

THE ISRAELI “SECRET” DIPLOMACY INSIDE THE AFRO-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

From the *Jerusalem Post*, 1996:

Home Page B&J.com

By: Gad Nahshon

Blacks and Jews FAQ

Audio

Photo History

Black-Jewish Quotes
& Facts

Min. Farrakhan &
the Jews

Jews & the Black
Holocaust

Jews in the Sugar
Trade

List of Jews in
Black Slavery

Prof. Tony Martin's
Jewish Onslaught

Contact

We are brothers under the skin: Blacks, Jews and Israelis participated Jan. 1996 in a unique tribute dinner in which Dr. Samuel Dubois Cook, the president of Dillard University, received the prestigious Torch of Faith award from the New Orleans Council of Brotherhood. Dr. Cook, a devoted friend of Israel established in his college, the only National Center for Black-Jewish Relations. It is, also, not surprising to note that Dr. Cook, a voice of protest in the wilderness, denounced Louis Farrakhan.

In January, 1993, Dr. Julius Scott, Jr., a president of Pain College located in Augusta, Georgia, praised Israel in the media. He was interviewed by newspapers such as the Amsterdam News after he returned from a visit to Israel. He was the head of a special- pioneer delegation of seven presidents of only Black colleges and universities. They built a new bridge between the academic community in Israel and the black academic community in this country. They developed a new dimension and established a system of mutual exchange programs. It is the foundation of a new triangle world of relations, knowledge and sensitivities, feed-back of a common struggle against ignorance through distorted images in a world of Blacks, Jews and Israelis.

There are 100 Black colleges and universities in this country but only 41 are members of the United Negro College Fund presided over by William H. Gray, III, the ex-congressman. And he is the "secret weapon" of Israel, the country whose goal has been development, also of an ethnic diplomacy. And Black scholars, intellectuals and students are the new Israeli target group. In order to fulfill the new mission, Israel developed another tool. "Israel cultural days: African-American Universities - local Jewish community participation." There is great leverage and opportunity.

These cultural days on the Black campus, is a new Israeli 'adventure', and are popular. Many African- American students attended this event at Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio. It was a first encounter with Israeli issues. They knew only that Israel is a Jewish state, a Jewish issue. They listened to lectures, they visited 'Operation Solomon' (an exhibition of the airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel) and enjoyed performances of the well-known Yemenite singer Achinoam NiNi and vocalist Gil Dor, from Israel.

It was the first time that these Afro- American students were exposed to the multi-ethnic nature of the Israeli society. Furthermore, Wilberforce University has, already, started a summer program in Israel for its students. Last summer 20 students joined a study program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Why must Israel challenge the Black campus? Why should Israel become a new factor in America's race relations or a player in the Black-Jewish crisis of today?

"We live in the era of the rise of Black intellectual anti-Semitism. We live in an era of the dismantling of the old Jewish-Black coalition. I am aware of the tragic reality. But I would like to note the following: We are victimized by the New York syndrome. America is a big country. There is life beyond the main urban center. We should not stigmatize the Blacks."

Our target populations, now are the liberal 100,000 Black scholars and students who are members of U.N.C.F. "In these 41 colleges, anti-Semitism is a marginal phenomena and they demonstrated openness and positive attitudes to the Israeli activities over there," stated Ephraim Ben-Matityahu of the Council of Academic Affairs, in charge of Israel's ethnic 'secret diplomacy', in his office in Manhattan. Ben-Matityahu or to his friends, "Effi", is a sophisticated Israeli diplomat and the son of Holocaust survivors. "Blacks perceive Israel as the Jewish essence; but, Israel is not part of the Jewish-Black conflicts. That's the reason for Israel's ability to contribute to the idea of better understanding between Black and Jews," said "Effi."

It is both good for Israel and good for Jews in America. One can see the feed-back, the ramifications at least on the local scene. "Effi" is, always searching for new routes and projects in coordination with presidents of the Black colleges, World Jewish Congress and leaders of the Jewish local Federations. The outreach programs of Black campuses are reaching out to future leadership of the Afro-American community at large. By the way, Israel is the only country in the world which officially celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

"Effi" is proud of the fact that Israeli activities on Black campuses have, already, stimulated a new compatibility between Blacks and local Jewish communities. "Jews, always remind me about their aid and support for Israel. That's one of the reasons that I am very happy when I find that Israel contributes to the well being of the Jewish community," said Ben-Matityahu. And Gary Siepser executive director of the Memphis Jewish Federation, for example, agrees. "The dust has not settled in Memphis over our Israeli culture program because we have been so busy with LeMoyne-Owen College in creating new on-going programs." Certainly Israel has by now an undisputed admirer who just returned from an academic exchange program in Israel, namely, Dr. Burnett Joiner, the president of LeMoyne-Owen, a traditional Black college in Memphis.

Israel requires still more projects, making inroads into the culture of the Black community. The new partnership between Israel and Blacks is eminently successful so that the outlook is positive with the hope for expansion and much overriding possibility. Effi tells me about the new project called 'Operation Understanding' and about the group that returned after a summer in Kibbutz Ramot Menashe. He also recommends the unique film: "Black to the Promised Land", which chronicles the experience of a group of Black teenagers from Brooklyn who lived on a Kibbutz.

© Copyright, March 1996, The Jewish Post of New York

© Copyright, March 1996, The Jewish Post of New York Online

Original has been removed from:
<http://www.jewishpost.com/jp0202/jpn202b.htm>