

The Board of Deputies of British Jews
1 Torriano Mews
Kentish Town
London NW5 2RZ

3rd March 2019

For the attention of Marie van der Zyl, Deputies President

Dear Marie,

The editorial in the Jewish Chronicle (1 March 2019) accuses the JLC and the Board of Deputies of being spineless for not condemning racism in Israeli politics. You are very selective when it comes to condemning racism, particularly the extreme views held by your late father Barry Kaye.

The humanist Rabbi Sherwin Wine wrote that:

Good values are universal. ... Bad values are also universal. Hate, bigotry and greed have no single national home. They are welcomed by people of many cultures. They have even been welcomed by Jews.

Your father exemplified this truism.

I am still waiting for you to censure the gratuitously racist letters your father sent to me and my wife in 2012. He wrote attacking me for being a “non-Jew” and disrespected me by saying that I was “... entirely deficient in knowledge of the learning and tradition of the Jewish way of life” - even though I was married to a rabbi’s daughter and ensured her two Jewish children were properly prepared for their bar and bat mitzvah. The bar mitzvah boy Darrell grew up to be the man who was Jewish enough to become your second husband. Instead of support, your father (who I didn’t know) considered it acceptable to threaten me with physical violence.

I wonder how much your father’s extreme beliefs influenced your own attitude to your husband’s family, imbued as it was with so much acrimony right from the start. You explicitly stated to my daughter Kerry, that you didn’t want anything to do with me - and that is what ensued. A very odd way to establish a relationship with your in-laws.

Your conduct toward your Holocaust survivor mother-in-law, my wife Nikki, has been less than respectful. One of the worst episodes was at the wedding to my step-son at West London Synagogue where your behaviour, both there and at the reception, fell far short of common civility and accepted wedding etiquette. What should have been a joyous occasion, was one marred by confrontation which showed contempt for traditional Jewish values. Twenty years later where are the thank-you letters (for gifts) and wedding photos?

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil, writing in the Jewish News (28 February 2019) reminds us that Maimonides states that we must honour the elderly because of their life experience. He quotes the great Rebbe Nachman of Breslov who wrote that one can “gauge a country’s prosperity by its treatment of its elders.” Rabbi Tawal says the British have a proud culture

of respecting all, regardless of age. He urges readers to “continue to ensure our society’s greatness by fulfilling our commandment to honour our elders”

Do you endorse this philosophy?

Yours sincerely,

George Rooker,
Historian