

# *The K.F. Stone Weekly*

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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## THE ENDANGERED SUPER MAJORITY

There's an old Yiddish expression which goes,

שווער צו זיין אַ איד

(pronounced *shvair tzu zein a yid*), which means "It's hard to be a Jew," and for generations of Eastern European Yiddish-speaking Jews and their first-generation American offspring, it was a well-known, well-understood saying. And with good



reason. In large part this is due to the fact that for centuries, Jews – a marginalized, powerless and mostly despised minority – were discriminated against -- if not flat-out persecuted -- by the majority community. Of course, Jews weren't the only minority who suffered marginalization, discrimination or annihilation. Historically, majorities have a long and lethal record of sticking it to defenseless minorities. Because of what the

majority perceived as "alien otherness," Jews, Romanies, Africans and what used to be called "Orientals" were made to live lives which were often less than second-class. And today, Muslim terrorist groups are terrorizing, torturing and murdering such minorities as Christians (Coptic and non-Coptic), Evangelicals, and any Muslim sect that is different from theirs.

Yes indeed, there certainly has been a long history of majorities oppressing and endangering minorities.

Then too, despite it being somewhat counter-intuitive, there have been – and still are – times and places in which it's the *minority* which wields the upper hand, and puts the lives of the majority into peril. Two examples:

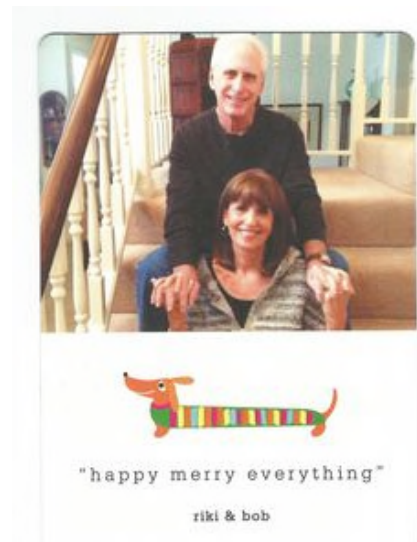
- For the past several generations, Shiites have constituted somewhere between 65% and 70% of the Iraqi population, with Sunnis comprising roughly 25%, and Kurds no more than 10. In other words, the Shiites have been the overwhelming majority. And yet, Saddam Hussein and his murderous, dictatorial henchmen were Sunni; a clear case of a minority riding roughshod over an overwhelming majority.
- Conversely, 75% of Syria is Sunni. Nonetheless, Bashir al-Assad, his late father Hafez, and all their ruling elite are Alawite -- a sect which makes up less than 20%. Sunnis consider Alawites -- an offshoot of Shiism, which presents an eclectic synthesis of Christian, Gnostic, Neoplatonic and Zoroastrian thought -- to be a bunch of heretics. As in Iraq, there's no love lost in Syria for a minority which holds the majority in thrall.

OK. So there tons of cases in which majorities treat minorities like noxious vermin and a couple in which the few manage to run roughshod over the many.

But what we are currently experiencing here in the United States is -- so far as I can tell - - unprecedented in human history: a super majority claiming that they are being targeted for extinction by an underwhelming, unorganized minority.

"What in the Hell are you talking about?" I can hear you ask.

What I'm talking about are the more than 100 million Christians here in America who truly believe they are being hounded and persecuted into oblivion by a cadre of Muslim-loving liberals, atheists, and agnostics as well as garden-variety secularists who, they shout, don't care a fig about Christian morality. They believe that there is a "war against Christianity" taking place in America. They see examples of this war everywhere: people saying "Happy Holidays" rather than "Merry Christmas"; Obama Care with its supposed financing of abortions; public schools teaching about evolution. (*Years ago, my slightly older sister Erica -- "Riki" and her husband, my brother-in-law Bob, solved the holiday greeting issue by wishing everyone a "Happy Merry Everything."*)



This belief that there is a war against Christianity is a breathtaking perversion of reality. One need only consider that according to [recent polling data](#), nearly 80% (78.4% to be precise) of the American public consider themselves Christian. According to recent figures compiled by the widely respected Pew Research Religion and Public Life Survey, of this nearly 80%, 51.3% describe themselves as Protestant, and of these, according to an [ABC News poll](#), 37% refer to themselves as either born again or evangelical. (**n.b.:** *At the very bottom of the list, one finds that a mere 2.4% consider themselves agnostic and a scant 1.6% atheists.*)

And yet, despite the fact that America is an overwhelmingly Christian nation, an increasingly vocal segment of this super majority fears that unless and until they take the spiritual bull by the horns and instill -- and whenever possible, legislate -- old-time religious values, beliefs and practices back into American society, they will go the way of the Dodo bird by the second half of the 21st century. To a great extent, this fear is what underlies all the "Take back America" rhetoric being used out on the campaign trail.

Much of this persecution complex stems from a visceral negative reaction to the growing acceptance -- and legality -- of same sex marriage, as well as such morally-charged issues as abortion, Evolution-versus-Creationism and climate change. Of late, we have seen an upsurge in the growth of so-called "Religious Freedom Reformation Act" (RFRA) bills that would allow people and businesses to discriminate if they have a religious justification for doing so. As *The Daily Beast's* [Jay Michaelson notes](#), "*The poster children of this campaign are religious wedding photographers and cake bakers. But the real impact is far more serious: huge corporations like Hobby Lobby denying benefits, services, and recognition to same-sex families; Catholic hospitals disallowing longtime, same-sex spouses to visit one another; huge university systems firing janitors, basketball coaches, and secretaries because they are gay.*" Theoretically, this "RFRA Madness" could lead to such abominations as Jews and gays being turned away from Christian-owned hotels and wife- and child-abusers offering religion as a defense.

We have seen the effect that strong Evangelical majorities can have on local school boards, town councils and state legislatures:

- Mandating that textbooks eliminate all references to evolution -- or at least giving equal time to so-called "creation science";
- Giving businesses legal cover to deny services to customers if they feel that such services go against the person's religious beliefs;
- Here in Florida, the state legislature just passed a bill ([HB 7111](#)) the "Conscience Protection for Actions of Private Child-Placing Agencies, Act" which would allow the state's adoption agencies to engage in any kind of discrimination if serving a particular family violates its "*religious or moral convictions or policies.*"

Just the other day, Brian Klawiter, owner of "Diseltec," a diesel repair shop in Michigan, posted a rant on [his Facebook page](#) about how liberals are trampling on the rights of Christian conservatives. It is a succinct statement of how fearful and angry Christian conservatives have become in contemporary American society:

*Our rights as conservative Americans are being squashed more and more every day. Apparently if you are white (or close to it), you have a job, go to church, and own a gun... That translates into racists, privileged, bigot, conspiracy theorist. Too many of us say nothing. Well, freedom of speech isn't just for Liberals, THEY are the ones that need to learn to "co-exist", THEY are the ones who need to WORK to be "equal"*

*I am a Christian. My company will be run in a way that reflects that. Dishonesty, thievery, immoral behavior, etc. will not be welcomed at MY place of business. (I would not hesitate to refuse service to an openly gay person or persons. Homosexuality is wrong, period. If you want to argue this fact with me then I will put your vehicle together with all bolts and no nuts and you can see how that works.)*

This is both deeply troubling and beyond frightening. For while we repeatedly hear about a "war on Christmas," an "anti-Christian bias" and a "campaign against religious freedom when it comes to Christianity," the very people making these claims are 100% convinced that they possess the keys to God's kingdom; that their understanding of God's word and law is unerring; that they -- and only they -- know what's best for America. In other words, they are both supremely confident and afflicted with a deep-seated persecution complex.

As a practicing Jew, I have a hard time understanding this kind of complex -- despite belonging to a people who have long said

שווער צו זיין א איד

"It's hard to be a Jew." But despite this expression, unlike those Christians who are screaming bloody murder that liberal society is out to get them, we Jews don't have self-pity hard-wired into our religion. Increasingly though, it seems that the super majority is imbued with self-pity and basically proclaiming גוי א זיין א שווער (pronounced *shvayr Tzu zein a goy*), which means "It's hard to be a gentile.)

To better understand how it could be that a super majority can feel so terribly persecuted, I highly recommend Notre Dame University biblical scholar Candida Moss' recent work [The Myth of Christian Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom](#). Moss asks who can "resist the deliciousness of having both the upper hand of power and the righteousness of the oppressed? Such persecution mania is dangerous, writes

Moss, because *"martyrdom is easily adapted by the powerful to cast themselves as victims and justifying their polemical and vitriolic attacks on others."*

I've always been of the belief that Judaism is the best religion in the world . . . for Jews, just as Christianity is the best faith . . . for Christians. Please, please, you of the super majority: quit foisting your morality and beliefs upon secular society. There's plenty of room for all of us. And if American civil society mandates that you cannot legislate your beliefs or practices into law; if people follow my sister's lead and wish one another "Happy, Merry Everything," please, please don't think it's because of some wish to destroy you and your religion.

Repeat after me:

אין אמעריקע עס איז נישט שווער צו זיין א גוי

*(Een Amerika, eez neat shvayr tzu zein ah goy)* which means "In America, it's not all *that* hard to be a gentile."

For let's face it, *you* are the super majority . . .

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