan. Parallels with the campaign against Iraq are numerous and vivid: the demonization of brutal ultranazis previously supported by the United States; the lies that proclaim America's love for freedom and hide the United States' own terrorist crimes; the thinly veiled drive to control oil supplies; the bombing campaigns and "accidental" civilian deaths; the increased attacks on civil liberties in the United States; and the surge of violence and harassment against Muslim, Middle Eastern, and South Asian people, including friends of mine.

Antisemitism is a secondary but real issue in this mix, as it was in the Gulf War. After September 11, articles circulated widely on the Internet suggesting that Jews (specifically, the Israeli secret service) secretly orchestrated the hijacking attacks. Many far rightists blamed Jews indirectly, treating the September 11 crimes as retribution for the U.S. alliance with Israel and supposed Jewish dominance over U.S. foreign policy. At the same time, some portrayals of the conflict exploited fears of antisemitism to help justify U.S. militarism or attacks on Muslim and Arab people.8

Antisemitism, both real and fictitious, also figures in the deepening catastrophe of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anti-Jewish bigotry is a reality among some Palestinians and their supporters, yet the charge of antisemitism is too often pinned on legitimate criticisms of Israeli rule. Random violence against Israeli Jewish civilians has no justification, yet U.S. accounts often portray such violence in ways that mask or justify the Israeli state's greater and far more systematic violence against Palestinians.

In organizing against war and bigotry, questions of antisemitism present complex challenges for both Jews and non-Jews. For example, when and how do we name ourselves as Jews? Where do Jews "fit" in discussions of diversity, coalition-building, or social justice, or discussions of U.S. Mideast policy? When do claims of antisemitism enable Jews to avoid dealing with our White privilege? When do Jews become convenient targets of blame, onto which non-Jewish Whites can shift their own responsibility for racism?

Seventeen days after the September 11 mass killings, my grandfather died. Leo Nemiroff deeply embodied the radical humanism—salted by pain, leavened with humor—that is central to my family's heritage of Jewish culture. Leo was one of my most important teachers. As a teenager first exploring radical politics, I treasured the long talks with Leo about history and theory and the sometimes bitter lessons of past struggles. Leo encouraged me to hope and work for a better world, but he taught me also to keep questioning, and to beware any movement or organization that claims to have all the answers. For that and everything else, Leo, spasibo, thank you. This preface and the essay that follows are dedicated to your memory.

M.N.L. October 2001

Introduction

Once again, hatred of Jews has become a major force on the far Right in the United States—more so than at any time since World War II. For decades, Ku Klux Klansmen and neonazis had talked about merging their two movements, and in the 1980s it finally started to happen. Old style, segregationist Klan factions stagnated or went under, while new organizations like the Aryan Nations, the Order, and White Aryan Resistance (WAR) drew fresh strength by fusing White supremacy with fascist ideology and goals. Estimates place the movement’s core membership in the tens of thousands, with perhaps ten times as many supporters.7 “The new strategy is not to put people in their place; it is not to make a sub-class out of them and to exploit, or super-exploit, their labor. It is genocidal. It is exterminationist.”8 To groups that embrace this doctrine, people of color are “subhumans” corrupting White society through race mixing, while gays and lesbians undermine supposedly natural sex roles and the reproduction of the White race. And behind them stand the Jews, who secretly wield vast power in a plot to control the world.

The LaRouchian fascist movement, which has avoided an open White supremacist focus, also grew during the 1980s and early nineties, building a major fundraising, espionage, and electoral network. Masked by populist rhetoric and obscure code words, scapegoating of Jews form the core of Lyndon LaRouche’s doctrine.9

To all antifascists who take the far Right seriously, these developments mean that analyzing and fighting antisemitism are important not only morally, but also strategically. Jew-hatred is not, as some have argued, just an archaic prejudice slowly on its way out; it is once again a useful organizing tool for the most vicious political organizations in the country. And in a
graffiti; vandalism against synagogues, Jewish homes, and businesses; harassment and threats; and physical attacks. For several reasons, antisemitism has the potential to get significantly worse: (1) Jews' roles in the class structure make us vulnerable to renewed scapegoating, especially in the event of a major economic crisis; (2) despite a widespread taboo against open Jew-hatred, antisemitic attitudes persist across class, color, and political lines; and (3) antisemitism is a central part of today's far Right, which is stronger now than it has ever been in fifty years.

Although Jews no longer constitute a people-class, they are once again concentrated in "middle-man" roles—positions of relative privilege outside the centers of power. According to figures from the late 1970s, almost three-quarters of Jews in the paid workforce are either professionals or administrators. Close to 50 percent are employed in trade and finance; those in manufacturing are concentrated in consumer goods and other light manufacturing. Almost half of Jews in the labor force are self-employed. Although a tiny number of Jews have become wealthy, few of them have reached the top levels of the most powerful corporations. The ruling class remains WASP-dominated. Meanwhile, a sizeable minority of Jews remains poor—especially elderly Jews and Jewish women.

Holding occupations such as shopkeeper, landlord, teacher, social service worker, lawyer, and bureaucrat makes Jews prime targets for scapegoating. To poor and working-class people—most of whom never meet any rich capitalists—such jobs represent the most visible kind of status and power. Seeing Jews in these roles can reinforce the myth that Jews are the main oppressors. Jews' prominence (partly real, partly fictional) in journalism and the film industry does the same thing on a bigger scale.

As in the past, economic privilege plus a persistent sense of vulnerability has drawn the official Jewish leadership into closer alliance with the WASP power elite. Mainstream Jewish organizations have moved steadily to the right in recent decades. After being won over to political Zionism in the 1940s, most hardened by the late 1960s into rigid supporters of Israeli government policies. In the 1970s, such groups played a leading role in opposing affirmative action programs. Jewish organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and periodicals such as the New Republic have also repeatedly exploited the charge of antisemitism to attack political opponents (particularly Blacks and left-wing critics of Israel) and to intensify Jews' sense of isolation. Such manipulation discredits genuine concern about Jew-hatred.

True, antisemitism is a reality within segments of the African American community, and the government's repression of the Black liberation movement in the 1960s and early seventies left a wake of political frustration in which anti-Jewish scapegoating could gain ground. A 1977 "Blacks and Jews" issue of the Black Books Bulletin, for example, included such assertions as "the Jews' grand strategy has been to use Blacks as their major tool in their quest for world power and domination." In 1988, National Black United Front Chair Conrad Worrill said that Black people were upset about Jewish "domination": "The Jewish people have amassed a great deal of wealth in the Western World. I would say that Jews control insurance, the banks, merchandising, and trade."57

But charges of "Black antisemitism" must be weighed carefully and in context. Jews and other Whites have frequently criticized Blacks for antisemitism while ignoring or rationalizing anti-Black racist behavior. Even when presenting a seemingly more balanced view, they have often treated Black antisemitism and Jewish racism as equivalent phenomena. They are only equivalent if we consider attitudes while ignoring the social framework: nearly all Jews in the United States hold White privilege while Blacks do not; Blacks face pervasive, institutionalized racist violence, bigotry, and discrimination, while Jews do not.

Highlighting the complexity of this issue was the August 1991 explosion in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, when long-standing neighborhood conflict between Black people and Lubavitcher Hassidic Jews erupted in several days of street fighting. Here anti-Jewish scapegoating and violence was mingled with legitimate Black grievances against Lubavitchers' systematic racist behavior, institutionalized White privilege, and preferential treatment by the city government. Yet mainstream media accounts tended to ignore the systemic context and to focus one-sidedly on Jews and other Whites as victims and Blacks as victimizers.

Too often, legitimate African American demands and grievances have been portrayed as antisemitic, such as Black support for affirmative action programs or criticisms of Israel's close ties with apartheid South Africa. Too often, Jews have focused on Blacks as an easier target, while playing down White antisemitism.

Compare the treatment of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam (NOI) and that of the Christian Right. Farrakhan has certainly made reprehensible statements, such as: "I am your last chance, Jews. You can't say 'never again' to God, 'cause when he puts you in an oven, you are in one indeed!" He has promoted bigots such as Steve Cokely, who charged that Jewish doctors have injected Blacks with AIDS. In the early 1990s, NOI cultivated an alliance with Lyndon LaRouche's neonazi movement, reprinting its articles, cooperating on electoral work, and praising LaRouche publicly.58 Farrakhan's
Homosexuality, in this framework, threatens the White race's ability to reproduce itself and undermines the gender roles needed for racial dominance. Yet "revolutionary" sections of the neo-Nazi movement have also promoted a kind of fake feminism, analogous to vulgar anticapitalism: an ideal of White women and men as equal comrades-in-arms. The Aryan Women's League, affiliated with White Aryan Resistance (WAR), claims that the Jews invented male supremacy, and calls for "Women's Power as well as White Power."84

The "revolutionary" wing of the Nazi/Klan movement seeks to overthrow the United States government or at least secede from it. This tendency draws supporters from many local Klan chapters, Posse Comitatus groups, and the Christian Identity movement (which claims that Anglo-Saxons, not Jews, are the true children of Israel). Richard Butler's Aryan Nations, based in Idaho, has provided an umbrella formation for many groups of this tendency. In 1983 members of the Aryan Nations formed an underground organization known as the Order, which declared war on the "Zionist Occupation Government" (ZOG for short). They raised about $5 million through counterfeiting and robberies of banks and armored cars, some of which they passed on to other Nazi/Klan organizations. The Order's most notorious action took place in June, 1984, when members murdered Alan Berg, a Jewish radio talk-show host in Denver.

The U.S. government cracked down hard on the Order. The state can accept right-wing terrorism directed against the Left (such as the 1979 Greensboro massacre, which two federal agents helped to plan) but not against its own rule. Order founder Robert Mathews was killed and many other members imprisoned. But in 1988, fourteen fascist leaders, including Butler, were acquitted in Arkansas of seditious conspiracy charges, leaving most of the underlying political-military network intact.

Tom Metzger, a former California Klan leader, heads another branch of the Nazi movement's "revolutionary" tendency: White Aryan Resistance. Metzger, like many European fascists, advocates so-called Third Position politics: rejection of both capitalism and communism. This political philosophy has its roots in the extreme anticapitalist wing of Hitler's Nazi Party. Metzger expounded his philosophy at the 1987 Aryan Nations Congress:

WAR is dedicated to the White working people, the farmers, the White poor....This is a working class movement....Our problem is with monopoly capitalism. The Jews first went with Capitalism and then created their Marxist game. You go for the throat of the Capitalist. You must go for the throat of the corporates. You take the game away from the left. It's our game! We're not going to fight your whore wars no more! We've got one war, that is right here, the same war the SA fought in Germany, right here; in the streets of America.85

Metzger supports "White working-class" militancy, stresses environmentalism, and has opposed U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Persian Gulf. Metzger's television program, Race and Reason, has been broadcast on cable television in dozens of cities. Through its Aryan Youth Movement wing, WAR was particularly successful in the 1980s in recruiting racist skinheads, who include thousands of young people clustered in scores of violent, pronazi formations. Metzger and WAR's position in the neo-Nazi movement was partially weakened in October, 1990, when they were fined $12.5 million in a civil suit for inciting three Portland skinheads who murdered Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw.86

In contrast to "revolutionary" neo-Nazi groups, a "reformist" wing of the movement seeks to build alliances with established conservatives. This tendency includes Willis Carto's Liberty Lobby, which has a radio network of some 150 stations and a weekly paper, The Spotlight, with a circulation over one hundred thousand. Carto also founded the Institute for Historical Review, which claims that the Nazi genocide never happened, and the Populist Party, which in 1988 ran ex-Klan leader David Duke for president.87

Partly influenced by Willis Carto, Lyndon LaRouche has developed one of the strongest but least-recognized neo-Nazi organizations in the United States. A former Trotskyist, LaRouche founded the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) in 1968 as an offshoot of the radical student movement. But in the early 1970s LaRouche used cult pressure tactics to consolidate his control over the NCLC and turn it into a right-wing fascist group.88

LaRouche has been guided by the insight that in order to win political power, fascists must make themselves useful to the ruling class. In Italy and Germany, capitalists backed fascism as a way to smash the large, militant labor movement and the Left. At first LaRouche experimented with a street-fighting strategy, including physical attacks on communists and Black nationalists. But the Left's decline in the 1970s meant this approach was unlikely to win major capitalist support. LaRouche therefore adopted other approaches to build his organization in a period of relative social stability.

First, his followers built an extensive network for spying, propaganda, and dirty tricks to make themselves useful to the upper levels of government, business, and organized crime. The LaRouchians have reported to intelligence agencies in the United States, South Africa, West Germany, and elsewhere. Their dirty tricks record includes helping Jesse Helms retain his U.S. Senate seat in 1984 by gay-baiting his opponent, and branding George Bush an agent of the Trilateral Commission in 1980 to help Ronald Reagan win the Republican presidential nomination.
Second, the LaRouchians began to develop a mass base through populist
electioneering. Since 1980, the LaRouche network has fielded thousands of
candidates and received millions of votes in Democratic Party primaries
across every region of the country. The LaRouchians spearheaded the 1986
California ballot initiative to quarantine people with AIDS, which received
two million votes. With this vote “LaRouche scored a major ideological
breakthrough for neo-Nazism in America. He took a previously taboo idea—
ensured isolation for the Scapegoat—and elevated it into a topic of
legitimate discourse.”

During the 1980s the LaRouchians raised an estimated $200 million
through legal and illegal fundraising efforts—a feat far beyond any other
fascist organization in U.S. history. In 1988 LaRouche was imprisoned for
several years for tax evasion and mail fraud conspiracy related to fundraising,
yet his organization continued to run strong.

Although LaRouche’s world view divides humanity into superior and
inferior “species,” his organization has often played down White supremacist
themes. Since about 1990, the LaRouchians have made a push for African
American support, recruiting a few right-wing Black spokespeople such as
Rev. James Bevel and forming an alliance with Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam.

Similarly, LaRouche hides his antisemitism by pointing to a number of Jews
among his supporters, and by using a variety of code words for Jews, from the
commonplace (“Zionists”) to the esoteric (“Babylonians”). LaRouchian propa-
ganda constantly invokes sinister conspiracies linked to prominent Jews such as
“[Henry] Kissinger’s friends, the Rothschild family, and other representa-
tives of Britain’s financial power.” (Like Hitler, LaRouche believes that Britain
is controlled by the Jews). In classic antisemitic fashion, LaRouche draws a
phony distinction between “productive” industrial capital and “parasitic”
finance capital. This enables him to be procapitalist and seemingly anti-impe-
rialist at the same time: “Imperialism was not the result of capitalist
development; it was the result of the conquest of power over capitalist nations
by a usury-oriented rentier-financier interest older than feudalism.”

LaRouche’s reputation as a kook has helped to shield him from criticism
and organized opposition. But other neonazis have begun to learn from his
successes. David Duke, for example, long modeled his electoral strategy after
LaRouche. In 1988 he ran in a series of Democratic presidential primaries
before turning to the Populist Party ticket, then adopted the Republican
Party label the following year to win entry into the Louisiana state legislature.
In 1990 he received 605 thousand votes and raised $2.2 million in the race
for U.S. Senate. Emulating LaRouche, Duke sought token Black support in
the form of civil-rights worker turned right-winger James Meredith. Like

LaRouche, Duke cultivated a public image of antielitist conservatism, while
promoting hard-core fascist racial ideology behind the scenes. The combina-
tion helped to give neonazi politics a new chance at respectability and a
broader constituency that may outlast David Duke himself.

Organizing against neonazis and hate crimes offers both special opportuni-
ties and special pitfalls. Knowing that we are all targeted can provide an
immediate, concrete reason for political alliances between Jews, gays and
lesbians, people of color, women, immigrants, workers, and leftists. In many
communities, diverse coalitions against “hate” have formed, providing a
valuable framework to learn about each others’ histories and struggles, and
important lessons in the challenges of coalition work. But in seeking a broad
base of support, some antinazi campaigns face a temptation to misrepresent
the struggle as a conflict between a supposedly democratic mainstream and
an extremist fringe. There is nothing un-American about the far Right: it
gives raw, open expression to violence deeply rooted in U.S. society. At their
best, antinazi coalitions highlight this connection and offer a bridge to chal-
lenging mainstream systems of oppression as well.

Conclusion: Antisemitism in the New World Order

From racist skinhead gangs to JAP-baiting, from the Christian Right’s
pedestal antisemitism to the neonazis’ racial ideology, Jew-hatred remains a
serious force in the United States today. Antisemitism no longer involves
widespread, institutionalized violence and discrimination, as it did in the
early twentieth-century United States, when Jews were commonly catego-
rized as non-White. But for many Jews, White privilege has come at the price
of cultural invisibility and loss. Economic gains have also left us vulnerable
to age-old forms of scapegoating. To fascists and demagogues who want to
exploit people’s real grievances against the government and economic system,
"the Jewish conspiracy" still offers a valuable target.

The U.S.-led Gulf War against Iraq highlighted not only antisemitism’s
persistance here, but also how routinely the issue of antisemitism is distorted
and manipulated. Saddam Hussein’s scapegoating of Israel, threats of poison
gas, and missile attacks against Israeli civilians played into George Bush’s
cynical effort to brand him an “Arab Hitler.” Few noted the U.S. govern-
ment’s own antisemitism. Bush (whose “New World Order” rhetoric echoed
Hitler) first set up Israelis to be bombarded, then exploited Holocaust imagery
to help justify his own mass murder of Iraqis. The mass media helped out:
while systematically hiding the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed and
wounded in the U.S.-led bombing, they paraded graphic photos of a
prostrate, bloody Israeli woman injured by an Iraqi missile. The selective


Lieberman, Jews and the Left: 150.


See Lieberman, Jews and the Left: 195, 359; and Baum, et. al., Jewish Woman in America: 123–124.

Lieberman, Jews and the Left: 156.


The figures cited here on Jews' occupational distribution are from Lieberman, Jews and the Left (603–604), published in 1979, and may have changed slightly in the interim. Probably the number of self-employed has declined and the number of professionals has increased.


Dworkin, Right-Wing Women: 139–141.

Quotes in this paragraph are from Beck, "From 'Kike' to 'JAP':" 18–20.


Beck, "Why Is This Book Different...?": xvii.

See Barbara Smith, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Relationships Between Black and Jewish Women," in Yours in Struggle: 74–78; and Bulkin, "Hard Ground": 148–150.


"Oriental" Jews is a term encompassing most non-Ashkenazi Jews, including Jews of Arab, Ethiopian, Indian, Iranian, Kurdish, and Sephardic descent. (Ashkenazi Jews are of central and eastern European descent.) I place the word "Oriental" in quotes because of the racist connotations often attached to it. The phrase Sephardi Jews is sometimes used as a generic term for non-Ashkenazi Jews, but I find this misleading. Sephardi Jews are of Spanish or Portuguese descent, whose culture blended European and Arab influences under Islamic rule in Spain, and many of whom found refuge in Turkey and North Africa after the Christians reconquered the Iberian peninsula and threw them out. To subsume all non-Ashkenazi under the label "Sephardi" obscures the existence of many other non-Ashkenazi Jewish cultures.


74 Israel's fundamental laws articulate its primary racial division—between Jews and non-Jews. White supremacy operates as a second-order division within this framework, creating a three-tiered structure: on top, Ashkenazi Jews (of central and eastern European descent); in the middle, "Oriental" Jews (Arab, Sephardic, Sephardi, African, and Asian); on the bottom, Palestinian Arabs. The claim that Israel is the state of the entire Jewish people helps to rationalize the dominance of Ashkenazi within Israeli society: Ashkenazi long formed a majority of Israeli Jews, but a large majority of Jews worldwide. This "imbalance" also presumably fed the Israeli government's eagerness to admit large numbers of Soviet (Ashkenazi) Jews.


Labor Zionism's policy of racial exclusivism fits a pattern often followed by other settler working-class movements: In the United States, white socialists and other labor activists played a leading role in the bloody campaigns from the 1870's to early 1900's to force Chinese and Japanese workers out of the California labor market. In South Africa in 1922, the Communist Party supported a nationwide general strike by white workers under the slogan, "Workers of the World Fight and Unite for a White South Africa!" (See Sakali, Settlers: 35–66, 60.)


78 See Boaz Evron, Holocaust: The Uses of Disaster, Radical America 17, no. 4 (July–August 1983): 7–21.


85 Metzger Begins Move to the Top, The Monitor (Center for Democratic Renewal), (January 1988): 5. See also Lawrence, "Klansmen, Nazis, Skinheads": 33.


88 My discussion of Lyndon LaRouche is based on Dennis King, Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism (New York: Doubleday, 1989), and on lectures by King at the Marxist School in New York City on May 11, 1989, and at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY on May 2, 1991.

89 King, Lyndon LaRouche 143.

90 Farrakhan has been endorsed not only by the LaRouchians, but also by the New Alliance Party (NAP), an ostensibly leftist, feminist, progay organization widely denounced as a political cult. NAP leader Fred Newman once led his followers into an alliance with the LaRouchians in 1973–1974, including a few months as members of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC). Former Newmanites such as Dennis L. Serrette, NAP's 1984 presidential candidate, report that Newman's methods of organizational control closely resemble LaRouche's and that people of color hold prominent positions but no real power within the NAP. See Chip Berlet, Clouds Blur the Rainbow: The Other Side of the New Alliance Party (Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, 1992); Bruce Shapiro, "Dr. Fulani's Snake-Oil Show," The Nation (May 4, 1992): 585–594; and articles in Radical America 21, no. 5, by Berlet, Serrette, Ken Lawrence, Charles W. Tisdale, and Leigh Peake. (Clouds Blur the Rainbow is available from Political Research Associates at 678 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 205, Cambridge, MA 02139-3355.)


93 I am grateful to Patricia Zimmerman for pointing out the media's use of the missile victim photo, and its significance (personal communication, February 1991).

