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'The Shrink Next Door'

Journalist Danny Fenster sentenced to 11 years in Myanmar, is released

(JTA) — Danny Fenster, a Jewish American journalist who Am and was sentenced to 11 years in prison Friday has been released. Former New Mexico governor and former diplomat Bill Richardson, who was in the country on a humanitarian visit, told reporters Monday that Fenster would travel back to the United States “through Qatar, over the next day and a half,” according to CNN. Zaw Min Tun, a spokesman for Myanmar’s military, told CNN that Fenster “has been released and deported. We will release details why he was released later.”

Fenster, who had lived and worked in Myanmar since 2019 and seven as a managing editor at Frontier Myanmar, had been detained at the airport while trying to leave the country to visit the United States in May. Fenster had been held without bail on various charges by Myanmar’s military, all having to do with his journalism.

Fenster’s imprisonment had become a rallying cry in his hometown of Detroit, where many lawns display “Free Fenster” signs on their front lawns, and his family has organized rallies attended by local Congressman Andy Levin. A recent post in a “Bring Danny Home” Facebook group, which has more than 6,000 members, reads, “We wish more than anything that Danny would be brought home to this community that loves him so.”

John Cleese cancels at Cambridge U over a debate about Hitler impersonation

(JTA) — An impression of Adolf Hitler at Cambridge University has touched off a fight over the limits of free speech and has drawn Monty Python comedian John Cleese into the fray. The impersonation was delivered at a debate last week on whether there’s such a thing as “good taste.” Andrew Graham-Dixon, an art historian, impersonated Hitler as an example of bad taste, in order to argue that good and bad taste do exist.

At the time, Keir Bradwell, the president of the Cambridge Union, a debating society, jokingly thanked Graham-Dixon for the impersonation. Since then, Bradwell has reversed course and published an apology for not cutting Graham-Dixon off.

That condemnation has led Cleese, a champion of free speech, to cancel his attendance at an upcoming event at the Cambridge Union. He said he made the decision in protest of the university’s treatment of Graham-Dixon. Cleese was scheduled to appear in Cambridge as a guest of the debating society as part of his new

documentary series, “Cancel Me,” in which Cleese interviews people who are perceived to have been penalized or silenced for making offensive statements.

In the debate, Graham-Dixon spoke as Hitler, putting on a German accent while making a Nazi salute. “Culture struggle through taste, my struggle, my struggle, Adolf Hitler’s struggle, I was a watercolor painter, I was rejected, my German art, my purity, it was rejected,” Graham-Dixon said in a German accent before about 400 listeners. “The romantic tradition of German art was rejected by this modern art, this modern, horrible art that was promoted by the Jews.”

The audience of 400 people voted in favor of Graham-Dixon in the debate. At the event, Bradwell commended Graham-Dixon for “perhaps the longest Hitler impression this chamber has ever received, a remarkable accomplishment for tonight.” But days later, Bradwell apologized for not interrupting Graham-Dixon.

“I would like to offer my unreserved apology for the comments made by a speaker in our debate on Thursday night,” he wrote in a statement posted to Twitter. “Neither I nor the society condones the thoughtless and grotesque language used by the individual in question, and I am sorry for my failure to intervene at the time.”

Polish soccer referee sends out antisemitic rant

(JTA) — Jewish groups in Poland complained after a professional soccer referee ridiculed the work of a group trying to root out antisemitism in the sport. Lukasz Araszkiwicz, a referee from Poznan, called the work of the Never Again association “hogwash by Jewish centers and milieus.” Never Again, which seeks to curb expressions of racist hatred in soccer, had invited him and others to participate in the group’s activities, the Poznan edition of *Gazeta Wyborca* on Tuesday, Nov. 9 reported. “Jews are not a chosen people despite this everlasting pretense of theirs,” Araszkiwicz replied in an email, “and portraying Poles as antisemites and talking about Polish concentration camps is the biggest Jewish f*****g despicable thing since World War II,” according to Never Again. Never Again and the American Jewish Committee’s Warsaw office urged FIFA, the world soccer federation, to take disciplinary action against Araszkiwicz, Never Again wrote on Facebook Wednesday.

NY Gov calls out Democrats who question ‘our commitment to Israel’

(New York Jewish Week via JTA) — New York’s Governor Kathy Hochul vowed to fight hate crimes and criticized fellow Democrats over their positions on Israel, in a speech delivered virtually to the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York on Wednesday, Nov. 10. Hochul pledged to

fight antisemitism and help bolster security at Jewish institutions. She also declared her support for Israel and called out those in her own party who disagree. “As a member of Congress a decade ago, I stood firm with Israel when they were under assault,” she said. “And even more recently, as a Democrat, now, I reject the individuals in my party who are making this an issue and questioning our commitment to Israel.” Progressives like by New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have challenged their party on issues like defense assistance for Israel.

Hochul noted that she was delivering the speech on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, and drew a connection to present-day antisemitism. She promised that she was “working very hard to make sure that the resources are there from the state government to fund security programs.” “For so long the community has been under assault, and we talked about the rise in hate crimes against individuals who should never have that fear in their hearts,” she said. “You’ve always fought back. The Jewish people always had to fight back but it makes them stronger and more united together.”

Near the end of her speech, Hochul said that she had planned to visit Israel over Thanksgiving with her family, but that in August “my life changed rather dramatically” — a reference to her becoming governor upon Cuomo’s resignation. “Let’s let me get through this year, and I’ll be there next year,” she said.

Murderer of French Holocaust survivor gets life

(JTA) — A French court sentenced a man to life in prison for what it termed the antisemitic murder of a Holocaust survivor in Paris in 2018. The murderer of Mireille Knoll, Yacine Mihoub, will be eligible for parole in 22 years, according to the ruling Wednesday, Nov. 10, by the Criminal Tribunal of Paris, AFP reported. An accomplice of his, Alex Carrimbacus, was sentenced to 15 years for theft aggravated by a hate crime for their actions in 2018. The charred body of Mireille Knoll, 85, was discovered in her apartment on March 23, 2018. Knoll, who escaped deportation to a Nazi death camp when French police rounded up Jews in Paris in 1942, was stabbed 11 times before her apartment was set ablaze by the perpetrators. Mihoub, 29, is a son of Knoll’s neighbor and had known her all his life. He and Carrimbacus, 23, were indicted in May 2020. In the verdict, the two men’s crimes were found to have been antisemitic because they targeted Knoll out of the belief that robbing and killing her would be lucrative because she is Jewish.

Knoll’s murder provoked an outcry by French Jews, including a protest march through Paris organized by Jewish community leaders in which 10,000 people participated. Her murder occurred about a year after the slaying of Sarah Halimi, a Jewish physician, by a neighbor who shouted about Allah as he killed her. The

killer in that case, Kobili Traore, did not stand trial because a judge found that he was suffering a psychotic episode induced by the consumption of marijuana. That ruling, which ended with Traore being admitted to a psychiatric institution, sparked a wave of protests by French Jews.

Knoll’s family said the sentences imposed on her murderer and robber were fair.

Actor Paul Rudd is ‘Sexiest Man Alive’ for 2021

(JTA) — Paul Rudd, the Jewish movie star whose original family name was Rudnitsky, was named *People* magazine’s “sexiest man alive” in 2021. He responded to the magazine with the signature sense of humility that has helped endear him to fans — in addition to his good looks — for over two decades of mostly comedic roles. “When I think about myself, I think of myself as a husband and a father, like I’m that,” he said in the article published Wednesday, Nov. 10. “I just hang out with my family when I’m not working. That’s what I kind of like the most.” “There are so many people that should get this before me,” he added.

Rudd, 52, was born to English Jewish parents, and learned about the antisemitism their ancestors faced on the PBS genealogy series “Finding Your Roots” in 2017. Rudd said he grew up largely detached from religion but experienced some antisemitism himself as a kid growing up in Missouri and Kansas. Before he made a name for himself in blockbuster comedies such as “Anchorman” and “Knocked Up,” Rudd was briefly a bar and bat mitzvah DJ. Rudd’s next big role is a very Jewish one: he will star as Dr. Isaac “Ike” Herschkopf in the Apple+ TV adaptation of “The Shrink Next Door,” (see story this issue).

The list of famous Jews formerly named “sexiest man alive” is short — pop star Adam Levine was given the honor in 2013; actor Harrison Ford, who had a Jewish mother and partly defines himself as Jewish, was given the title in 1998; English soccer legend David Beckham, whose maternal grandmother was Jewish and has called himself “half-Jewish,” was selected in 2015.

Antisemitic tirade at AZ school board meeting spurs a debate

(Jewish News of Greater Phoenix via JTA) — An antisemitic tirade at a school board meeting in suburban Phoenix last week has spurred an extensive response among local officials and Jewish leaders — some of whom say they were distressed that board members did not rebut the comment at the time. During the public comment portion of the meeting of the Chandler Unified School District board, a woman who identified herself as Melanie Rettler spoke about critical race theory and vaccines — topics not listed on the meeting agenda. Her comment crescendoed with an antisemitic

claim drenched in the language of right-wing conspiracy theories. “Every one of these things, the deep state, the cabal, the swamp, the elite — you can’t mention it, but I will — there is one race that owns all the pharmaceutical companies and these vaccines aren’t safe, they aren’t effective and they aren’t free,” Rettler said. “You know that you’re paying for it through the increase in gas prices, the increase in food prices — you’re paying for this and it’s being taken from your money and being given to these pharmaceutical companies and if you want to bring race into this: It’s the Jews.”

After Rettler walked away, Barb Mozdzen, the board president, addressed everybody in the room. “Comments really need to be related to what the school board can do something about, and this was not something we can do something about,” she said. Some Jewish organizations expressed outrage that Mozdzen and other board members didn’t respond more strongly to the antisemitism. The Arizona chapter of the Israel American Council said it wrote to the Chandler board requesting that “in the future the board members themselves speak up the very moment such hateful lies are expressed.” “Our history teaches us that allowing such racism to pass unchallenged only invites more of the same,” the group said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the ADL sent a letter to the board and each member expressing concern. “The lack of response from board members to last night’s public speaker who used blatant antisemitic tropes and stereotypes to promote anti-vaccine and anti-CRT views is simply appalling and dangerous,” the letter said.

The response after the meeting was more decisive. After Chandler’s interim superintendent, Franklin Narducci, learned about what had happened, he got in touch with representatives of the Jewish community. Paul Rockower, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Phoenix, praised the district’s outreach to and collaboration with the Jewish community. So did Rabbi Michael Beyo, CEO of the East Valley Jewish Community Center in Chandler, who said he is pleased and grateful that Narducci sought to collaborate. “An ignorant person made an antisemitic comment. That’s not newsworthy,” Beyo said. “What is important is that the superintendent canceled all of his meetings [Thursday] in order to deal with this.”

Narducci collaborated with Beyo to craft a statement that condemned hate speech and denounced the antisemitic statements. Beyo’s statement applauded the district governing board, administration and Narducci for “leading by example and speaking out against the hatred of all people.”

Bennett meets members of Congress on trip sponsored by J Street

(JNS) Two delegations from Congress met with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett at his office in Jerusalem on Wednesday, Nov. 17, including one which is raising eyebrows because of its sponsor. The two groups included one bipartisan delegation led by Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.), who chairs the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, and another all-Democratic delegation sponsored by the left-wing organization J Street, led by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), chair of the House Appropriations Committee. The J Street sponsored delegation included Reps. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.), Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.), Marc Pocan (D-Wis.), Mondaire Jones (D-N.Y.) and Melanie Stansbury (D-N.M.), some of who have been critical of Israel on the floor of the House of Representatives. The press release from Bennett’s office did not mention that the delegation was from J Street.

Earlier this week, the J Street delegation met with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. Lapid thanked the delegation “for supporting the replenishment of the Iron Dome missile-defense system, and we discussed the importance of continuing to strengthen the US-Israel relationship.” The J Street delegation met with other Israeli officials, including President Isaac Herzog, on its five-day trip; and with Palestinian officials including Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh.

An Israeli government official told *Israel Hayom* that “J Street is the only lobby that defines itself as ‘pro-Israel,’ but actively opposes the policies of the [various] governments — whether this means actively supporting a return to the nuclear deal with Iran, or promoting members of Congress who oppose Iron Dome funding. When other lobbies don’t agree with Israel on a certain issue, they simply keep quiet and don’t take a position. [J Street] are the only ones who come out against [Israel].”

“Had the honor of meeting with children today in the occupied West Bank city Hebron,” Bowman tweeted while on the trip, along with a picture of himself and other delegation members sitting with Palestinian children. “There are streets they cannot walk and places they cannot go, simply because they are Palestinian. When I asked about their dreams, their answer was simple: freedom. The occupation must end.”

Bowman was thanked in a retweet by J Street, repeating his sentiment.

Four Israeli products on TIME’s Best Inventions of 2021 list

(Israel21C via JNS) TIME magazine’s “Best Inventions of 2021” list names 100 “inventions that are making the world better,

smarter and a bit more fun.” Four of these are Israeli: ElectReon wireless vehicle-charging technology in the transportation category; SupPlant ag-tech solution in the smarter-farming category; OrCam Read in the accessibility category; and Percepto AIM for automated inspections in the artificial-intelligence category.

ElectReon invented an in-road wireless electric vehicle (EV) charging technology for commercial, public and passenger vehicles. The charging infrastructure wirelessly charges EVs on the road when they’re in motion or at rest. The company is working on pre-commercial projects in Germany, Italy, Sweden and Israel, with plans to expand into North America.

SupPlant uses sensors to monitor crops’ temperature and moisture, providing highly accurate instructions for farmers in 14 countries to maximize yields. A sensor-less approach, intended for 450 million “smallholder” farmers in the developing world, is coming next.

OrCam Read is a first-of-its-kind handheld device with a smart camera that seamlessly reads text from any printed surface or digital screen. It’s intended for people with mild low vision, reading fatigue, reading difficulties including dyslexia, and for anyone who consumes large amounts of text.

Percepto Autonomous Inspection and Monitoring (AIM) software solution for industrial sites employs drones and robots to automate inspections, emergency response and security. From data capture to AI-powered insights and reports, Percepto AIM is used by Fortune 500 companies around the world. The 2022 AIM upgrade will be unveiled November 17 and features AI-powered analytics for specific sectors such as solar, mining, energy, and oil and gas.

A new party game wants to take away your ‘Jewish card’

(JTA) — Excommunicating someone from the Jewish community is no laughing matter.

Unless you’re taking their last “Jewish card” because of their opinions on cinnamon-sugar bagels or the movie “Wet Hot American Summer.” Then you might just be playing a game of Jewish Card Revoked. Modeled after the popular games “Black Card Revoked” and “Latino Card Revoked,” the new game attempts to unite Jews of nearly every background over a skill most of them value: the ability to make fun of themselves.

The game consists of cards that are each printed with one multiple choice question and four answers. The players vote on their preferred answer to each question, after which one representative of each answer makes the case for why their choice was best in 45 seconds or less.

Players start the game with 10 points each and lose one point every time they disagree with the majority. But Molly Zeff, founder of the game’s production company, Flying Leap Games, says the points don’t really matter. “If you get to zero, your ‘Jewish card’ is revoked,”

Zeff said. “But no one would actually care, it’s a party game, you just have fun.”

One of the biggest challenges in creating a Jewish party game that actually appeals to a broad swath of Jews is making sure the questions are engaging and funny for people from different backgrounds and communities. To do that, Zeff composed the questions together with four other writers and two editors from diverse backgrounds, including a gay Jewish comedian and a Sephardi Puerto Rican-Cuban Jew. Zeff describes herself as a “traditional egalitarian observant Jewish hippie who attends multiple kinds of services.” “Any game that’s creating a light, fun approach to cultural humor, and any game more broadly, will benefit and be infinitely better from being created by a diverse team within that group,” Zeff said.

Jewish Card Revoked is the company’s first Jewish-themed game of Flying Leap Games, created by Zeff, 37, and her childhood friend, Jonathan Cannon. Though it covers a diverse swath of Jewish backgrounds and experiences, several of the game’s questions feel like inside baseball. Answers to a question about what poses the greatest threat to Jews in the 2020s include “the patriarchy,” “the cost of Jewish education,” “taking the Pew report too seriously,” and “chocolate chummus [sic].” Originally intended for secular Jews, it became a hit among the Orthodox community. “I realized that Orthodox Jews liked the game a lot,” she said. “And so it turns out that our main audiences were from very diverse spectrums.”