

Re: Nov. 12 book review essay, "American Jews Face a Choice: Create Meaning or Fade Away"

We are writing as the former and current Directors of the Jewish Studies Program at the University of California, Davis, with regard to the Nov. 12 book review article, "American Jews Face a Choice: Create Meaning or Fade Away."

The field of modern American Judaism is one of the very few academic disciplines that might be described as dominated by women. It is, therefore, a remarkable feat that Gal Beckerman has managed to present an all-male collection of recent work on American Jewish identity .

As scholars of Jewish Studies in other subfields, we would find it difficult to come up with a list of works on this topic that includes not a single woman. Female scholars have been some of the most prominent voices in the study of Jewish identity in 20th century America and some of the most influential commentators on contemporary American Jewish issues. Among senior scholars, Hasia Diner, Riv Ellen Prell, and Lila Corwin Berman, for example, have explored the American Jewish experience as it relates to ethnicity, immigration, and urban life (see Berman's recent op-ed on Pittsburgh in the Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/american-jews-always-believed-the-us-was-exceptional-we-were-wrong/2018/11/01/43be2f62-dd7c-11e8-b3f0-62607289efee_story.html, and a 2017 podcast on Judaism and political identities in America, <http://www.judaismunbound.com/podcast/2017/6/28/episode-75-lila-corwin-berman>).

Recent books by Sarah Imhoff (*Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism*, 2017), Samira Mehta (*Beyond Chrismukkah: The Christian-Jewish Interfaith Family in the United States*, 2018), Shari Rabin (*Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2017), Lillian Faderman (*Harvey Milk: His Lives and Death*, 2018), Rachel Kranson (*Ambivalent Embrace: Jewish Upward Mobility in Postwar America*, 2017), and Joyce Antler (*Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement*) are about exactly the issues the review essay wishes to tackle.

None of these scholars are musty antiquarians: all have written for broader audiences, given interviews, won awards, and been guests at community events. They are not difficult to find or read, and they represent the state of the field and its future.

The motivation that frames the essay is the rise of hate crimes that target Jews. Scholars of Judaism know very well that hatred of Jews is intertwined with other hatreds: antisemitism, white supremacy, nativism, and misogyny are often closely aligned. In a piece that ostensibly wants to discuss how people of various identities might coexist and survive in today's America, to ignore the most prominent and exciting voices in the study of American Judaism--those of women--is downright shocking. It matters that NYT Books communicates that they think women do not have anything to say about this issue.

Sincerely,

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