DAILY NEWS

OPINION

Turning Jewish victims into the villains

The Park Slope Food Coop on Friday, May 22, 2026. (Emma Seiwell / New York Daily News)

By **RORY LANCMAN**
PUBLISHED: May 26, 2026 at 5:00 AM EDT

As the worldwide campaign against the state of Israel and the Jewish people grows more violent and more discriminatory, it's important to understand the strategy that is the movement's central ideology and instrument: negating Jewish suffering by substituting it with Jewish culpability and negating the persecution of Jews by making Jews the perpetrators — perpetrators who are merely getting what perpetrators deserve.

The claim that Jews are the real Nazis, ethnic cleansers, war criminals, child murderers, and rapists negates those very crimes committed against the Jewish people, and it negates the guilt of those who committed them. It makes it acceptable to kill and assault and harass and ostracize Jews because isn't that what perpetrators have coming to them?

As someone who fights antisemitism for a living as a lawyer, and as someone who has fought antisemitism as an elected official, this theme is a constant.

It is no coincidence that the infamous Nicholas Kristof column accusing Israel of using rape as a systemic tool of political oppression appeared almost the same day that a deeply researched and documented study of the sexual violence committed by Hamas and Gaza civilians on Oct. 7 was released. The Times had knowledge of that study at least a week before the Kristof column ran. What better way to negate the documented horrors of Oct. 7 than to allege with almost no verifiable evidence that "The horrific abuse inflicted on Israeli women on Oct. 7 now happens to Palestinians day after day"?
Then, the mayor of New York tweeted about the so-called Nakba, or "catastrophe." This is the alternate reality that the creation of the state of Israel itself displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, rather than the war waged against Israel following Palestinian rejection of the offered an Arab state living side by side with Israel. In other words, the "catastrophe" which Palestinians and the mayor are commemorating was the failure to effectuate a Holocaust in the land of Israel a decade after the Holocaust in Europe.
And tonight, Park Slope Food Coop members will vote on whether to boycott Israeli products, a campaign aimed at combating "Jewish supremacy." No wonder proponents erupted in laughter at a recent meeting at the mere mention of antisemitism; complaints of discrimination can't be taken seriously by those designated as supremacists.
Negation strips the Jewish state, the Jewish people, Jewish institutions, Jewish synagogues, and Jewish individuals of any right to safety or protection. Murderers deserve murder; rapists deserve rape; supremacists deserve discrimination. Isn't that just fair?

From Kristof to Mamdani to Tucker Carlson, the message is the same: Jewish persecution is negated by the very crimes invented to justify it.

There are many responses to this campaign to legitimize Jewish persecution, and I am involved in all of them: litigation, legislation, advocacy. Our civil rights laws

must be enforced to protect America's Jewish community with the same vigor as applied to all. Our laws must be strengthened to defend Jewish life in this country. And we must continue to participate fully in the civic and political life of this country to defend truth and reality.

But I am convinced that no strategy is more important to defeating the negation of our shared Jewish reality than strengthening Jewish identity, Jewish education, Jewish communal institutions, and the Jewish state.

Every bris, bar and bat mitzvah, Birthright trip to Israel, and smashed wedding glass is a beautiful affirmation (the opposite of negation) of Jewish life and Jewish continuity.

Lancman, a candidate for state Senate, is senior counsel at the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law. The views expressed are his own.