Are Jews Oppressed? Response by Judy Andreas

This may be read as Judy Andreas’s response to this piece (essentially Monday’s blog entry) by Ralph Seliger. Judy Andreas is Director of Catalyst to Coalition and the FACING A CHALLENGE WITHIN Conference Series Coordinator.

The New York/New Jersey Area FAC conference – A Progressive Scholars’ and Activists’ Conference on Anti-Semitism & The Left – has generated some discussion about whether to consider Jews as oppressed. Here’s my take on the significance of this issue.

The Left generally situates groups in relation to oppression in this way:
THESE ETHNIC GROUPS ARE OPPRESSED: People of African descent, People of Asian and Pacific Island descent, People of Latin American descent, People of Native American descent, Arabs.
THESE ETHNIC GROUPS ARE NOT OPPRESSED: White People, Jews.
You see where this leads us.

Imagine the effect on millions of Gentile Progressive who accept this analysis. Many conclude that Jews do not deserve care as people oppressed by bigotry and have no place in coalitions of oppressed peoples. Rather, Jews are seen as well-to-do white oppressors whose power should be resisted. Jews, of course, are also affected by this analysis. (You see how closely this parallels the deeply-held belief about “Jewish power” that has been a prominent feature of anti-Semitism since the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were created in the early 1900’s. See Dr. Christopher MacDonald Dennis’ academic paper which documents this perception among college students today. Abstract on www.facingachallenge.com, click on “academic papers.”)

While you may disagree that situating groups due to privilege is an effective social change strategy, I maintain that it is basic in the culture of the Left, generally. This is the reality that I live in as an activist, whether or not I value identity politics. I believe the point is to use these concepts of oppression to challenge prejudice itself. But, when it comes to Jews, we as a multicultural Left have not yet developed theory, practice or organizations to challenge anti-Semitism.

The FACING A CHALLENGE WITHIN conference series is dedicated to Ricky Sherover Marcuse in the spirit of continuing development of her anti-oppression work. Ricky studied with the Frankfurt (Germany) School of Revolutionary Psychology, from which she created Unlearning Oppression theory and practice. You can learn more about Ricky’s life and work at www.unlearningracism.org We need theory such as this that explains how our emotional orientation to Jews underlies our beliefs and actions to effectively fight anti-Semitism....

Click here to read this entire article by Ms. Andreas, and a response by Ralph Seliger, at the Engage UK Forum Web site.