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CHICAGO READER

CHICAGO'S FREE WEEKLY | THIS ISSUE IN FOUR SECTIONS
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The Empty
Bottle goes
to Norway

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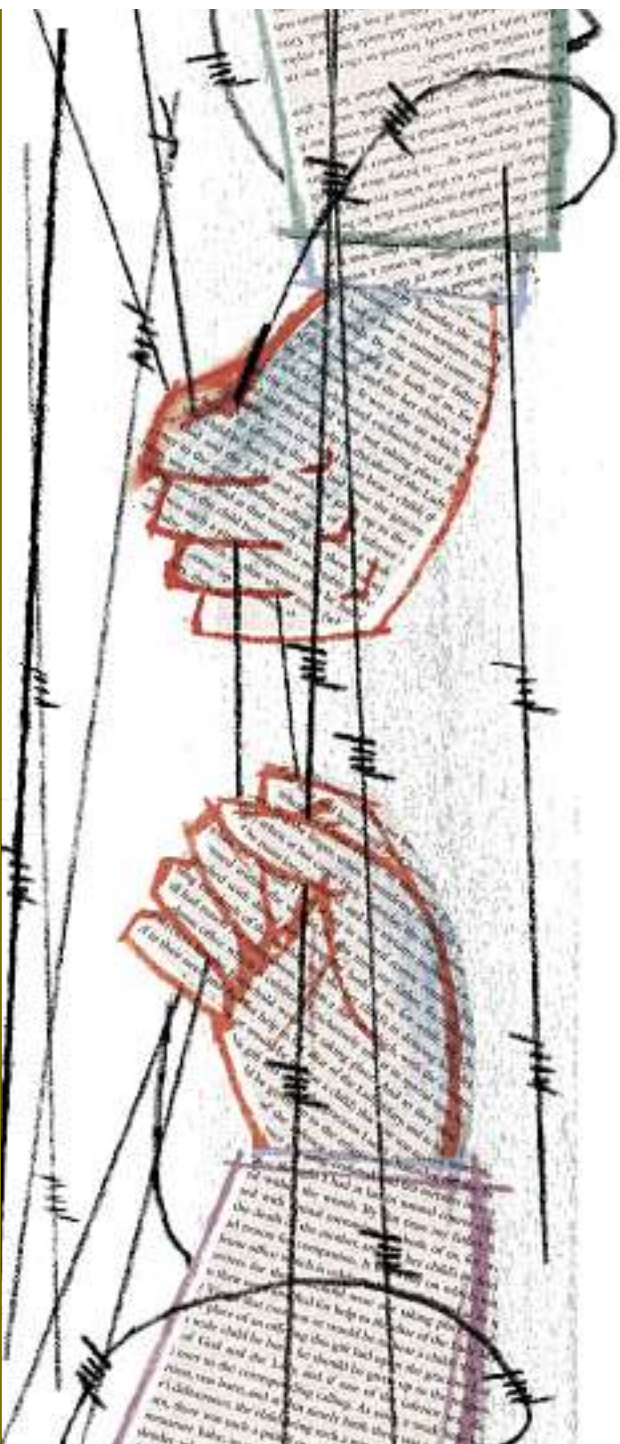
Got a car?
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drag race.

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Whose Holocaust Is It Anyway?

Why Alan Dershowitz wants DePaul professor Norman Finkelstein fired



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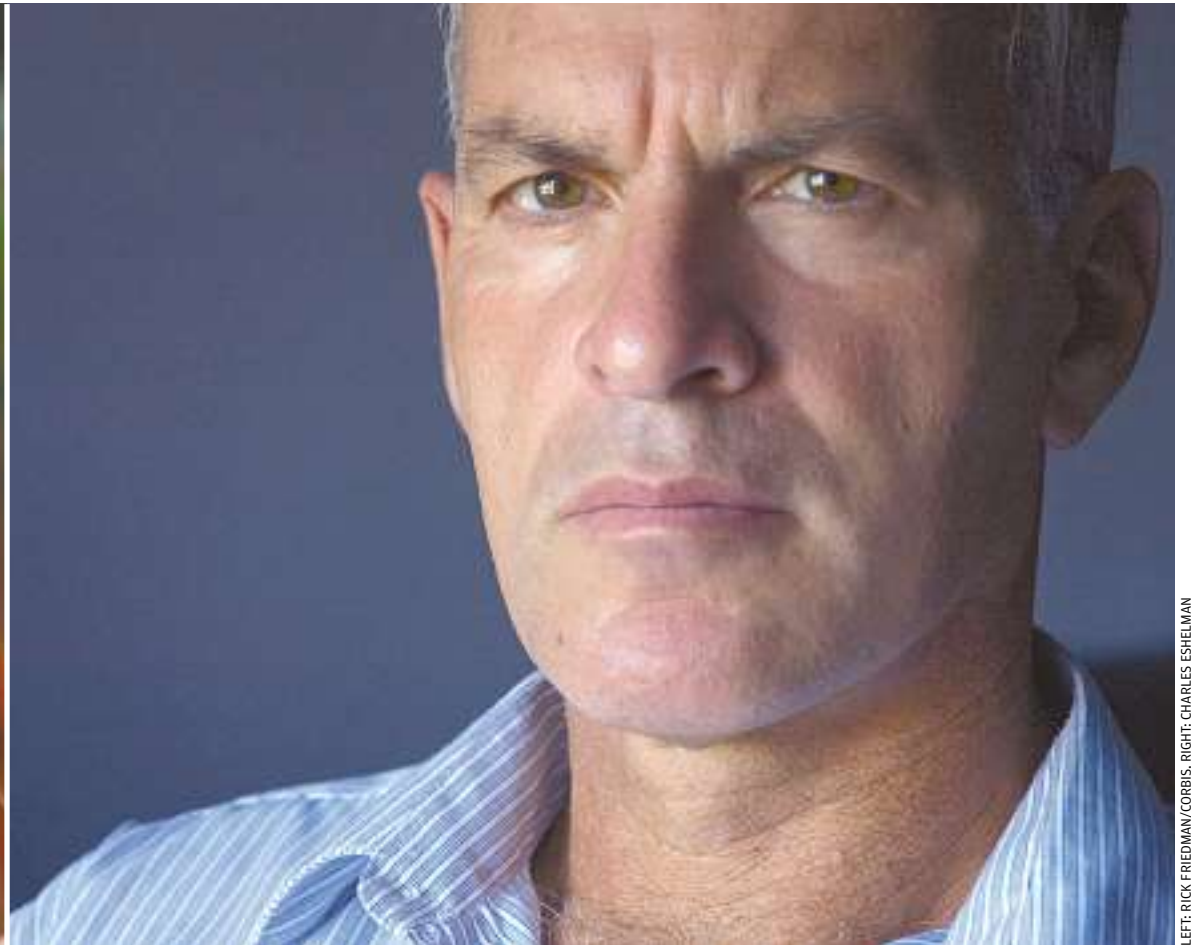
Ink Well

This week's crossword: Flat Features

ON THE COVER: CHRISTIANE GRAUERT (FINKELSTEIN), PAUL HORNSCHEMEIER (GUILFOILE), MARTY PEREZ (EMPTY BOTTLE, DRAG RACING), YVETTE MARIE DOSTATNI (CUPCAKE)

Whose Holocaust Is It Anyway?

Why Alan Dershowitz wants DePaul professor Norman Finkelstein fired



Dershowitz, Finkelstein

LEFT: RICK FRIEDMAN/CORBIS; RIGHT: CHARLES ESHELMAN

By Jeffrey Felsman

The "worst enemies in the struggle against real anti-Semitism are the philo-Semites," writes DePaul University political science professor Norman Finkelstein in *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History*, scheduled to hit bookstores on August 29. "Alongside Israel, they are the main fomenters of anti-Semitism in the world today. Coddling them is not the answer. They need to be stopped." Philo-Semites, he says, are American Jewish elites who use the Holocaust and the charge of anti-Semitism to silence any criticism of Israel or themselves, and

at the top of the list he puts Harvard professor and author Alan Dershowitz.

Dershowitz responds by calling Finkelstein an anti-Semite, among other things. And he thinks DePaul—where, according to the head of his department, Finkelstein is popular with students and faculty—should dump him. "I think they think they're protected because he's a Jew," he told me. "That's the defense. 'Well, how can he be an anti-Semite? He's a Jew.' Well, he's a Jew and an anti-Semite—and a neo-Nazi supporter, and a Holocaust trivializer, and a liar, and a falsifier of

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Finkelstein

continued from page 1

quotations and documents.”

The two men first met on the *Democracy Now!* radio program in 2003, after Dershowitz published *The Case for Israel*. “I was supposed to debate [Noam] Chomsky, and instead he showed up,” Dershowitz recalls. “And he was like a little worm.”

Finkelstein started out by accusing Dershowitz of plagiarism, characterized one of his arguments as a “very lovely bar mitzvah speech,” and wound up by saying he wasn’t sure Dershowitz had even written *The Case for Israel*. A few days later Alexander Cockburn repeated the plagiarism charge in *Counterpunch*, and then Dershowitz and Finkelstein exchanged letters in the *Harvard Crimson*. Finkelstein wrote, “The book he claims to have written is a hoax.” Dershowitz briefly defended his work, then concluded, “I will no longer dignify false and empty charges leveled by these serial fabricators. I rest my case.”

Finkelstein wasn’t about to let him rest. In *Beyond Chutzpah*—the title’s a reference to Dershowitz’s 1991 book *Chutzpah*—he charges that Dershowitz quoted without attribution from Joan Peters’s

1984 book *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*. Finkelstein had read Peters’s book carefully, combing through the footnotes in an effort to challenge her sources and undermine her thesis that Palestine was practically unpopulated when Jews began moving there and that most of the Arabs who fled in 1948 were themselves recent arrivals. The use of “fraudulent history” to cover up Israeli “crimes” is one of his favorite themes, and in *Beyond Chutzpah* he writes that Peters’s book is a “colossal hoax.”

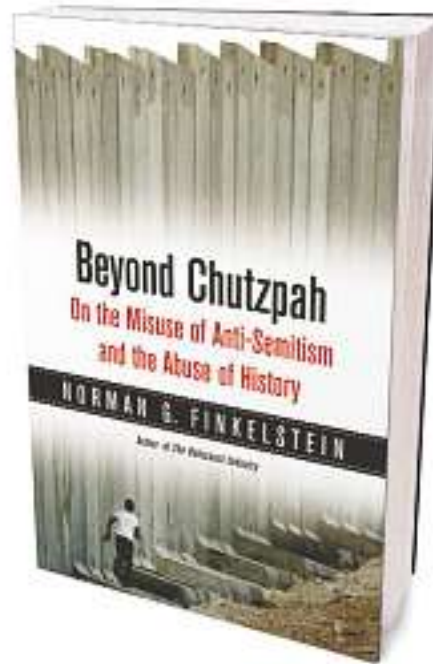
Dershowitz counters that he read the original sources Peters cited and then quoted the originals. In one footnote he writes, “See Peters. Peters’s conclusions and data have been challenged. . . . I do not in any way rely on her demographic conclusions or demographic data, but I have quoted several historical quotations that I first came upon in her book.”

The centerpiece of Finkelstein’s case that Dershowitz plagiarized Peters is a quote from Mark Twain that’s cobbled together from different parts of *The Innocents Abroad* in Peters and is quoted in much the same way in *The Case*

for *Israel*. Dershowitz says he was using this quote before the Peters book even came out. Finkelstein also holds up the word *turnspeak*, which he says Peters mistakenly attributed to George Orwell, probably intending to use *newspeak*. (Actually Peters seems to have consciously coined the term without reference to Orwell, defining it as the “cynical inverting or distorting of facts, which, for example, makes the victim appear as culprit.”)

Turnspeak is in pages from the first edition of *The Case for Israel*, which are reproduced in *Beyond Chutzpah*. During their radio interview Finkelstein attacked Dershowitz for using the word, and Dershowitz replied, “I like it.” The current edition of the book uses *newspeak*. Dershowitz says that Harvard reviewed all of Finkelstein’s plagiarism charges and found they had no merit.

But plagiarism isn’t the main target of *Beyond Chutzpah*. “Next to Alan Dershowitz’s egregious falsification of Israel’s human rights record and the real suffering such falsification causes,” Finkelstein writes, “Dershowitz’s academic dereliction seems small



the same way: “Kept under wraps in deference to ‘political correctness,’ the discontent will only fester. To avert a resurgence of anti-Semitism, the Holocaust profiteers must be publicly exposed and repudiated.” He also accuses the same Jewish organizations, along with the Israeli government, of using the Holocaust and the victimization of Jews as an excuse to mistreat Palestinians and as a justification for repressive policies in Israel, which he thinks only causes more resentment.

Israeli new historians such as Tom Segev, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé have taken similar positions without being vilified in Israel the way Finkelstein has been in the U.S. Finkelstein’s work is cited admiringly on neo-Nazi Web sites, and that—along with his tendency toward overstatement and intemperate language—probably explains some of the hostility he’s faced.

But his work also has been endorsed by Raul Hilberg, dean of the Holocaust historians. And though he’s been called a Holocaust denier, both of his parents were survivors of the Warsaw ghetto and concentration camps, and the rest of his family died in

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(Back Page of Section 4, that is)

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Finkelstein accuses Jewish organizations, along with the Israeli government, of using the Holocaust and the victimization of Jews as an excuse to mistreat Palestinians and as a justification for repressive policies in Israel.

the Holocaust. He grew up during the 60s in Brooklyn, where photographs of dead relatives hung in the living room. His father rarely discussed his experience, his mother readily talked of hers. The Holocaust colored their perception of the world. "They

didn't trust anyone," Finkelstein says. "They were great humanitarians, they loved people. But they were—it's like that saying, 'He's a great philanthropist, but he can't stand his neighbors.' They were like that." It infuriates him that anyone would try to use

their experience or the experience of people like them to rationalize unethical acts. "I will not have the suffering of my parents used for any ulterior purpose," he told the London *Sunday Times* in 2000, "whether it be the prevention of the assimilation of

Jews or the defense of Israel."

In the introduction to *The Holocaust Industry* Finkelstein writes, "The current campaign of the Holocaust industry to extort money from Europe in the name of 'needy Holocaust victims' has shrunk the moral stature of their martyrdom to that of a Monte Carlo casino." He also told me, "I believe that everything having to do with the Holocaust is bad for the Jews."

Those are the kind of statements that drive Dershowitz nuts. Part of his latest book, *The Case for Peace*, published in early August, is devoted to trashing Finkelstein's views, and he says

Finkelstein should be ashamed of the way he uses his parents to advance those views. "He charges his own mother with being a Nazi collaborator," he says. "Now what could be lower than that?" That's a reference to an excerpt from Finkelstein's forthcoming memoir that's on his Web site (normanfinkelstein.com), in which he writes that, like Primo Levi, his mother often said, "Too delicate and refined, the best didn't survive." He goes on, "Was this an indirect admission of guilt? Much later in life I finally summoned the nerve to ask whether she had done anything
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Finkelstein

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of which she was ashamed. Calmly replying no, she recalled having refused the privileged position of 'block head' in the camp. She especially resented the 'dirty' question 'How did you survive?' with the insinuation that, to emerge alive from the camps, survivors must have morally compromised themselves. Given how ferociously she cursed the Jewish councils, ghetto police and *kapos*, I assume my mother answered me truthfully." Finkelstein says Dershowitz "blatantly inverts the meaning of what I wrote, and in the process he slanders the memory of a Holocaust survivor and he slanders her son."

Beyond Chutzpah was scheduled to come out in April, but Dershowitz conducted a very public campaign against it. An article in the *Nation* said he even wrote Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to ask for help in persuading Finkelstein's publisher, the University of California Press, to drop the book, but Dershowitz denies that. He did send the *Crimson* lists of inflammatory quotes from Finkelstein and responses from his detractors (the compiler of the lists wasn't noted). He also threatened a lawsuit over Finkelstein's charge that he hadn't written *The Case for Israel*, pointing out that he has the handwritten manu-

Dershowitz wants to come to DePaul next year, when Finkelstein is up for tenure, apparently to crash the external peer review of his work.

script. And he wrote articles and letters to editors and gave interviews, including one in which he called Finkelstein the "equivalent of a neo-Nazi."

"I really didn't expect the magnitude of the prepublication conflict," Finkelstein says. "He started his campaign in October 2004, when he started writing letters to my original publisher, New Press, and already it was clear that problems were arising." New Press suggested postponing publication while they lawyered the manuscript.

Hoping to get his book into print sooner, Finkelstein switched to the University of California Press. But they too seemed worried about a lawsuit and insisted that his manuscript be pored over by four lawyers—only two had read his previous books. "I was involved in a process which had basically been taken over by lawyers—where the university press was, I think it's fair to say, shoved aside—and it was now the lawyers who were

calling the shots," he says. "They were making all sorts of demands on me and all sorts of decisions, which I found unacceptable, about which I had very little negotiating space."

But he went along with the changes, and now that the book's headed for store shelves he doesn't want to talk about what they were. "I'm not going to say anything, because I still think it could be pulped, it could be pulled from the shelves—all sorts of things can happen," he says. "I don't know what tricks Dershowitz has up his sleeve. He's been acting very erratic. At this point he says he's not going to sue, but I can't predict."

"If I wanted to sue him, I'd own him," says Dershowitz. Instead he wants to come to DePaul next year, when Finkelstein is up for tenure, apparently intending to crash the external peer review of his work. "I will come at my own expense, and I will document the case against Finkelstein," he says. "I'll demonstrate that he doesn't meet the academic standards of the Association of American Universities."

"I don't understand why he always resorts—or maybe I do understand—to strong-arm tactics to try to bully, blackmail, and threaten, rather than to do exactly what he formerly claimed he's committed to, namely battling it out in the marketplace of ideas," says Finkelstein. "Let's see what happens in the marketplace of ideas." ■



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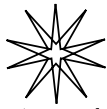
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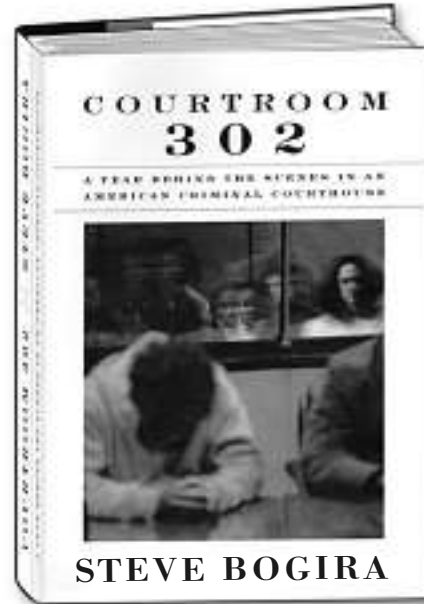
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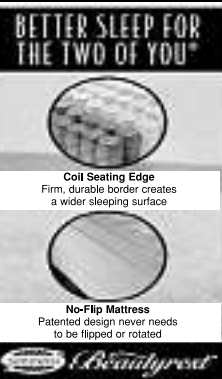
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