

The United Nation Women's Decade and Jewish Feminist Identity

Hannah Milstein

“In my community in Baltimore, I am vulnerable as a feminist; in Copenhagen, among the supposed feminists of the world, I felt vulnerable as a Jew,” expressed Chiaie Herzig, a member of the American Jewish Congress who attended the second U.N Women’s Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1980. Her sentiment speaks volumes to the unique situation of Jewish-American feminists at the midway point of the UN Decade for Women, which spanned from 1975 to 1985. Spurned at home and abroad, Jewish-American feminists occupied a complex position within the feminist community as they grappled with their own paradigms of identity during the 1970s and 1980s. Heavily involved in these self-conceptions were the ideology of Zionism and the experiences of anti-Semitism, which these women encountered both on the national and international stage. It was only through victimization, within the U.S women's movement and at the UN Women’s Conferences, that a Jewish identity, one specifically linked to Zionism, became a crucial part of being a Jewish feminist in America. Experiences of anti-Semitism within the US women’s movement remained critical to understanding this process of perceived victimization and the importance of Israel to emerging Jewish Feminists.¹

The initial UN Women’s Conference, hosted in 1975 in Mexico City, marked a turning point for Jewish women in the American feminist movement. “I went to Mexico City this summer of 1975 to help advance the world wide movement of women to equality,” recounts Betty Freidan, but as the women of the world united for the first time to address “the monumental problems of female infanticide, illiteracy, high mortality rates, abject poverty, involuntary pregnancies, domestic violence, and so on,” the conference quickly digressed into an arena for geopolitical sparring.² What resulted through the efforts of

¹ While there is a limited historiography on the subject of Jewish Feminists the leading historians on the subjects generally agree about the important role the UN Women’s Decade played in the formation of a specifically Jewish feminist identity. Hasia Diner, Lieff Benderly, and Joyce Antler all characterize the role of the UN Women’s conferences in their anthologies on Jewish American women’s history as a pivotal moment in many women’s identification as specifically Jewish feminists. Feminist from Jewish women in the women's movement to specifically Jewish feminists. While these women give an excellent chronology of this event within the movement, they fail to address the extensive and varied context in which this event took place as well as the new role of Zionism in making this distinction of identity.

² Betty Freidan, “Scary Doings in Mexico City” in *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's movement* (New York: Random House, 1976), 440. Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, 154.

Palestinian feminists, various other groups of subaltern feminists, who at that time were referred to at the time as Third World feminists, and the Soviet bloc was the “Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace.” It declared that women were, “natural allies in the struggle against any form of oppression,” including, “colonialism, neocolonialism, Zionism, racial discrimination and apartheid, thereby constituting an enormous revolutionary potential for economic and social change in the world today.”³ Jewish women worldwide, as well as the American press, quickly dubbed this declaration the “Zionism is racism” resolution.⁴ As Letty Cottin Pogrebin writes, “the ‘Zionism is Racism’ equation enraged me.... because it so cynically co-opted a feminist event for anti-Israel activity.” She and other Jewish and American feminists saw the event as “hijacked” by the Arab, particularly Palestinian, and Communist delegates pushing the “Zionism is racism” addition into the conference’s declaration.⁵ The loss was twofold as the Jewish feminists at the conference experienced unprecedented anti-Semitism on the world stage, an act of betrayal at the hands of fellow feminists, while also losing the direction of the conference to the geopolitics and Cold War interests, rather than achieving the conference’s intended goal: securing a plan of action to improve women’s lives around the world.⁶ The first conference of the UN Women’s decade was, by American and Jewish standards, a failure for a growing group of Jewish women in the feminist movement.

This sentiment only continued to evolve in the five years between conferences, manifesting in full force during the 1980 UN Women’s Conference in Copenhagen. Headlines like “Obscenity at Copenhagen” and “PLO Copenhagen conference takeover” appeared in droves as popular Jewish media outlets covered the unfolding drama, and delegates felt “terror” in the face of perceived militant anti-Semitism.⁷ “We kept hoping that in the intervening five

³ “Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace,” Accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.un-documents.net/mex-dec.htm>.

⁴ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 156.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶ While Arabs are considered Semites as well as Jews, and their experiences of persecution would fall under the label of anti-Semitism, in the writings and recollections of Jewish feminists the term anti-Semitism is used to convey their perceived experiences of anti-Jewish sentiment. For simplicity’s sake I will be using it in this way throughout this paper.

⁷ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 154-163. Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference*, 1-14. “PLO Copenhagen takeover conference outrages Jews.” *The New York Jewish Week*, May 11, 1980. Accessed November 16, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/371565956?accountid=14522>. “Obscenity at

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years solidarity and good sense would have overtaken global politics and Jewish women would be treated *as women*, and not held accountable for [the Israeli government's] policies," recalls Pogrebin. Unfortunately, this was not the case as Jewish feminists heard things like, "the only good Jew is a dead Jew," and, "the only way to rid the world of Zionism is to kill all the Jews."⁸ Instead of the marked improvement that Jewish American feminists had hoped for, Jewish delegates from around the world felt "terrorized" and "scared to death" as they navigated the conference.⁹ As conference attendee Helen Lewis stated in her 1981 report, "The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath: Implications for a Jewish Women's Agenda", "Jewish women felt isolated in the center of a pageant of international anti-Semitism."¹⁰

Amidst the ongoing conflict of international-feminist anti-Zionism, the Copenhagen conference exposed emerging fragmentation within the American feminist movement. While anti-Semitism in the American feminist movement predated the UN Women's Conference, it took on a wholly new significance within the context of an ideological attack on Israel.¹¹ Both majority and minority feminists, "refused to recognize Judaism as a legitimate form of identity," leading Jewish women in the movement to discuss instances of "the Three I's": invisibility, insult, and internalized oppression.¹² This time, though, anti-Semitism became apparent among some of the US delegates, particularly the women of color who were in attendance, as they accused the delegation of "deferring to the Jews" and could not understand why it "was wrong [to] say Zionism is racism."¹³ What was unique about this incarnation of "the oldest form

Copenhagen." *The New York Jewish Week*, August 17, 1980. Accessed November 16, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/371510760?accountid=14522>.

⁸ Ibid., 156.

⁹ Ibid., 156-157.

¹⁰ Helen S. Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath: Implications for a Jewish Woman's Agenda*. Box II 27, Folder 5, National Council of Jewish Women Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:2048/View/1639317>. (Accessed November 17, 2014)

¹¹ Antler, *The Journey Home*, 292-295. Letty Cottin Pogrebin. "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement." *Jewish Women's Archive*. June 1, 1982. Accessed November 15, 2014. <http://jwa.org/sites/jwa.org/files/jwa102e.pdf>. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power: Essays on Women, Jews, Violence, and Resistance* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books 1992), 92-109.

¹² Paula , "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women's Movement: Convergence and Divergence" In *American Jewish Identity Politics*, edited by Deborah Dash Moore, 226.

¹³ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 157. Antler, *The Journey Home*, 275.

of racism” was the way in which anti-Semitism appeared in both majority and minority sides of the movement.¹⁴ Neither fully accepted by the white majority feminists nor by the minority feminists, anti-Semitism in the American women's movement went unexamined by Jews and non-Jews alike until the first UN Women's Conference in 1975. By the Copenhagen conference in 1980 it could no longer be ignored. Impelled by the slanders at Copenhagen, anti-Semitism, coupled with a challenge to Zionism, became a central issue for those within the Women's movement who were beginning to identify, specifically, as Jewish feminists. Only with the removal of the “Zionism is racism” clause at the final conference in Nairobi in 1985 did that sense of failure begin to dissipate and a distinctly Jewish Feminist identity cement itself as part of the American feminist discourse.

1975 marked a turning point in the formation of a Jewish feminist identity. “The Declaration of Mexico was the initial ‘click’ that started me on my life as a *Jewish-feminist*,” noted Pogrebin in a sentiment which also held true for many of the other Jewish-American delegates.¹⁵ Anti-Semitism was nothing new to the women's movement, but for many of the Jewish-American delegates something shifted in the nature of Zionist critiques at this conference. The PLO and their backers struck a nerve with many of the Jewish delegates, but especially the Americans, when their opponents attacked a critical part of their identity: Israel. 1975 marked the moment in which Israel and Zionism became critical for not just a Jewish-American identity, a place it held long before, but for a Jewish-American Feminist identity. Before 1975, Jewish women within the American feminist movement did not label themselves as specifically Jewish feminists. Within a movement that strove for a cohesive and unified idea of “sisterhood” Jewish women were loath to single themselves out as different from the white “majority” of feminists. Not all women of Jewish descent made the change to identifying as Jewish feminists during this period, but, for those that did, Zionism, and thus a strong identification with Israel, was a key factor. It was only after perceived experiences of anti-Semitism, now conflated with anti-Zionism, that a distinct Jewish feminist identity emerged.

In order to understand the events that transpired at the first two UN Women's Conferences it is imperative to understand the diverse conceptions of Israel and Zionism by 1975. In order to comprehend these paradigms it is necessary to examine the much fraught history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

¹⁴Pogrebin, "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement." 10-12. Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 98.

¹⁵Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 154-163. Antler, *The Journey Home*, 274-279. Diner, and Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her*, 340. Helen Lewis *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath: Implications for a Jewish Woman's Agenda*, (1980) 3-5.

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A conflict which effectively began at the turn of the 20th century, by the 1970s the international perceptions of the Israeli- Arab conflict had shifted from the original views of 1948. Established in May of 1948 the state of Israel was immediately invaded by five neighboring Arab armies, inaugurating a renewed era of conflict within the region. The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 ultimately resulted in a military and public relations victory for Israel. International opinion favored granting Israel as a home to Jews for the many hardships they endured as one of history's greatest underdogs, especially as victims of the Holocaust, and finally now also for holding their own against aggression from much larger neighbors.¹⁶ This view held until 1967 when the Six Days War shifted international sympathies, except those of the United States, toward greater sympathy for the plight of Palestinians, particularly as territorial gains made by Israel exacerbated an already acute Palestinian refugee crisis. The conflict began when, in response to the mobilization of its Arab neighbors, Israel staged a sudden preemptive air assault, destroying Egypt's air force on the ground as well as largely incapacitating Jordanian and Syrian air power. Without this air cover the Arab armies were left vulnerable, which enabled a swift and overwhelming Israeli victory. By the time the United Nations ceasefire came into effect six days later, Israel had tripled its territory bringing the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and the Sinai Peninsula under its control. The warfare and Israeli territorial expansion resulted in the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and brought more than one million Palestinians in the occupied territories under Israeli rule.¹⁷ Among the Palestinians though, "the 1967 war in fact inaugurated a period of national reintegration and institutional renewal, along with the daily burdens of Israeli occupation."¹⁸ Six years later in 1973, in an effort to reclaim lost territories, the Egyptian and Syrian armies launched a coordinated attack in what would become known by Israel as the Yom Kippur War and the Ramadan War by Arab forces. In this instance, the assault almost overwhelmed Israel and it was only with material aid from the U.S. that Israel was able to rebound.¹⁹ The attack threatened the country's very existence in a way that reminded the worldwide Jewish community of the Holocaust a generation earlier. For a generation of "young devout Israelis" the 1973 war had the psychological effect

¹⁶ Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History*, 210.

¹⁷ "The Six Days War," last modified November 12, 2014,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/850855/Six-Day-War>, paragraph 4.

Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History*, 210.

¹⁸ Baruch Kimmerling and Joel Migdal *Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2003), 214.

¹⁹ Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History*, 212.

of underlining Israel's precarious position in the Middle East and justifying annexation of surrounding territories as a defensive measure against future invasions.²⁰

In response to these events two distinct narratives arose among Jewish feminists, Palestinian and other subaltern feminists. A description that accounts for both views is the idea that Israel used a "colonial strategy to create a national home and were continuing that strategy in a post-colonial world."²¹ To Jewish women Zionism was a nationalist movement, arising in the same spirit of self-determination seen throughout the world in the wake of World War II. "To me," writes Pogrebin, "Zionism is simply an affirmative action plan on a national scale. Just as legal remedies are justified in reparation for racism and sexism, the Law of Return to Israel is justified, if not by Jewish religious and ethnic claims, then by the intransigence of worldwide anti-Semitism."²² Prominent Jewish Feminist and United States senator Bella Abzug expressed a similar sentiment during the 1980 UN Women's Conference, describing Zionism as a "liberation movement for a people who have been persecuted all their lives throughout human history," as Israel literally and figuratively was a place of refuge among the world's Jews in the wake of the Holocaust and centuries of anti-Semitism.²³ In the converse, Palestinian feminists, as well as other subaltern delegates, viewed Zionism as a continuation of the Western imperialism that had plagued the region since the turn of the century. The existence of the state of Israel ran counter to the Palestinian view of self-determination, and the Right of Return law, so celebrated by their Jewish counterparts, was a slap in the face to the people who were treated as second-class citizens by Jewish Israelis whom these Palestinians viewed as an occupying force.²⁴ Both groups held the goal of self-determination within the region and a fundamental difference of understanding as to who had the right to pursue it. Ultimately it was this mutually exclusive common ground that would continue to put them in conflict with one another for years to come.

Throughout the UN Women's Decade in which these conferences took place, these issues were compounded by the disparate definitions of what constituted a women's issue. For subaltern feminists the idea that, "the real solution for women" could be found within "the framework of national struggle"

²⁰ Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History*, 259.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

²² Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*,

²³ Antler, *The Journey Home*, 275.

²⁴ Kimmerling and Migdal *Palestinian People*, 312.

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predominated.²⁵ Western feminists, particularly American feminists and Jewish feminists, held that the conference should be reserved for gender specific issues. Thus, when the Palestinians and other subaltern delegates, through their additions to the resolutions, brought global politics into the conference it was perceived by the American and Jewish feminists as a “transparent attempt to manipulate the women’s movement” by “politicizing the forum.”²⁶

Among the American contingent, views over the actions of the Palestinians and other subaltern delegates varied. Among American women of color and radical feminists, the sentiments were typically pro-Palestinian. Black feminists for example, who tended to view Jewish women as predominately white, identified with the plight of the Palestinians, through race and gender, in ways that they simply could not with Jewish women. “Often,” writes Barbara Smith in 1985, “Black women and other women of color feel a visceral identification with the Palestinians because.... they are people of color struggling for the liberation of their homeland.” Criticisms of Israel were often coupled with an “obligatory” anti-Semitic remark as the line between the predominately male-run Israeli state and all Jewish women was frequently blurred due to this particular kind of solidarity Black Feminists felt with the Palestinian cause.²⁷

Zionism itself has remained a dynamic concept throughout its history. By the UN Women’s Decade, a subtle distinction had emerged in the utilization of its rhetoric. Author Steven M. Cohen argues that by the 1970s there was far more pro-Israelism than classical Zionism in the way American Jews were identifying as Zionists. “To most American Jews, a Zionist is someone who believes in the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people,” a firm believer in the necessity and merit of Israel’s existence and its right to exist.²⁸ What this definition eschews is the imperative to end the diaspora and move to Israel, which constituted an earlier understanding of Zionism. With the recent traumas of the Holocaust still fresh, the UN Women’s Decade instilled a sense of urgency in the concept of Zionism so present in Abzug, Pogrebin, and other emerging Jewish feminists. The Jewish American feminists, like most American Jews, had come to define Zionism in this way.

“I have come to consider anti-Zionism as tantamount to anti-Semitism because the political reality is that its bottom line is an end to the Jews,” notes

²⁵ Kimmerling and Migdal *Palestinian People*, 310. Charlotte Bunch. “Opening Doors for Feminism: UN World Conferences on Women”. *Journal of Women's History* 24 (2012): 215-216.

²⁶ “Women’s Conference Opens With Dispute” *The Boston Globe* 1985.

²⁷ Smith, *The Truth that Never Hurts*, 149.

²⁸ Ben-Horin and Gordis, *Jewish Identity in America*, 122-123.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin in her memoir, a sentiment that can be found in the results of multiple surveys conducted by the American Jewish Congress during the 1980s. This survey found that, for most of American Jewry, their feelings about Israel were associated with fear instead of hope for the future, a sharp contrast from previous Jewish paradigms about Israel.²⁹ As much as Israel had become a “macho stand-in for the patriarchy” to subaltern feminists and non-Jews alike, it and the ideology of Zionism had taken on an increased importance in the 1970s for American Jews, over two-thirds of whom considered Israel important to their conception of being Jewish.³⁰ American Jews, specifically, had a distinct relationship to Israel in the wake of the Holocaust. Many American Jews felt it had merely been the good fortune of timing and geography which had saved them from the same fate as their European fellows and saw it as their duty to support Israel, regardless whether or not they planned to move there in the future (as Zionism’s original vision encouraged).³¹ They viewed Zionism, as congresswoman and conference attendee Bella Abzug described, as “a liberation movement for a people who have been persecuted all their lives and throughout human history,” and as “affirmative action on a global scale.” Any affront on Israel or Zionism was as an attack on the survival of the Jewish people. With this paradigm they felt obligated to lobby for exclusion of the “Zionism is racism” clause until it was successfully removed at the third UN Women’s conference held in Nairobi in 1985.³²

It was only through victimization, within the U.S women's movement and at the UN Women’s Conferences that a Jewish identity, and one specifically linked to Zionism, became a crucial part of being a Jewish feminist in America. Experiences of anti-Semitism within the US women’s movement remained critical to understanding this process of perceived victimization and the importance of Israel to emerging Jewish Feminists. Anti-Semitism in the United States, during the 20th century, was a complex issue involving elements of religion, race, and class and functioning through a process of erasure. Through

²⁹ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 210. David Gordis, and Yoav Ben Horin., *Jewish Identity in America* (Weinstein Institute: Los Angeles 1991), 120-126.

³⁰ Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 98. Gordis and Ben Horin, *Jewish Identity*, 120.

³¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999) 32. Gordis and Ben Horin, *Jewish Identity*, 120-126.

³² Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 157. Bella Abzug. “Preparation’s payoff: Anti-Zionism muted, Feminism advanced at Nairobi.” *The New York Jewish Week*, August 2, 1985. Accessed November 16, 2014.

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/371611352?accountid=14522>. Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference, 9-14*. Michael Levin, “What Nairobi Wrought.” *Commentary*, October 1, 1985. Accessed November 5, 2014.

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/what-nairobi-wrought/>.

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these main themes Jewish women in the feminist movement were targeted, for a variety of reasons and by a diverse array of groups.

Within the American women's movement, Jewish women began to experience more ideologically targeted anti-Semitism from other feminists, the majority of whom were Christians. This anti-Jewish strain of "Christian" feminism was rooted in the first wave feminist movement. Starting with Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1895 *The Women's Bible*, American Christian feminists blamed the "contempt for women" found in Christianity as a "Jewish dispensation" with overt anti-Jewish, anti-Old Testament rhetoric. This rhetoric characterized the movement until the early 20th century when their contempt was aimed at immigrants in general, rather than singling out one specific group.³³ This idea reemerged in the 1960s and 70s as Christian feminists, engaging the idea of Jesus as a feminist, sought to relegate the source of patriarchy to their much-abused forebear, Judaism. As religious scholar Judith Plaskow wrote in 1980,

There is a new myth developing in Christian feminist circles.... It is a myth... which perpetuates traditional Christianity's negative picture of Judaism by attributing sexist attitudes to Christianity's Jewish origins, at the same time maintaining that Christianity's distinctive contributions to the "woman question" are largely positive.³⁴

She goes on to describe another, "weapon in the Christian anti-Judaic arsenal," the myth of Jewish women's plight in biblical times has been exaggerated in order to underscore Jesus' revolutionary actions as an early feminist. Plaskow's criticism considers these works scholarly deficient in their interpretations of Talmudic sources and rabbinic opinion, yet indicative of the religious base for anti-Semitism in the women's movement. In this sense the coexistence of Christianity and feminism, for emerging Christian feminists, was achieved at the expense of Judaism and its reputation. Plaskow ends her article with the statement that, "the feminist revolution has furnished one more occasion for the projection of Christian failure onto Judaism," as "new" interpretations from Christian feminists merely perpetuated earlier anti-Semitic rhetoric.³⁵

³³ Antler, *The Journey Home*, 71. Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, edited. *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia, Volume I*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 409.

³⁴ Judith Plaskow, "Blaming Jews for Inventing Patriarchy," *Lilith*, 1980.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

In addition to anti-Semitism on the basis of religion, were class-inspired paradigms of anti-Semitism. White Christian, minority, and radical feminists all deemed the oppression of Jews impossible because of the general appearance of economic prosperity among many Jews. Again, this new incarnation of anti-Semitism in the women's movement played upon older tropes of Jewish wealth, influence, and power³⁶. Author and activist Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz extensively covers the systems that allowed anti-Semitism to continue not just in American society, but in some of the most progressive sects of it: the left and the feminist movement. Kaye/Kantrowitz identified herself as a lesbian, a radical feminist, and member of the new left, all roles that were deeply intertwined with her Jewish upbringing and sense of identity.³⁷ "By speaking about anti-Semitism," Kaye/Kantrowitz writes in her 1985 article reflecting upon her experiences in the feminist and new left movements, "Jewish women unsettle an unspoken equation in the radical women's movement: in a society like ours, deeply racist and absurdly pretending to classlessness, class comes to be seen as identical to race."³⁸ Within this paradigm Jews lacked the valid platform to express experiences of anti-Semitic oppression largely due to their predominantly white skin and universal perceptions of Jewish financial success and wealth. This rhetoric, on the part of the women's movement and other radical movements, did a disservice not only to Jews but to any middle class minority or working class white person. Their argument that wealth was inherent to race (although running counter to the aims of both the Women's movement and New Left) ultimately barred Jews from having the legitimacy to voice concerns of anti-Semitism. Kaye/Kantrowitz made it apparent that in order for these groups to become responsive to a dialogue on anti-Semitism these ideas, class and race, needed to be separated into their own distinct entities.³⁹

Anti-Semitism within the women's movement was not a racially exclusive view, as both white and Black feminists perpetrated anti-Semitic acts. These interactions reflected the complex relationship in the racial perceptions of Jews throughout American history, and their only recent transition from "other" within the American racial context.⁴⁰ Jews, until the first quarter of the 20th century, held an ambiguous position along the black-white polarization of America's racial divide. "Whether Jews described themselves as a nation, a race, or merely a religious group," notes historian Eric Goldstein, "depended upon the

³⁶ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 210. Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 98.

³⁷ Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 75-139.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁹ Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 83-84.

⁴⁰ Goldstein

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opportunities and pressures presented by their participation in the wider world.”⁴¹ “Jews were a racial conundrum,” as they simultaneously demonstrated “outsider racial behavior” with admirable industrious qualities, endowed with the capability of eventually assimilating into the majority white culture.⁴² Goldstein argues rather than a successful transformation into full-fledged members of the white community, the unique position of Jews led to a negotiation of whiteness, implicating an essential tension between whiteness and Jewishness.⁴³ By 1970, the generation of Jewish women working within the women’s movement would have come of age within a discourse of tentative whiteness, through which the outside world would mark them as both other and oppressor.

In practice, these perceived racial differences emerged in acts of “covert anti-Semitism.”⁴⁴ Kay/Kantrowitz and Pogrebin recall *WASP* (white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant) women describing their Jewish counterparts as “pushy, loud, moneygrubbing” and “exploitative.”⁴⁵ While Jewish women were predominately white they still were not fully accepted by the group with which they physically bore a resemblance.⁴⁶ This exclusion was supposedly due to their less than demure behavior, but it more likely resulted from the ways that Jews often broke the subtle racial and social norms of the WASP community.⁴⁷ Examples of this can be further extrapolated from the potent stereotypes of the Jewish Mother and the Jewish American Princess. Originating in fictional works of the 1950s and 60s, through the works of Herman Wouk and Philip Roth, both caricatures in their continued use imbued negative stereotypes of femininity with a distinct sense of Jewishness. The Jewish Mother was “pushy, materialistic, [dominating] their families, living through their children and belittling their weak and ineffectual husbands,” while the Jewish American Princess was “a materialistic child-woman, indulged by her parents and educated to lure a husband.”⁴⁸ The two women were integrally linked, as the Princess was merely the Mother before

⁴¹ Eric Goldstein, “‘Different Blood Flows in Our Veins’: Race and Jewish Self Determination in Late Nineteenth Century America.” *American Jewish History* 85.1 (1997): 29-55.

⁴² Goldstein. *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, 2-4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

⁴⁴ Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue Is Power*, 82-85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Also it is important to note that while there are a variety of Jewish ethnic groups, the American Jewish population is primarily comprised of Ashkenazi Jews, originating from Eastern Europe. Most of the Jewish women prominent in the American women’s movement were of Ashkenazi ancestry.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Antler, *The Journey Home*, 266. Pogrebin, *Deborah Golda and Me*, 217.

marrying, implying that their sole purpose and want in life was to marry and reproduce in a suitably affluent suburb: the antithesis of much of the feminist movement's message.⁴⁹ What is most jarring is that these corrosive tropes were not used exclusively by men. They were also used by many women, even shockingly, women who were engaged in the feminist movement. Gentile feminists were not troubled by the negative connotations for women in these stereotypes since they only applied to Jewish women. The use of these terms also reflects the further link between class and race in the case of the Jews, as these fictitious caricatures were linked to Judaism more through stereotypes of greed than through any acts of overt religious practice.

As many of the Jewish women in the feminist movement at the time later recalled, they began to identify and feel more comfortable around the minority feminists, but the feeling was not mutual. Most apparent in the relationship between Black and Jewish feminists, divisive histories, cultures, and the contemporary statuses of each group ultimately acted as a barrier to mutual understanding. "There is a close, often unspoken bond between Jewish and Black women that grows out of their awareness of oppression and injustice, an awareness many Gentile women simply do not have," writes Pogrebin. Each group identified with a history of politically imposed suffering and impacts that were "brutally similar," including "segregation, ghettoization, physical violence, and death on such a massive scale that it is genocidal." All of these experiences were suffered primarily at the hands of the white Christian majority making Jews and Blacks practical and ideological allies at times.⁵⁰ As the Jewish women in the feminist movement began to explore their own identity and articulate their specific needs and agenda within the larger movement they expected minority feminists, and especially Black feminists to be their allies due to these commonalities in their histories.⁵¹ "Not that I assumed experiences and issues for Jewish women and for gentile women of color were the same," Kay/Kantrowitz wrote in 1985, "but I did expect some sort of analogy to be apprehended. I expected that the movement would continue building on general principles, as well as differentiate what was unique ... this did not happen."⁵² In 1984 both Black and Jewish feminist communities saw their fraught relationship as a pressing issue to address, resulting in the book *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism*. One of its co-authors, Black feminist Barbara Smith, notes, "the early 1980s were an extremely volatile time for

⁴⁹ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda, and Me*, 263.

⁵⁰ Barbara Smith, *The Truth that Never Hurts: Writings on Race Gender and Freedom* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1998), 138.

⁵¹ Kay/Kantrowitz, *The Issue is Power*, 97. Pogrebin, *Deborah Golda and Me*, 154.

⁵² Kay/Kantrowitz, *The Issue is Power*, 97.

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relationships between Black and Jewish women.”⁵³ In her chapter, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” she reflects on this issue, stating: “our [Jewish and Black] respective ‘awareness of oppression’ leads us to believe that each other’s communities should ‘know better’ than to be racist or anti-Semitic,” because of mutual experiences of oppression.⁵⁴ But despite the impression that each group should “know better,” both groups agreed that in practice, Black women could still be anti-Semitic and Jewish women could still be racist. Smith continues that Jewish women were still seen as singularly white by most of the Black community; that is, white women who were capable of racist behavior and benefitted from white privilege. Black women in turn could be anti-Semitic, as anti-Semitism pervaded an American culture where, “classism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism float[ed] through the air, [were] embedded in the very soil,” unavoidable in the gentile communities regardless of race.⁵⁵

Almost universally, Jewish women were denied the social, political, and intellectual space to talk about their experiences of anti-Semitism in the context of oppression. A systematic belittling was commonplace in what Letty Cottin Pogrebin, in her 1982 *Ms.* magazine article, “Anti-Semitism in the Women’s Movement,” describes as the invisibility component of her famous “Three I’s.” Letty Cottin Pogrebin herself was a veteran of the women’s movement, heavily involved with the Jewish community, and helped cofound *Ms.* magazine in 1972, a seminal publication for second-wave feminists that covered a variety of national and international women’s issues. This broad scope included Pogrebin’s famous 1982 article on anti-Semitism in the women’s movement.⁵⁶ While the magazine only printed three of the letters responding to the article, *Ms.* actually received over three hundred letters, the majority of which supported Pogrebin’s presentation of contemporary anti-Semitism.⁵⁷ She argued that by systematically devaluing the legitimacy of their experience, in tandem with the open insults of anti-Semitism, non-Jewish feminists created an environment in which Jewish women were further discouraged from identifying publicly as Jewish. The perception remained that Jewish women who brought up these issues were lingering over “petty Jewish concerns” at the expense of the larger movement, yet other groups were allowed to fragment in order to pursue their own interests in a groups setting with little rebuke.

⁵³Smith, *The Truth that Never Hurts*, 132.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 137.

⁵⁶Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*.

⁵⁷Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 204.

As both groups searched for channels to express their identity within the context of the feminist movement, a variety of conflicts arose, mainly concerning the ways in which Jewish feminists approached the formation of their identity. A critique mentioned by Smith and Kaye/Kantrowitz is the idea of “Scarcity Theory,” the notion that there is not enough of whatever is needed, in this case political and social energy, to go around, and “everything is skin off somebody’s nose.”⁵⁸ In Kaye/Kantrowitz’s experiences, gentiles and minority feminists viewed anti-Semitism in the movement as a low priority, and one for which precious resources could not be spared. They saw Jews as “draining the movement, of competing for victim status, and ignoring advantages and options open to [them].”⁵⁹ In writing about the “negative dynamics between Black and Jewish women in the movement” Smith questions, “whom it serves when we permit internal hostility to tear the movement apart?” She blames the way that Jewish women went about asserting their identity for much of the hostility between the two groups.⁶⁰ The underlying message to many Jewish women was that publicly forging a Jewish identity that would coexist with their idea of themselves as feminists was invalid and unimportant.

These prejudices came to the forefront as identity politics entered the American political sphere during the 1970s. Emerging from the ranks of student activists in the civil rights movement, as well as the New Left, and as a response to the Black Power movement, identity politics grew with the feminist idea that “the personal is political.”⁶¹ For Jews in general it meant trying “to bring Jewishness together with political elements of an identity,” and for Jewish-American feminists there was the added struggle of attempting to incorporate this with their identities’ as feminists. Pogrebin, Betty Freidan, Judith Plaskow, and other important Jewish feminists recorded similar experiences of falling away from a religion that devalued them based on their gender. As members of a patriarchal religion, these women, who were raised in the tradition and values of Judaism and taught to consider it an integral part of themselves, began to question whether, in essence, women actually matter within the faith. Tradition barred them from participation in a minyan, a quorum of ten Jewish adults required for important religious obligation, and the general bar set for determining power and identity within the Jewish religion. Both Pogrebin and Plaskow, reflecting upon experiences in which they were belittled by their exclusion from a minyan, express understanding for the first time that they could

⁵⁸ Kaye/Kantrowitz, *The Issue is Power*, 101.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁰ Smith, *The Truth that Never Hurts*, 140-141.

⁶¹ Deborah Dash Moore, “Introduction” in *American Jewish Identity Politics*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 1.

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never be “real” Jews. “I abandoned my father’s religion,” recounts Pogrebin. She continues that “[if] I didn’t count in the minyan for my mother’s Kaddish, I decided, I would count myself out all together,” expressing the sentiment of many women coming of age in the Jewish community during the 1950s and 60s who “left the fold in frustration or rage”.⁶² It was only in the mid-70s, with the advent of feminist Judaism and the goal of “nothing short of the eradication of supremacy, and gender inequality in Jewish life,” that women of Jewish origin in the feminist movement began to return to the fold of Judaism and identify with the religion in their private life, in a way they previously had not.⁶³

Historian Daniel Horowitz breaks Jewish feminism into two distinct time periods: before and after 1970. He argues that before the 1970s Jewish women involved in the feminist movement did not incorporate their Jewish identity into their public feminist identity. He writes, “Among Popular Front feminists of the 1960s Jewish women were represented to an extraordinary degree,” but they did not openly identify to others, or for many self-identify, as Jewish until the next decade.⁶⁴ 1960s feminism was predominately secular, as a universalist approach was utilized in addressing the needs of women in the United States. Horowitz goes on to argue, “The general feminist movement of the 1960s raised the consciousness of tens of thousands of women who, in the next decade participated in the creation and development of Jewish feminism.” Quoting Judith Plaskow’s presentation at the 1973 National Jewish Women’s Conference, “we are here because a secular movement for the liberation of women has made it imperative that we raise certain Jewish issues now.”⁶⁵ At the beginning of the decade Jewish women in the feminist movement were bringing the lessons of feminism back into Judaism in an unprecedented way by identifying within the Jewish community as feminists. A prime example of this can be found in the 1976 publication of *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, the premier feminist liturgy. It included a variety of prayers and services rewritten in order to promote gender equality in the practice of Judaism. The new liturgy was less a rejection of previous Jewish tradition than an expansion of its parameters in order to include a wider base of followers. In turn it was only as they attempted to bring their

⁶² Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “Letty Cottin Pogrebin,” in *Transforming the Faith of Our Fathers: Women who Changed American Religion*, ed. Anne Braude et al. (New York: Pelgrave Macmillian, 2004), 38-39, 41.

⁶³ Pogrebin, “Letty Cottin Pogrebin,” 42. Daniel Horowitz, “Jewish Women Remaking American Feminism” in *A Jewish Feminine Mystique: Jewish Women in Post War America*, ed. Hasia Diner, Shira Kohn, and Rachel Kranson. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 243-248.

⁶⁴ Horowitz, “Jewish Women”, 245.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 243-244.

Jewish identity into the fold of the women's movement that they experienced renewed experiences of anti-Semitism in that context. Until the UN conferences these were issues of private identity, Jewish women working within the Jewish community to reform patriarchal practices in ways that would adequately reconcile feminism with Judaism. However, the slanders of the 1975 conference in Mexico forced them to "go public" and assert their Jewish identity within the feminist movement with renewed vigor, as well as encouraging them to express that which made Zionism an integral part of publicly identifying as a Jewish Feminist.⁶⁶

The crucial role of Zionism in the public, Jewish feminist identity is further underscored by the example of women of Jewish descent who did not identify with but, rather, actively challenged the Zionist component of their identity. Multiple examples can be found of Jewish women who have been critical of Pogrebin and other's accusations of anti-Semitism within the Women's Movement. "Pogrebin's article disturbs us as feminists and as Jews," begins one letter to *Ms. Magazine* in response to Pogrebin's famous 1982 article, "Anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement."⁶⁷ The critical response, according to its authors, was penned by ten "feminists and Jews" but not Jewish feminists. The wording they used contains the implication that these identities are and ought to be separate, with neither experience actually or ideally influencing the other. They further underscore this position with their assertion, that "within the Women's movement a politics of identity (Jewish, black, lesbian, disabled, fat and so on) appears to be superseding a politics of issues" and is a cause for "distress" among them.⁶⁸ These women, while claiming some degree of identification with Judaism, clearly do not identify as "Jewish feminists" and even actively argue against the inclusion of any additional identification within the women's movement. Another example of this can be found in the work of Ellen Cantarow who, writing in 1988, compares her upbringing to Pogrebin's. Cantarow identifies herself as having been "raised Jewish," thereby setting a conditional relationship with her Jewish identity while continuing to disassociate it from her feminist identity. In this same vein Robin Morgan, a radical feminist and co-founder of the New York Radical Feminists as well as the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, described herself as an "apostate Jew," or ethnically Jewish but with no more identification with the religion than the average American and no mention of how it related to her feminist identity.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Pogrebin, "Letty Cottin Pogrebin," 45.

⁶⁷ "Letters Forum: Anti-Semitism," *Ms.* February, 1983, 11-16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Hyman and Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, 414.

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Beyond the language used to describe their Jewish and feminist identities, the women of Jewish descent who did not identify with the Jewish feminists expressed similar opinions when it came to anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, and the legitimacy of other feminists' claims concerning these issues. Cantarow articulates this specific stance best in her article, "Zionism, Anti-Semitism and Jewish Identity in the Women's Movement," in which she states, "when the women's movement began focusing on diversity and difference, Jewish women became aware of anti-Semitism." Cantarow further explains that the renewed awareness to anti-Semitism was more reactionary than legitimate in this context. She claims to have had "no experiences [she] would call anti-Semitic," and is particularly critical of Pogrebin's claims of rampant anti-Semitism in the movement.⁷⁰ Cantarow's sentiments were echoed by the printed responses to Pogrebin's "instantly (in)famous" 1982 article for *Ms. Magazine*.⁷¹ "What is the source of current and we believe disproportionate concern with anti-Semitism in the Women's Movement?" the letter asks, continuing on to assert that the concern with anti-Semitism, rather than a reality of the Women's movement, was merely a "response to the recent focus on racism."⁷² The authors further questioned if Pogrebin, and others that shared her opinion, were merely competing for victim status rather than enduring such oppression.⁷³ They leveled the critique that "an assertion of Jewish identity and a focus on anti-Semitism" in the women's movement was merely an avenue for "many Jewish feminists to participate in the politics of oppression" as victims rather than oppressors.⁷⁴ These women made it clear that they experienced anti-Semitism as a problem in the 30s, 40s, and 50s but thought it was of historical importance rather than an issue relevant to the contemporary women's movement of the 70s and 80s.

This lack of perceived anti-Semitism influenced the role that Israel and Zionism played in the lives of these women and consequently how they formed their identity. As surveys by the American Jewish Congress concluded, views of Israel among American Jews were predominately shaped by fear of anti-Semitism, with Israel's existence perceived as a safeguard against another Holocaust.⁷⁵ All of these women expressed ambivalence toward fierce criticisms of Israel that in some cases entered the intellectual territory of anti-Zionism. Morgan was known for her outspoken pro-Palestinian views, while Cantarow and

⁷⁰ Cantarow, "Zionism", 40.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷² "Letters Forum: Anti-Semitism," *Ms.* February, 1983, 11-16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Gordis and Ben Horin, *Jewish Identity*, 43-45.

the women of the *Ms.* Letter offer hefty critiques of Israel and its government.⁷⁶ They particularly cite the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the first instance in which Israel was arguably on the unilateral offensive in the region. These feminists of Jewish descent labeled it “the genocidal invasion of Lebanon by Israel,” and asserted, “the events of summer 1982 threw Zionism and Israel into stark relief with the Women’s Movement.”⁷⁷ While these women were loath to equate Zionism directly to racism, they made frequent allusions to Zionism as imperialistic and aggressive, a sharp contrast to Bella Abzug and other Jewish feminists’ idea of Zionism as affirmative action for the Jewish people on a global scale.⁷⁸ These women, who did not perceive anti-Semitism in the Women’s Movement, also did not consider Israel a necessity of the Jewish experience, and examined Israel through a predominately Leftist lens. Thus, as these women of similar backgrounds and values – Jewish background and feminist values – encountered the events of the UN Women’s Conference it is the perception, or lack thereof, of a threat to Israel and Jewish safety that separated self-identification among these women.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, the confrontation of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism during the UN Women’s Decade brought Jewish women who had previously been uninvolved with the Women’s movement into the feminist fold under the label of Jewish American Feminists. The most compelling example of this can be found in Hadassah, the American Zionist women’s organization and the largest Jewish women’s organization at the time.⁷⁹ According to historian Marlin Levin, “Hadassah’s full-fledged entry into the women’s movement aptly came on an issue that challenged its Zionist identity,” that issue being the “Zionism is racism” resolution passed as part of the Declaration of Mexico in 1975.⁸⁰ As President of Hadassah and attendee of all three conferences of the UN Women’s Decade, Bernice Tannenbaum, put it: “until that time we were standoffish about women’s issues,” preferring to stick to Zionist problems in their official agenda. Hadassah, since its inception in 1912, existed as a cornerstone in the Jewish tradition of women’s activism whereby American Jewish women were consistently offered the platform for leadership and equality in aiding the Zionist vision, which were frequently not afforded to

⁷⁶ Hyman and Moore, *Jewish Women in America*, 414. Cantarow, “Zionism”, 42. “Letters Forum: Anti-Semitism,” *Ms.* February, 1983, 11-16.

⁷⁷ “Letters Forum: Anti-Semitism,” *Ms.* February, 1983, 11. Cantarow, “Zionism”, 42.

⁷⁸ “Preparation’s payoff: Anti-Zionism muted.” *The New York Jewish Week*. Antler, *The Journey Home*, 268. Pogrebin, *Deborah Golda and Me*, 211.

⁷⁹ Marlin Levin, *It Takes a Dream: The Story of Hadassah* (New York: Gefen Books, 1997), 343.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 343-344.

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them in other aspects of society.⁸¹ The conference provided the perceived threat necessary for Jewish women not previously involved in the women's movement to explore a formal feminist identity and join the group identifying as Jewish American Feminists. Much like the feminists who affirmed their Jewish identity in the context of the women's movement in order to combat anti-Semitism, the women of Hadassah entered the women's movement, affirming formal feminist identities. By 1975 Zionism and Feminism had merged themselves into a quandary that had to be addressed, pushing Hadassah to play an active role in the UN Women's Decade until the "Zionism is racism" clause was finally removed at the Nairobi conference in 1985.⁸² The women of Hadassah and their counterparts' disparate reactions to the events of the 1975 and 1980 conference reveal the importance of Zionism to the emerging sense of a specifically Jewish Feminist Identity, while underscoring the importance of negative encounters, like anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, in the formation of a Jewish Feminist identity.

Without these instances of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in 1975 and 1980 Jewish women, both within the feminist movement and outside of it, would have lacked the impetus to create the new label, Jewish Feminists. Women who self-identify as Jewish feminists acknowledge a feeling of oppression, at home and abroad, as the impetus for the formations of a decidedly public Jewish Feminist identity. With criticism from so many groups there was truly no benefit to publicly identifying as a Jewish feminist during this time period, other than to combat perceived oppression. For Jewish women who could easily "pass" due to their predominately white skin and middle-class backgrounds, identifying as a Jewish feminist meant marking themselves as other, in essence putting a target upon themselves, in order to combat their own oppression. Thus, for these women, their cultural, spiritual, and ethnic connection to Judaism was brought to the forefront of their secular identities.

By the third UN Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985 these women had fully immersed themselves in and internalized their Jewish feminist identities, committing to actively working for the removal of the "Zionism as racism" clause. This process began in the wake of Copenhagen, as hope for the (then) newly dubbed Jewish Feminists regrouped to form a cohesive strategy for the Nairobi Conference.⁸³ Helen Lewis's report, "The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath: Implications for a Jewish Women's Agenda," begins to lay out some of the issues Jewish feminists organized behind in detail as the "hope that

⁸¹ Ibid., 23-26.

⁸² Ibid., 343-346.

⁸³ Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath*, 2. Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 156., Levin, *It Takes a Dream*, 343-346., Antler

Copenhagen would transcend ideological and national differences and address the problems of all women” was abandoned.⁸⁴ For Nairobi, Jewish-American feminists eschewed hope for concerted preparation.⁸⁵ Lewis’s report outlines the issues so viscerally experienced in Copenhagen as well as a distinct line of action for how the Jewish feminists could confront the negative narrative dictated by the PLO and other subaltern delegates. Jewish feminists were thus tasked with protecting pluralism within the women’s movement while fostering an understanding of Jewish survival issues, like the threats of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.⁸⁶ Pogrebin describes action that fits with this spirit as she founded a series of Black-Jewish and Arab-Jewish dialogues, in order to foster some sort of united response to anti-Zionism, or at the very least provide a platform for dialogue less volatile than the international conferences.⁸⁷ At this point Jewish feminists had assumed the role of “emissaries,” the final part of the Cross identity model, and were prepared to cross and transcend group boundaries regularly as part of that role as well as provide advocacy for their group. By the time the American delegation and Jewish feminists arrived at the Nairobi conference they were prepared in an unprecedented manner and were able to get the “Zionism is Racism” clause removed. As Pogrebin put it, “this time Jewish Women come home battered but not broken.”⁸⁸

Congresswoman Bella Abzug put it best in her article for *The Jewish Weekly*:

As a Zionist ...and as a feminist ever since I can remember, I rejoice at the outcome of the Nairobi conference. By deleting Zionism as one of the major obstacles to the advancement of women obstacles which included racism, apartheid, exploitation and "all forms and manifestations of foreign occupation, domination and hegemony" we can now look with optimism to implementation of the document unanimously adopted by the official conference called "Forward Looking Strategies: 1986 to the year 2000."

As the UN International Women’s Decade came to a close, an unprecedented change in self-identification had transpired among Jewish women in the

⁸⁴ Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath*, 2. Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 158-163.

⁸⁵ Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath*, 1-14. Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 158-163.

⁸⁶ Lewis, *The Copenhagen Conference and its Aftermath*, 10. Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 158-163.

⁸⁷ Pogrebin, *Deborah, Golda and Me*, 161, 335-340. Preparation pays off.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

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American feminist movement. Through forced engagement with anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism on the national and international stage, Jewish women in the feminist movement evolved their self-conception so that they were able to embrace every facet of their identity. These experiences, while in essence very personal to each woman, reflected a larger trend for Jewish women in the feminist movement. The “Zionism is racism” clause ultimately defined the parameters of what it meant to be a Jewish American Feminist during the UN Women's Decade, as the threat of anti-Semitism in the women's movement made Israel and Zionism a necessary component of how these women defined themselves as Jewish feminists. In the end, the three conferences of the UN Women's Decade and the events that transpired marked the beginning of a public Jewish Feminist identity, one in which, Letty Cottin Pogrebin notes, “everything we do reflects our Jewishness.”⁸⁹

Hannah Milstein is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in History at SFSU. Her field of study is 20th century American history and her research interests include issues of gender and religion, feminist movements, and soundscapes.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 200.

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