

5/5/07

Dear *WSJ* Editor:

Although I have no doubt that Mr. Alan Dershowitz somehow believes the charges he has been leveling against DePaul Professor Norman Finkelstein for the last three years, I think it is important to—once again—catalogue how these allegations have no basis in fact. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to establish the transparency of Dershowitz's lexicon on some key terms which repeatedly appear in his attacks on Finkelstein, and are most recently found in his 5/4/07 Op/Ed piece:

Dershowitz uses the phrase “hard leftist” to describe Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, and Alexander Cockburn, and any other critics of Israel who have exposed the mendacity and deceit of U.S. apologists, such as Alan Dershowitz, who have proven their intent to prevent serious debate about the Israel-Palestine conflict from moving forward in the U.S.

Here are a few other mischaracterizations in Dershowitz's article:

1. Dershowitz alleges that Finkelstein is a “failed academic.” Translation: Finkelstein has written a series of highly successful books critical of Israel and its U.S. apologists such as Alan Dershowitz.
2. Dershowitz writes: “[Finkelstein's] prospects seemed bleak, so when radical Islamist Aminah McCloud – a follower of Louis Farrakhan – helped him land a job at DePaul, a school that Mr. Finkelstein describes as “a third-rate Catholic university,” he accepted ‘exile.’” In actuality, Professor Aminah McCloud played no role in Norman Finkelstein's hire at DePaul. Professor McCloud is a Professor of Islamic Studies, not Political Science, the department within which Finkelstein was hired and is currently an assistant professor.
3. Dershowitz claims that Finkelstein's book *The Holocaust Industry: The Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* was a “screed against Holocaust survivors.” Translation: *The Holocaust Industry* was a devastating critique of American Jewish elites such as Israel Singer, Edgar Bronfman, Burt Neuborne, Elie Wiesel, and Stuart Eizenstat and their efforts to use the Holocaust as a political bludgeon throughout Europe to illegitimately collect monies, in the name of Holocaust Survivors, for Jewish organizations. Since Finkelstein's own parents, who were themselves Holocaust survivors, placed more faith in the German government to dispense Holocaust compensations monies than the greatly trusted Jewish organizations such as the World Jewish Congress, one can draw their own conclusions about Mr. Dershowitz's charge. Raul Hilberg, the Dean of Holocaust Studies, had this to say about Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry: The Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*: “When I first read Finkelstein's book, *The Holocaust Industry*, at the time of its appearance, I was in the middle of my own investigations of these matters, and I came to the conclusion that he was on the right track. I refer now to the part of the book that deals with the claims against Swiss banks, and the other claims pertaining to forced labor. I

would say now in retrospect that he was actually conservative, moderate and that his conclusions are trustworthy. He is a well-trained political scientist, has the ability to do the research, did it carefully, and has come up with the right results. I am by no means the only one who, in the coming months or years, will totally agree with Finkelstein's breakthrough" (Raul Hilberg: A New Interview in *Le Monde*, 15 February 2001)

4. Dershowitz claims that Finkelstein "expressed views so *ad hominem*, unscholarly and extreme that he could claim the decision was being made not on the basis of his scholarship, but rather on his politics." Translation: Finkelstein expressed views critical of Israel and the vulgar apologetics of its U.S. supporters such as Alan Dershowitz.

Dershowitz tacitly concedes the veracity of Norman Finkelstein's critique of Israeli policies and Dershowitz's vulgar apologetics and mendacity, by consistently evading them in favor of a vilification campaign, which would be irrelevant even if there were a particle of truth in it.

5. Dershowitz writes: "Mr. Finkelstein does not do "scholarship" in any meaningful sense." If that's the case, why has Finkelstein's scholarship been praised by leading scholars on the Israel-Palestine conflict, such as Avi Shlaim (Oxford), Sara Roy (Harvard), William Quandt (*Foreign Affairs*), Daniel Boyarin (Berkeley), Mouin Rabbani (*Middle East Report*), Neve Gordon (Ben-Gurion University)? In Dershowitz's estimation, are these scholars (or, as Dershowitz would have it, "well-known Israel bashers") part of the vast conspiracy to defame him and his *The Case for Israel*?

6. Dershowitz maintains that "Mr. Finkelstein commissioned a cartoon by a man who placed second in the Iranian Holocaust-denial cartoon contest." Although Dershowitz has repeatedly asserted this as fact, he has produced no evidence thus far to prove it. Indeed, in an attempt to deflect attention away from the fact that he tried to suppress the publication of Finkelstein's *Beyond Chutzpah: The Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History*, insisting that he will produce all of his and his appointed legal counsel's (Cravath, Swaine, and Moore's) correspondence with the University of California Press and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Dershowitz has tried to turn the tables in the form of a desperate wager: If Finkelstein will produce all of his correspondence (including oral correspondence) with "the neo-nazi Latuff" (the cartoonist), Dershowitz will produce his and Cravath, Swaine, and Moore's correspondence with UC Press and Schwarzenegger. I believe this is called "the thief, thief technique": when you have no case and wish to divert the public's attention away from your own transgressions, point hysterically in the other direction and cry "Thief, thief," so the subject will be changed. Given that Dershowitz emailed every faculty member at DePaul's Law School and several faculty members in other DePaul schools and departments a large dossier of allegations about Finkelstein, it appears that Dershowitz is trying desperately to come up with convenient distractions to remove attention from the fact that he has long been exposed as a passionate opponent of civil rights, free speech, and open debate on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

7. Dershowitz writes: “The final part of Mr. Finkelstein's quest for tenure is to blame his tenure problems on "outsiders." He claims that I intruded myself into the DePaul review process, neglecting to mention that I was specifically asked by the former chairman of DePaul's political science department to ‘point [him] to the clearest and most egregious instances of dishonesty on Finkelstein's part.’ I responded by providing hard evidence of made-up quotes and facts—a pattern that should alone disqualify him from tenure.” The “hard evidence,” as it turns out, can be viewed at <http://www.alandershowitz.com/publications/docs/depaulletter.htm>. Here is the exact text of the solicitation letter from Patrick Callahan, the former chair of DePaul’s political science department:

To prepare myself [for Finkelstein’s tenure case), I am investigating your charges that he is guilty of various forms of intellectual dishonesty. I have contacted Professor Peter Novick to follow up on his indictment which you quoted in your letter of November 10, 2005, to Father Holtschneider and in the manuscript titled "Literary McCarthyism" which you sent me (emphasis mine) the previous year. I am contacting you, too, to ask your assistance. Could you point me to the clearest and most egregious instances of dishonesty on Finkelstein's part?

8. Dershowitz concludes that “Whether or not he receives tenure, Mr. Finkelstein will persist in his unscholarly, *ad hominem*s against supporters of Israel, Holocaust survivors and the U.S. But for the time being, the question remains: Will his bigotry receive the imprimatur of the largest Catholic university in the America?” Of course, Norman Finkelstein receiving tenure at DePaul is Mr. Dershowitz’s worst nightmare, as it would demonstrate that U.S. supporters of Israel, despite their best efforts, cannot subvert academic processes and silence a serious and effective academic critic of Israel, thus opening up the possibility of a serious debate about what U.S. and Israeli militarism has brought to the Middle East. The extent to which Alan Dershowitz has interfered with Finkelstein’s tenure case at DePaul University over the last one year should tell us just how dangerous the truth, as it is represented in Finkelstein’s scholarship, could be if it reached a broad audience.

Sincerely,

Matthew Abraham