



**The Center for the Study of  
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The Lester and Sally Entin  
Faculty of Humanities  
Tel Aviv University

## **PERSPECTIVES**

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The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry publishes commentary and analysis on Jewish identity and culture. You are welcome to share your thoughts on our Perspectives with us: [cst@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:cst@tauex.tau.ac.il). We are glad to share with you the thirty-third issue of Perspectives.

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### **Leaving the BBC**

*A young Jewish journalist gave up his dream for principles. What happened next?*

*Noah Abrahams*

“The only Jew in Derby” is what my friends called me during my time at university in England’s East Midlands.

It was a nickname I cherished, and I continue to cherish.

Some might perceive this as a cruel or discriminative label. However, I was always proud to be who I am. A British Jew with a passion and desire to represent my people in a place where so few others share my identity.

British Jewry accounts for 0.46% of the UK population. Now, in a climate so toxic, my friends think more carefully before bellowing my nickname across a bar or football field.

Whilst I feel like I shout from the rooftops with my message of peace and truth, I sense fear from my peers. A trepidation that they could somehow put me in harm’s way if they somehow gave the game away.

Some of my earliest memories stem from attending a non-Jewish elementary school on the outskirts of London and taking the day off for Rosh Hashanah whilst the other children stayed put in the classroom. I have often felt the outcast.

My passion for Zionism and, indeed, Judaism, stems from being an ambassador for our “ethnic minority” at an early age. All of those Hanukkahs when everyone else waited eagerly for Christmas, I knew that these people called the Maccabees had fought off the hate and pathed a way for celebration. It was always abundantly clear that as a member of the 0.46%, life would be different.

But, as with life’s twists and turns, the pride for religion comes in ebbs and flows. In fact, I hated leaving my non-Jewish elementary school to join a Jewish high school. The indoctrination I felt as we davened Shacharit or sat through Mincha, only learning about Judaism in religious studies and religious terms, stirred up an anger.

I left high school at 16 and studied at a community sixth form college instead. After five years of sheltered and privileged Jewish life in an affluent and protected bubble, I stepped back into the real world and studied journalism in a secular school.

Life as a lonely Jewish boy among hundreds of Christians, Catholics, Muslims, Sikhs, and atheists was back on. My duty as a Jewish diplomat and advocate had been re-activated.

Whilst studying between ages 16 and 18, I remember my first battle against the authorities as my lecturer told me to shift my focus on a mandatory essay assignment anywhere but the Holocaust on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. My stomach turned, my guard went up, and I instinctively defended my right to educate on history’s cruelest chapter.

Today, I often think back to that exchange. A Jewish student banned from mentioning the Holocaust because Jews “wallow in self-pity.” As a then 16-year-old Masorti Jew, I tasted the struggle of an antisemitic narrative.

Six months on from October 7 and the worst antisemitism experienced in my lifetime, I reflect on the “part I played.” When working in the media, one is often told of the reasons behind a righteous act. Equally, one is frequently presented with an excuse as to why wrongdoing is continued.

On October 12, 2023, I made a decision that pointed my career in a different direction. Forget about being “the only Jew in Derby.” I became the “Jewish sports reporter who quit the BBC.” A decision with ramifications that frequently surprise me.

Sitting on the Tube last month, I opened the Daily Mail, and right there in black and white, Sir Michael Ellis summarized my story in a nutshell. In a national newspaper, readers were reminded that activism comes only with a personal price paid.

Sir Michael, the former Attorney General for England and Wales, explained that “Jewish sports journalist Noah Abrahams, 22, quit his dream job after the

Corporation's refusal to unequivocally call Hamas what it is: a terrorist organization. Noah said that 'words have the power to fuel hate and put fuel on the fire. Words impact how we think, how we react, how we act. They have influence.' The BBC's senior management has fundamentally failed to deal with this problem and uphold its own guidelines. Awful though it is, it cannot be denied – the BBC seems to be institutionally anti-Semitic.”

Sir Michael's piece and my resignation may feel like a harsh assessment of a treasured British icon. However, this is a broadcaster that, to my knowledge, banned Jewish employees from attending marches against antisemitism, reported Hamas executions based on Hamas statements, and relied on Hamas-supporting journalists to verify reports.

In journalism and as a member of society, one is rarely called upon to really and truly reflect on who they are and what they believe in.

Robert Louis Stevenson's cynical and highly unpleasant character, Mr. Hyde, will often show his face in life. On Saturday afternoons, the Saturdays of fever pitch, whilst now working as a television producer in a hot, stuffy, and stale studio, I feel Hyde's presence. He attacks any positive mindset and spreads his poison. He whispers, “What if?”

The fact is that I had the option to stay quiet, keep a blossoming career, and fuel my passion whilst being paid.

However, I now see that sacrifice can be a blessing. With every Hyde, there is a Dr. Jekyll. The doctor reminds me that in sacrificing a job I treasured, I inspired others to speak louder and stand by their own beliefs with confidence and conviction.

I have just concluded a one-week visit to Tel Aviv and Israel at large. Everywhere I went, people who heard my story or already knew about it told me how much it meant to them. How important it is for the Jews of Israel to know that Jews living in other countries stand with them.

I was fortunate enough to join rural farming communities near Netanya. Alongside hundreds all over the country, I contributed in fundraising for the war effort and in keeping local business alive.

For hours, volunteers from the UK, US, Canada, and Australia struggled under sweltering heat for a cause thousands of miles away from their homes. A group of strangers became friends. We picked strawberries and shared our Jewish experiences.

Working in a remote field, miles from any town or city, we bonded over our common values and came together as a people. Sacrifice has several faces, and each is a test of character, resilience, and strength.

Whether coined the “only Jew in Derby” or ‘the Jewish sports reporter who quit the BBC,’ these past six months have taught me that labels matter little. It is the morals behind any headline or description that have the most meaningful impact.

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Noah Abrahams, a former BBC journalist, is Associate Editor at the Center, and a television producer.

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