

ACTIVIST ALERT

• The Cottage Grove Blackberry Pie Society will host **Lane County Sheriff Byron Trapp and Cottage Grove Interim Police Chief Scott Shepherd** from 6:30 to 8 pm Thursday, March 31, in the Reception Room at the Cottage Grove Community Center, 700 E. Gibbs, Cottage Grove. Free and open to the public. Email blackberrypie@gmail.com for more information.

• A public meeting on “**Housing Our Unhoused Citizens**” will be from 9 to 11:15 am Friday, April 1, at St. Jude Catholic Church, 4330 Willamette Street. Speakers will include Jennifer Frazer of the Eugene Human Rights Commission. In a follow-up meeting, Church Women United will gather at 7:30 am Tuesday, April 5, at Brails restaurant, 1689 Willamette Street. Breakfast can be purchased.

• A **candidate forum for Lane County commissioner** candidates will be at noon Friday, April 1, at the UO Downtown Baker Center, 975 High Street. Sponsored by City Club of Eugene. \$5 for non-members. The following week, April 8, will be a mayoral candidate forum at the same time and location.

• A **Friendly Street community dance and potluck** in support of mayoral candidate Lucy Vinis (and the hat will also be passed for Bernie Sanders) will be from 6 to 9:30 pm Saturday, April 2, at the corner of 28th and Friendly Street. Soulacious plays at 7:30 pm. Information and RSVP to juliefisch@msn.com.

• **The Fire Next Time**, a PBS film on countering right-wing extremism, will be shown from 4 to 6 pm Sunday, April 3, at the Hilyard Community Center, 2580 Hilyard Street. Guest Speaker Jessica Campbell of Oregon’s Rural Organizing Project will connect the film to militia activities in our state today. Free.

Donations will be collected for Slater Elementary School in Burns, which has been negatively impacted by the recent six-week occupation of Malheur Wildlife Refuge. Sponsored by Springfield/Eugene Showing Up for Racial Justice, Community Alliance of Lane County and the Eugene Human Rights Commission.

• A benefit for **Community Alliance of Lane County** will be from 5 to 9 pm Monday, April 4, at Mazzi’s Restaurant, 3377 E. Amazon Drive.

• **Immigration attorney Abigail Molina** will speak on “women and children and incarceration on the southwestern border” at 4 pm Wednesday, April 6, at the UO Law School Room 141. Molina will also be available for a Q&A lunch at noon in Room 141. Sponsored by the UO Career Center and professor Michelle McKinley.

JUMP SHOTS FROM ISRAEL BY HAYDEN ROOKE-LEY

PEACE OUT OF REACH

Violence feeds upon itself as history fades from memory

I have lived in Israel for more than seven months now and I struggle to reconcile many residents’ opinions with current events and accounts of history. Eager to find opposing viewpoints — and not apt to withhold my own — I’m familiar with the proverbial “you’ll understand when you’re older.” Perhaps. Or perhaps one man’s naiveté is another’s objectivity. I keep wrestling with these arguments, nonetheless.

To be sure, Israelis live in fear. Legitimate, undeniable fear. And beneath it is a survivor’s mentality — a besieged Judaism that frames political discourse. While understandable, it is an outlook often distorted by the victimhood meta-narrative: that Jews have always been peace-seeking refugees in Israel, perpetually under attack by barbaric Palestinians and a hostile Middle East hell-bent on its destruction.

This rendition of history is as pervasive as it feigns to be dispositive; it is injected into policy arguments to inoculate Israel from immoral affliction. But it happens to be laced with historical inaccuracy.

My recent visit to the Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem was a sober reminder of humanity’s potential for evil. This unconscionable atrocity was so abhorrent to justify a Jewish safe-haven. But past abuse cannot grant future immunity, particularly when Israel’s victims (Palestinians) were not its original offenders.

Palestinian anti-colonialism cannot conflate with anti-Semitism, especially when too many Israeli policies have been driven by territorial maximalism, not peace.

In *My Promised Land*, author and *Haaretz* columnist Ari Shavit wrote of his British great-grandfather’s arrival in Israel in 1897, envisioning a return of the Jews to Israel. He saw “the quiet, the emptiness, the promise.” He didn’t see the Arabs.

Similarly, it is often argued today that such a vacant, arable land awaited “civilized” Jews because there was no Palestinian state — or more so, “there was nothing.” But as William Cleveland and Martin Bunton note in *A History of the Modern Middle East*, “This small territory ... had been inhabited by an Arab majority for some 1,200 years,” and after World War I, it was “promised by a third party (Great Britain) as a national home to another people (the international Jewish community), the majority of whom lived in Eastern Europe.”

Ironically, Palestinian nationalism was the progeny of Western and Zionist intervention. British imperialist policies and Jewish land acquisition — largely purchased by The Jewish National Fund and nominally leased only to Jews — uprooted Palestinian tenant

farmers and small proprietors, causing profound economic hardship and despair.

Attributing subsequent violence to transgressions at Holy Sites has always been facile. In response to the 1929 “Wailing Wall disturbance” (akin to the incitement this past fall), the British “Shaw Commission” ascribed unrest to a “landless class of discontented Arabs” who feared further Jewish expansion.

The threat of land loss only increased with the Great Depression and Jewish immigration in the 1930s. During the following decade, impatient Jewish militant groups sought to control all of Palestine and beyond. Amid the mounting tension over land, Britain realized that its imperial position was untenable and ceded jurisdiction of the land to the United Nations. In 1947, before votes were cast on the partition plan, fanatical Jews overtook the proposed land, highlighted by the Irgun’s 250-person massacre in Jerusalem, under the helm of future Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

The ensuing 1948 Arab-Israeli war is perhaps most cited to buttress the victimhood narrative and to defend Israel’s subsequent actions. As Cleveland and Bunton explain, the “legend of a defenseless, newborn Israel facing the onslaught of hordes of Arab soldiers” does not comport with reality. An Arab League, fragmented by selfish state actors competing for individual legitimacy, was “not only poorly prepared, poorly equipped, and poorly led; they were also outnumbered.” And after the first ceasefire, Israel doubled its forces, procured heavy military weaponry and even air capability from Europe, and assured victory in the second armistice.

In the 1967 war, Israeli forces overwhelmed surrounding nations and began to occupy the West Bank, the Sinai and Golan Heights and annexed East Jerusalem — again, a display of military might that contradicts the conception of an Israeli David versus an Arab Goliath.

Israel’s apparent military invincibility in both wars left little incentive to concede anything after the war, despite the 1967 U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 that stated the inadmissibility of land acquisition by war, and demanded the withdrawal from occupied territories and a just solution to the refugee problem.

But as Cleveland and Bunton repeatedly demonstrate, many Israelis had an ulterior motive to peace: “What some Israelis viewed as an unjustifiable occupation, others saw as a God-given opportunity to hasten the redemption of the Jewish people laying claim to all the land of ancient Israel.”

The landmark election of Prime Minister Begin and his Likud Party in 1977 ushered in an era of unambiguous colonialism in occupied territories, as Begin pursued a dual effort to establish an unrelinquishable mass of settlements and to prevent Palestinian cohesion and economic independence.

As examples, he strategically built in Arab enclaves to fragment Palestinians and dislocate them from their agricultural land; he enacted exploitive, asymmetric trade policies; he sanctioned house arrests, collective punishments and businesses closures.

These policies have defined Israeli-Palestinian relations ever since. Interspersed with ephemeral hopes of peace negotiations, Palestinians have become more resistant, Israel more heavy-handed and violence has spiraled out of control. Peace today feels out of reach.

My intention is not to cherry-pick history, to indict all Jews or to absolve Palestinians of their heinous and well-documented terrorism. I do not advocate immediate, wholesale de-occupation, and I am sympathetic to the angst of withdrawal considering circumstances in Lebanon and Gaza.

However, I do hope to address the paradigmatic flaw that abdicates Israeli culpability: Jews reflect on a place of refuge, their dogged resolve for independence and their resounding rejection of past persecution; simultaneously, Palestinians experienced colonialism. In addressing their dire refugee problem, Jews created another, and it was incumbent on them to solve it. But too often, Israel pursued policies of the settlement enterprise over land compromise.

An accurate historical perspective connects the illusion of victimhood with the elusiveness of peace. It exposes the pathology of violence — how dispossession turns to despair, how repression mutates rationality, how radicalization is metastatic — and reveals mutual religious zealotry. It calls for policies of placation and conciliation, for building trust, not settlements.

Some Israelis have told me that I’ll “get it” the longer I live here. I am always taken aback. I feel their emotional pride — and their fortified defensiveness. I try to balance impassioned anecdotes with my understanding of historical trends.

And I can’t help but think of how Ari Shavit’s great-grandfather, in 1897, was blind to the Palestinians living on this land he so desperately wanted. “I understood him perfectly,” explains Shavit. “[He] does not see because he is motivated by the need not to see ... So that he can carry on, my great-grandfather chooses not to see.”

Having built such a powerful state, Israel must now see its past. Its future depends on it. ■

Hayden Rooke-Ley is a graduate of South Eugene High School and Williams College, where he majored in political science and biology. He has “a strong passion for politics and a range of policy issues” and is currently playing professional basketball in Israel before pursuing his long-term career goals.