

THE GROSS FAMILY CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF **ANTISEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST**

To Whom It May Concern:

The lesson assigned to students by Mrs. Nast at William T. Dwyer High School on November 2, 2023, purporting to examine the causes of the current conflict between Israel and Hamas was biased, inflammatory, and intellectually dishonest. The video she forced students to watch in her class was nothing less than indoctrination, utterly bereft of educational merit.

The video uses the techniques of propaganda: selective reporting, inversion of facts, and outright falsehoods. Indeed, there are so many inaccuracies and lies in the short film, that it's impossible to address them all. In this letter, we only address some of the main problems.

While professing to explain the history that gave rise to the current conflict, the video for the most part ignores it. The seemingly friendly narrator begins his story with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire but ignores the thousands of years prior; the 4,000-year connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel, the fact that Jews are the indigenous people of the Levant, and the fact that there has never in the history of that territory been an independent state that was anything other than a Jewish state—the first and second Jewish kingdoms and the modern State of Israel. At all other times in history that land was only ever part of a larger empire ruled from afar.

By contrast, Islam came into being in the beginning of the seventh century, Arabs come from Arabia, and they colonized the region by force in the mid-seventh century. They did not call the Levant “Palestine;” they did not call themselves “Palestinian.” When the Ottoman Turks conquered the region, it was called South Syria and the inhabitants were Arabs and Jews.

After World War One, when the Ottoman Empire fell, Britain began to manage the region as the British Mandate for Palestine. The Jews who lived there called themselves Palestinians and the Arabs called themselves Arabs. The narrator calls it “Palestinian land,” and calls the Arabs “Palestinians.” These are fantastical terms in the context of the real history. There never was a state of Palestine. The “Palestinian” identity was appropriated by some of the Arabs decades later, in the 1960s, after the re-establishment of the State of Israel.

The video contends that after World War One, the Arabs were “bamboozled and tricked” by the British, when indeed it was the Jews who were betrayed. Britain took 70% of Mandatory Palestine, the territory promised to the Jews, and gave it to the Hashemite tribe of Arabs, creating the brand new country of Trans-Jordan. This the video conveniently ignores.

Shockingly, the video claims the British facilitated Jewish immigration to the region. This is a complete inversion of facts. The British actually limited Jewish immigration, even as oppression of Jews in Europe turned to genocide. There is no telling how many Jews were murdered because they were refused sanctuary in—even forcefully repelled from—their homeland.

There is no mention in the video of the violent pogroms against the Jews of Palestine committed by their Arab neighbors. These events were strikingly similar to what took place on October 7, 2023, when Arabs murdered, raped, and mutilated Jews, cutting the breasts off women, slicing open pregnant women, beheading some of their victims. Similarly, the film ignores the various attempts to placate the Arabs, including a 1937 plan proposed by the Peel Commission.

The violence, mischaracterized in the video as a righteous fight for Arab freedom, did indeed cause the British, depleted after World War Two, to turn to the fledgling United Nations to resolve the problem. The U.N. did propose the 1947 partition plan, the Jews did accept it, and the Arabs did reject it.

What the narrator ignores is the invasion of Israel in 1948 by five Arab states' armies and other forces. The leaders of these attacking forces told the Arabs to evacuate temporarily, and they could return after the Jews were massacred. Instead, the speaker claims the "Palestinians" lost their country and identity. (Again, there was no Palestine and the Arabs didn't adopt this identity until the 1960s.) It's just the war didn't turn out as the Arabs thought; the Jews refused to be massacred and, indeed, they were victorious.

Even so, the Arabs were not, as the video claims, "ethnically cleansed from their land and driven into near total destruction." This in fact happened to the Jews in all the surrounding Arab countries in which they had lived for thousands of years. The Jews of Iraq, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, etc. were violently expelled, their property confiscated, and their land seized. None of this is mentioned in the video. Nor is the fact that the Arabs who stayed were offered Israeli citizenship with the very same rights enjoyed by all citizens. Indeed 20% of Israeli citizens are not Jewish.

While the Jewish refugees were incorporated into Israel and became integral to the formation of the state, the Arab refugees were never incorporated into Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. They were only used by their Arab "brothers" as a propaganda tool. And that is what this video is.

Every element of what the video characterizes as "over 70 years of occupation," is fallacious; again, there are too many falsehoods to address them all. Conveniently ignored are the many waves of Palestinian terrorism, the many offers of Palestinian statehood, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the withdrawal from Gaza and its takeover by Hamas, the incitement to violence by Palestinian leaders, the bounties paid to terrorists for the murder of Jews, the Palestinian educational system which trains children to seek the death of Jews, and more.

The bottom line is that the video is intellectually dishonest. Important facts and context are omitted, falsehoods are included, bias is injected, and history is distorted. The students at Dwyer deserve better. Their parents deserve better. Taxpayers deserve better.

Teachers at every high school in the district can also deliver better, in the form of the following Video which they can watch, learn from and write about: <https://youtu.be/XNf40sBcvKk?si=L-WdSk-q5RZhi0ho>)

We, the undersigned, implore you to relegate the video shown by Mrs. Nast to the trash bin where it belongs for all of the above detailed reasons.

Respectfully yours,
