

# The New Look for Consortiumnews.com

Consortiumnews.com introduces a new look for the 15-year-old Web site.

Over the past couple of years, some readers have urged us to update our Web design and incorporate more of the modern bells and whistles now available for Internet sites. Well, we've finally taken a step in that direction.

However, in keeping with our emphasis on old-fashioned journalism, not technological pizzazz, we decided to keep the new design simple and straightforward. For more than 15 years, we have been producing original independent journalism for the Internet and what's most important is for our readers to easily find and access the stories.

So, our new look continues that emphasis on the articles and their readability.

In the days ahead, we hope to tweak the look, with increased use of photos and other graphics. There also are sure to be some wrinkles that need to be ironed out.

In the meantime, we invite your comments and suggestions.

Thanks,  
Robert Parry  
Editor

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## Turning a Blind Eye to Bahrain's Abuse

The Sunni-ruled kingdom of Bahrain is adopting repressive tactics to ensure that the island's Shiite majority doesn't gain significant political power. But Official Washington has been fairly muted in its criticism of Bahrain's king because the island is a strategic U.S. asset and a democratic system might be a boon to Iran, Lawrence Davidson explains. May 11, 2011

By Lawrence Davidson

**Editor's Note: Official Washington, with the neoconservative editors of the Washington Post and the New York Times in the lead, is pushing for more lethal violence to force "regime change" in Libya, but the view is far different regarding the cruel crackdown in Bahrain.**

**There, U.S. opinion leaders mostly look the other way because the repression is directed against Bahrain's Shiite majority, and it's feared that the Shiites**

**might ally with Shiite-ruled Iran, Washington's top villain in the region, as Lawrence Davidson notes in this guest essay:**

If you want to see how an ostensibly religious regime can be corrupted into something close to fascism, just take a look at contemporary Bahrain.

In February, there were a series of non-violent demonstrations staged mostly by the small kingdom's Shia majority (approximately 70 percent of the country's Muslim citizens.) These were held to protest the discriminatory practices of the country's Sunni monarchy.

The protests were soon violently suppressed by the Bahraini army and police, with the help of troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, it was what followed the crushing of the demonstrations that smacks of fascism.

Here is how a report from May 6 by Roy Gutman of the McClatchy Newspapers, puts it:

"Authorities have held secret trials where protesters have been sentenced to death, arrested prominent mainstream opposition politicians, jailed nurses and doctors who treated injured protesters, seized the health care system that had been run primarily by Shiites, fired 1,000 Shiite professionals and canceled their pensions, beat and arrested journalists, and forced the closure of the only opposition newspaper.

"Nothing, however, has struck harder at the fabric of this nation, where Shiites outnumber Sunnis nearly 4 to 1, than the destruction of Shiite worship centers."

As an important aside that can only shake your faith in the effectiveness of international law, it is to be noted that this repression is being carried out by a regime that, as Stephen Lendman tells us, "is a signatory to nearly every major international humanitarian and human rights law, including: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, among others."

Signing such instruments is an easy act of hypocrisy for most dictatorships and, as we will see, the one in Bahrain treats them as a form of convenient deception.

Today, Shiites make up approximately 20 percent of the world's Muslim population and are particularly concentrated in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain.

The tension between Sunnis and Shiites has its roots in a disagreement over the

proper order of succession following the death of the prophet Mohammad. As a consequence the Sunni majority has always seen Shiites as not quite orthodox, and so has often treated them in a discriminatory fashion.

This led to over 1,000 years of periodic struggle and competition, sometimes violent, between the two sects. Though none of this has been as horrid or prolonged as the wars of religion experienced by the Christian West, the potential for comparable bloodletting is there.

I think that there is little doubt that the prophet Mohammad would strongly disapprove of this aspect of Muslim history.

In his last sermon to his followers, delivered during his final pilgrimage to Mecca in 632 CE, he said, "Oh ye men, listen to my words and take them to heart: every Muslim is a brother to every other Muslim and you are now one brotherhood." Over the years this message has been disregarded all too often.

The Bahraini regime, which happens to be Sunni, has certainly forgotten this important message and treated the majority Shiite citizenry as anything but brothers. And, just as in every other case of prolonged discrimination, the result has been growing resentment.

The popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt served as incentives for Bahrain's Shiites to once more express their discontent in a nonviolent way. That the regime blames this all on Shia Iran is just an excuse.

It is the Bahraini monarchy's prejudicial policies that have brought about this situation – the truth is that King Hamad (the present ruler), his family and rest of the kingdom's ruling clique, pursue bigoted policies and then call that government.

So when it comes to Bahrain, you can forget about the fact that this is supposed to be a Muslim government. Islam has nothing to do with its ruling policies.

What you have is a minority regime which refuses to reform its indecent and inhumane ways. It is going to hold on to power by brute force and by doing so join the ranks of other regimes such as Pinochet's Chile, the Argentine military dictatorship that massacred its own people, the death-squad regimes of Central America, ad nauseum.

The next time King Hamad appears on the balcony of his palace to address his supporters, the man standing next to him will no doubt be the regime's "Lord High Executioner." The probable candidate for this position is Hamad's uncle, Salman al Khalifa, who is 75 years old and has been the country's prime minister for 40 years.

As the Gutman piece tells us, that is “a current world record.” This is not a Muslim Bahrain. This is a Fascist Bahrain.

What is the American connection to all of this? The U.S. Fifth Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf, is headquartered at a small 100-acre naval base at Bahrain (the base is presently being enlarged).

The U.S. has also designated Bahrain a “major non-NATO ally” and has a “defense pact” with that country. Thus, the United States is concerned about the fate of Bahrain.

It is reported that, at the time of the Egyptian protests, President Obama told both the Bahraini and the Saudi regimes that they should carry out major political reforms so as to prevent similar unrest in their own countries. Both were aghast at this advice and furious that the Obama administration abandoned the Mubarak dictatorship.

Obama has since been publicly silent on the issue of Bahrain. This is what happens when you climb into bed with dictators. If you are not willing to walk away from them, you must turn a blind eye to their behavior.

Historically, this has not been a problem for most American administrations. Abandoning Egypt’s Mubarak seems to be an exception to the rule.

Ever since the Egyptian protests ousted Mubarak, Washington’s rhetoric has been confusing. President Obama has often attempted to lay down what sounds like basic principles ones reflecting “who we (Americans) are as a nation.”

That is the kind of language Obama invoked to justify military intervention in Libya. We were going to “protect civilians” because that is who we are and that is what people like us do. Well, if this is a basic principle, if we allegedly act in this humane way as a function of who we are, should we not be consistent in our behavior?

What about the unfortunate Bahraini Shiites who are being trampled in a fascist manner by a dictatorship every bit as bad, if not worse, than the one in Libya?

I could easily throw in a number of other friendly regimes which have equal fascist potential such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Syria and Iran don’t quite fit here because they are presently not our friends.

Obama, with his principled rhetoric, has run into the inevitable problem of double standards. It is the kind of problem that makes you want to be an isolationist.

However, there is supposedly too much at stake to just walk away from a place

like Bahrain. For one thing there is the issue of keeping Middle East oil in “friendly” hands.

And just how big an issue is that? There is an old saying that has gone around Washington for decades and it is framed in the form of the question, “what are the Arab leaders who sit on a lot of oil going to do with it? Drink it?”

In other words, oil is a commercial product. It does not matter if the Saudis or the Bahrainis or the Iraqis or the Iranians, etc. agree with you or not. Whoever ends up in charge is going to sell their oil. So why support dictatorial regimes?

Why not back the protesters? We are all for democracy, or so we claim.

Alas, this is about more than oil. The dictators we now back are accepting of Israel and turn blind eyes to the destruction of the Palestinian people.

The democracies that might replace them are not likely to feel the same way. We already have intonations of this in post Mubarak Egypt. This situation has actually made undeclared allies of Israel and bloody regimes such as that in Bahrain (King Hamad has admitted cooperating with Israel).

Israel, in turn, has one of the strongest lobbies in Washington and, most of the time, shapes America’s Middle East foreign policy, particularly in Congress. Then, there is our shared, if exaggerated, fear of Shia Iran. Israel and its allied lobbies drive this fear forward in the U.S. and our dictator friends, like the Saudis and the Bahrainis, are also obsessed by it.

Remember, the protesters in Bahrain are overwhelmingly Shiite. If they were successful, Bahrain would most likely be a place friendly toward Iran. That would never do.

This year is not the first time Bahrain’s Shiites have protested their plight. There were protests throughout the 1990s which ended with the proclamation of the National Action Charter promising equality of opportunity for all.

This statement of theory has obviously not been sufficiently translated into practice. It turned out to be a convenient deception hence the 2011 troubles.

There is no reason to believe that the suppression of this year’s protests marks the end of Bahrain’s problems. As noted, most of the kingdom’s protests have been non-violent.

However, with the fascist tactics now adopted by the regime, non-violence is probably not going to be the popular response next time around. It is simply the case that, over time, the violence of the oppressed rises to the level of the

violence of the oppressor.

The next time there will likely be civil war in Bahrain.

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## The War Against Taxing the Rich

The Republicans have dug in their heels against any proposal to raise taxes on the rich, even opposing efforts to close loopholes for the oil industry which has been chalking up stunning profits simply by riding the wave of rising global oil prices. In return, big corporations have been very generous to the GOP, Michael Winship notes. May 10, 2011

By Michael Winship

**Editor's Note:** Republicans and their free-market allies argue that the United States is facing a spending crisis, not a revenue crisis, thus tax increases should be off the table. However, when they do consider tax changes, they usually talk about slashing middle-class tax breaks, like the mortgage-interest deduction, while further reducing the tax rate for the top-income bracket.

**It's as if in a nation with a shrinking middle class and growing disparity between rich and poor, the role of the federal government should be to squeeze the middle class more and loosen the belt for the over-indulged rich, as Michael Winship observes in this guest essay:**

Nothing is certain but death and taxes, it used to be said, but in the madcap times we live in, even they're up for grabs.

No matter what proof the White House provides that Osama bin Laden indeed has had his bucket kicked – and at this point even al-Qaeda admits he's dead – there still will be uncertainty.

Whether they ever release those damned photos or not, a lunatic few will continue to insist that Osama's alive and well and running a Papa John's Pizza in Marrakesh.

As for taxes, having to pay them is no longer a sure thing either, especially if you're a corporate giant like General Electric, with a thousand employees in its tax department, skilled in creative accounting. You'll recall recent reports that although GE made profits last year of \$5.1 billion in the United States and \$14.2 billion worldwide they would pay not a penny of federal income tax.

Chalk it up to billions of dollars of losses at GE Capital during the financial meltdown and a government tax break that allows companies to avoid paying U.S. taxes on profits made overseas while "actively financing" different kinds of deals.

It gets worse. In 2009, Exxon-Mobil didn't pay any taxes either, and last year, they had worldwide profits of \$30.46 billion. Neither did Bank of America or Chevron or Boeing.

According to a report last week from the office of the New York City Public Advocate, in 2009, the five companies, including GE, received a total of \$3.7 billion in federal tax benefits.

As *The New York Times'* David Kocieniewski reported in March, "Although the top corporate tax rate in the United States is 35 percent, one of the highest in the world, companies have been increasingly using a maze of shelters, tax credits and subsidies to pay far less. ...

"Such strategies, as well as changes in tax laws that encouraged some businesses and professionals to file as individuals, have pushed down the corporate share of the nation's tax receipts – from 30 percent of all federal revenue in the mid-1950s to 6.6 percent in 2009."

What's greasing the wheels for these advantages is, hold on to your hats, cash. Over the last decade, according to the NYC public advocate's report, those same five companies – GE, Exxon-Mobil, Bank of America, Chevron and Boeing – gave more than \$43.1 million to political campaigns.

During the 2009-2010 election cycle, the five spent a combined \$7.86 million in campaign contributions, a 7 percent jump over their 2007-2008 political spending.

"These tax breaks were put in place to promote growth and create jobs, not bankroll the political causes of corporate executives," Public Advocate Bill de Blasio said. "No company that can afford to spend millions of dollars to influence our elections should be pleading poverty come tax time."

And by the way, those campaign cash figures don't even include all the money those companies funneled into the 2010 campaigns via trade associations and tax-

exempt non-profits.

Thanks to the Supreme Court *Citizens United* decision, we don't know the numbers because, as per the court, the corporate biggies don't have to tell us. Imagine them sticking out their tongues and wiggling their fingers in their ears and you have a pretty good idea of their official position on this.

Meanwhile, last week Republicans like Utah's Orrin Hatch, ranking member of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, grabbed hold of an analysis by Congress' nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation and wrestled it to the ground.

The brief memorandum reported that in the 2009 tax year 51 percent of all American taxpayers had zero tax liability or received a refund. So why, the Republicans asked, are Democrats and others so mean, asking corporations and the rich to pay higher taxes when lots of other people – especially the poor and middle class – don't pay taxes either?

Hatch told MSNBC, "Bastiat, the great economist of the past, said the place where you've got to get revenues has to come from the middle class. That's the huge number of people that are there. So the system does need to be revamped... We have an unbalanced tax code that we've got to change."

All of which flies in the face of reality.

As Travis Waldron of the progressive *ThinkProgress* website explained, "The majority of Americans who do not pay federal income taxes don't make enough money to qualify for even the lowest tax bracket, a problem made worse by the economic recession. That includes retired Americans, who don't pay income taxes because they earn very little income, if they earn any at all.

"And while many low-income Americans don't pay income taxes, they do pay taxes. Because of payroll and sales taxes – a large proportion of which are paid by low- and middle-income Americans – less than a quarter of the nation's households don't contribute to federal tax receipts – and the majority of the non-contributors are students, the elderly, or the unemployed."

What's more, *ThinkProgress* notes, "The top 400 taxpayers – who have more wealth than half of all Americans combined – are paying lower taxes than they have in a generation, as their tax responsibilities have slowly collapsed since the New Deal era." In the meantime, "working families have been asked to pay more and more."

So maybe death and taxes are no longer certain, but one thing remains as immutable as the hills. In the words of another golden oldie, there's nothing surer – the rich get rich and the poor get poorer.



Michael Winship is senior writing fellow at Demos, former senior writer at “Bill Moyers Journal” on PBS and current president of the Writers Guild of America, East.

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## Declaring Victory Over Osama

World War II concluded with “V-E Day” and “V-J Day,” marking the victories in Europe and Japan, respectively. The Bush administration said no such definitive success would finish the “war on terror,” which was defined as essentially an endless conflict. But President Barack Obama’s operation killing Osama bin Laden creates the possibility of a V-OBL Day, writes Ivan Eland. May 10, 2011

By Ivan Eland

**Editor’s Note: President George W. Bush and his neocon advisers always said the “war on terror” would not end with surrender ceremonies as occurred with World War II’s “Victory in Europe” (V-E Day) or “Victory over Japan” (V-J Day). Instead, they depicted the “war on terror” as essentially never-ending.**

**However, President Barack Obama’s successful mission to kill al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden presents something like an opportunity for a V-OBL Day, a chance to declare victory and realign U.S. policies to actual (rather than exaggerated) dangers, a prospect that powerful interests will oppose as the Independent Institute’s Ivan Eland explains in this guest essay:**

Although the Obama administration has said that the killing of Osama bin Laden is not a V-E or V-J day, which brought a return to normal times after World War II ended, perhaps it should be.

President Obama should declare that the Bush-era “war on terror” has finally been won. The main trunk of al-Qaeda has been severely weakened, and regional affiliates of the group would likely focus on local issues, not anti-U.S. attacks, if the United States quit stirring the hornets in their regions.

Of course, Obama is unlikely to take this action, because the secur-ocrats, to whom Obama has been so deferential and who need a continuing threat to justify continually building empires of added manpower and funding, are already cautioning that anti-U.S. terror attacks will likely continue and may actually

increase, at least in the short term, in retaliation for bin Laden's martyrdom.

While this may be true as far as it goes, it conveniently ignores the underlying causes of Islamists' anti-American attacks. American politicians, secur-ocrats, and media don't like to bring up these root causes because they undermine the "patriotic" narrative that America only heroically responds when attacked.

As with the Japanese air attacks on Dec. 7, 1941, the American version of history begins with al-Qaeda's attacks on the day of infamy, in this case, Sept. 11, 2001. In both cases, the narrative begins with a diabolical enemy raining destruction from the air on a sleeping United States.

The events leading up to both attacks, which might make the U.S. government look a little less innocent, are regularly swept under the rug, as if the Heisenberg uncertainty principle of "uncaused" events in physics could apply to international politics.

An example of such discarding of causal factors for political purposes can be found in President Obama's late night speech announcing the demise of bin Laden:

"We quickly learned that the 9/11 attacks were carried out by al-Qaeda, an organization headed by Osama bin Laden, which had openly declared war on the United States and was committed to killing innocents in our country and around the globe. . . .

"The American people did not choose this fight. It came to our shores. And started with the senseless slaughter of our citizens."

In the second quote from the speech, the world seems to start on 9/11. The first quote indicates that bin Laden had previously declared war on the United States, but it conveniently omits the reasons he launched his morally repugnant series of attacks.

The American media also gingerly stepped around the underlying causes of bin Laden's war on the United States by noting, in their coverage of his killing, that he wanted the return of a pan-Islamic caliphate, which ended with the demise of the Ottoman Empire after its defeat in World War I.

Although bin Laden and his fellow travelers have mentioned this pie-in-the sky goal as an ultimate objective, most experts on bin Laden agree that he originally decided to attack the United States because "infidel" U.S. troops remained in Muslim lands after the first Gulf War.

More generally, according to those analysts who followed his writings and pronouncements, bin Laden attacked the U.S. not because of its culture, ideas,

or freedoms, but because of its military and political meddling in the Middle East and other Islamic nations, most of which is unnecessary for U.S. security. He has been very clear on this point.

Such facts are dangerous to bring up because “patriotic” security hawks will shout down the offender with false charges of “blaming America” or “blaming innocent victims of heinous attacks.”

Killing innocent civilians for any reason anytime is heinous and bin Laden was a villainous monster, but that doesn't excuse the U.S. government from blame for unnecessarily stirring up such Islamists by its profligate military and political meddling in the Muslim world.

In the insurance world, the U.S. government might be accused of “contributory negligence” (although U.S. policy is usually more purposeful than merely negligent). All Americans should read the post-World-War-II history of heavy U.S. intervention in the Middle East prior to 9/11.

Obama should make the killing of bin Laden a V-E or V-J day and use it as a cover not only to withdraw from Muslim Afghanistan, but also to quietly lighten the U.S. political and military footprint in the Middle East and Islamic world.

The two pillars of American Middle East policy have traditionally been U.S. support for Israel and the control of oil using military power. Neither is needed.

Israel is now a rich country, with hundreds of nuclear weapons, and it can easily defend itself without U.S. support. Oil is a valuable commodity that will be produced and exported to the world market, around and even through conflicts, without the need for U.S. military occupation or meddling in the Middle East.

Yet these two policy pillars motivate Islamists such as bin Laden to attack the U.S.

Let's declare victory and come home.

**Ivan Eland is Director of the Center on Peace & Liberty at The Independent Institute. Dr. Eland has spent 15 years working for Congress on national security issues, including stints as an investigator for the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Principal Defense Analyst at the Congressional Budget Office. His books include The Empire Has No Clothes: U.S. Foreign Policy Exposed, and Putting “Defense” Back into U.S. Defense Policy.**

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# Attacks on Israeli Critics Escalate

Jewish playwright Tony Kushner is the latest critic of Israeli government treatment of the Palestinians to come under attack by pro-Israeli hardliners. They sought to strip him of an academic award, but Kushner and his supporters managed to fight back, an opportunity that other targets have not had, reports Danny Schechter. May 10, 2011

By Danny Schechter

**Editor's Note: Criticism of Israel remains a politically dicey matter in the United States, where pro-Israeli hardliners are quick to react, denouncing adversaries in the harshest terms as "anti-Semites" or "self-hating Jews" or "conspiracy theorists."**

**Often, the hardliners strip Israeli critics of awards or other measures of professional standing, essentially transforming them into pariahs, as in two cases addressed by Danny Schechter in this guest essay:**

First, it was Helen Thomas.

After the veteran White House correspondent spoke inelegantly once about her feelings about Israel, and apologized, but to no effect, she was blackballed at the instigation of strident Israeli supporters and her career achievement-standing journalism awards were stripped.

She became persona non-grata with many media outlets joining in the denunciations of a colleague they had honored for decades.

Many at the time suspected the wrath was especially severe because she is an Arab-American. Right-wing provocateur Ann Coulter even asked if "that Arab" should be allowed near the President of the United States.

But now a new flap – driven by some of the same issues – involves a Jewish Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and a leading academic institution in New York.

His name: Tony Kushner, best known for the brilliant "Angels in America" plays that bravely took on AIDS and the hypocrisy if not criminality of the prominent Jewish lawyer Roy Cohn, an aide to the late fanatically anti-communist symbol, Sen. Joseph McCarthy.

Now McCarthy's name has been introduced into a debate following a decision by a City University of New York to strip Kushner of an honorary degree after one

conservative pro-Israel trustee took umbrage at his criticisms of the Israeli government and convinced his colleagues to take action.

Supporters of Israel have been primed by their lobby and the Israeli government to confront any and all attempts to “ delegitimize” Israel or even criticize its government.

Kushner was made into the personification of a self-hating Jew who was bashing Israel. A group of CUNY trustees deemed him an Israel hater. He became the new Helen Thomas, even though he is Jewish.

But in New York – unlike Washington which seems ruled by a conservative media elite that is frequently intimidated, if not directed, by the Israel Lobby – there was a cultural push-back against what was seen as an act of intolerance that violated freedom of thought.

Soon the New York Times was making it a big story with strong statements against the efforts of conservative Republican trustee Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld, to blackball plans to honor Kushner by John Jay College, one of the system’s schools. Wiesenfeld did not win much sympathy when he was quoted as questioning whether Palestinians were human.

Blogger MJ Rosenberg offered insight into Wiesenfeld’s didactic views:

“Here is his Wiesenfeld’s rationale for his actions, which he offered in a telephone call with the Atlantic’s Jeff Goldberg:

“‘My mother would call Tony Kushner a kapo,’ he said in a telephone conversation earlier this morning. ‘Kapos’ were Jews who worked for the Germans in concentration camps.’

“Pretty amazing likening criticizing Israel to working with the Nazis to kill Jews. But Wiesenfeld has some strong views.”

He was also aligned with Pam Geller, the Muslim hater who led the fight against the so-called Ground Zero mosque. He is an active supporter of AIPAC, the Israel lobby.

His diatribe was seen as too severe and inflammatory by many civic leaders. Prominent supporters of Israel were soon supporting Kushner, including former Mayor Ed Koch, newspaper Publisher Mort Zuckerman and a who’s who of cultural figures.

Enter the top officials at the City University who agreed to review the decision and vowed to reverse it, On May 9, they did so, voting unanimously to restore the award.

Reported the Guardian, "The chancellor, Matthew Goldstein, addressing the board on Monday night, said he had supported the original recommendation of the award and praised Kushner's 'extraordinary body of work.' He urged the board to overturn last week's decision and to support the award.

"Some members of the board spoke, all of them voicing support for Kushner. One of them described the row as a 'blemish' on the university's reputation as an upholder of freedom of expression."

Tony Kushner had told the Times, "I have been honored many times by prominent Jewish organizations, proudly identified as a Jew and maintained a passionate support for the continuous existence of the State of Israel. An apology should come from the Board of Trustees for not following the dictates of simple fairness and decency when this happened, and allowing someone who deserved better treatment to be treated shabbily."

Since the CUNY board's action, he has received an outpouring of support from peace groups, friends, and intellectual and artistic groups. "It's completely overwhelming," he said.

The City University's leaders rushed to restore its honor and his, and on Monday reversed the Trustee's decision, reinstating Kushner's award.

Here's how the Times put it: "Having embarrassed themselves more than was absolutely necessary in the eyes of many New Yorkers, trustees of the City University of New York are to undo the damage."

In an earlier statement, Kushner, who has edited a collection of essays critical of Israel, said, "It's been my experience that truth eventually triumphs over SoundBites spin and defamation, and that reason, honest inquiry, and courage, which are more appealing and more persuasive than demagoguery, will carry the day."

His story went from the Jewish press to the pages of the New York Times, and quickly became an international free speech issue.

But even if his status is rehabilitated, the Times asks, "Will a reversal end the affair? Not necessarily. Closing a self-inflicted wound can be tough."

The problem, of course, is that Kushner's status earned him reconsideration; other less well-known personages critical of Israel, including academic and political analysts, are often targeted in ways that generate less attention and debate. Many conclude it's just not worth it to speak up about Israeli policy less they became targeted and smeared, and even lose their jobs.

Meanwhile, Helen Thomas continues to live defensively as an exile in the straitlaced Washington media world in which she was once a luminary.

A group of journalists is now lobbying the Society of Professional Journalists to reinstate her status, but, at age 90, she has no major newspapers and high-profile politically acceptable people behind her.

Perhaps Tony Kushner could do a play about how Thomas has suffered the slings and arrows of unfair slurs and demonization.

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