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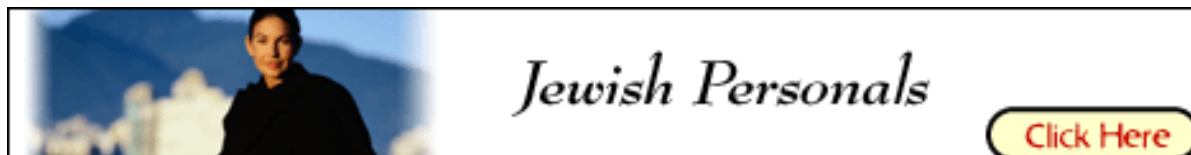
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The big stink about media bias

by Peter Hebert

with Hillel Glazer

The Advisory Committee for the Boycott of The Washington Post (www.BoycottThePost.org) calls on *Post* subscribers to halt subscriptions from June 10-17 in protest of the paper's skewed coverage on Israel.

The committee contends that the media's role is not to reposition facts, terms and phrases and thereby perceptions of reality, or to border on the speculative and thereby become inflammatory -- intentional or not. When this happens, as every *Post* critic knows, the victim Israel is portrayed as the culprit, and the guilty party, the Palestinian terrorists, becomes portrayed as the victim. The unintended consequence is hatred directed at Jews. Attacks against Jews around the world bear this out.

Through omission and other failures of ethics, reporting on the Middle East by several writers and foreign editors at the *Post* appears to take the position that:

* terrorists are freedom fighting underdogs while ignoring that the Palestinian Authority has governed the Palestinians since 1993 per Oslo;

* terrorists are fighting out of frustration and humiliation while ignoring the fact that prior to Yasser Arafat's return to the region, Palestinians as a whole had more economic viability and personal freedoms than at any other time;

* prior to 1967 the "West Bank" and Gaza were Palestinian territory when in fact the lands were never a self-governed nor an independent entity -- they respectively belonged to Jordan and Egypt; and

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* that terrorism is about the "occupation" while it is clear that the goals of the terrorists are the elimination of the State of Israel.

The Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (www.spj.org) in part states, "Journalists should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible."

Yet, during a 20-month period, the *Post* has been guilty of inaccurate coverage, clear bias, gross error and distortion of the facts. Traditional media watch groups, the journalist's own code of ethics, position papers and thousands of letters to the editor do not seem to have any impact when it comes to insisting that the *Post* get the story right.

The Post violates not only the code of ethics but also the elements of bias noted on HonestReporting's Web site (www.HonestReporting.com). These include misleading definitions and terminology, imbalanced reporting, opinions disguised as news, lack of context, selective omission and using facts to draw false conclusions.

No other industry can stonewall the public and think it cannot be held accountable. No other industry can withhold information without being charged with fraud. No other industry can defend employees who rudely treat customers and shout at them and still keep them employed.

The Washington Post needs to better understand that the arrogance that produced the advertising slogan, "If you don't get it, you won't get it" has been turned on its head and that longtime readers are fed up with both the arrogance and second-rate coverage. The June boycott will send the clear message to the *Post* that we expect higher quality, accurate and thorough coverage.

Peter Hebert of Germantown serves on the Advisory Committee for the Boycott of The Washington Post. Hillel Glazer of Rockville is the Web master of www.BoycottThePost.org.

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