

Did Trump sabotage Josh Shapiro's VP bid? Unpacking the real reasons - opinion

Trump's alleged role in Josh Shapiro's VP bid is questioned. Discover the real reasons behind Shapiro's rejection, from internal party politics to a damaging scandal.

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PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR Josh Shapiro joins US Vice President Kamala Harris as she visits Philadelphia, last month, before President Joe Biden dropped his bid for reelection.

(photo credit: KEVIN MOHATT/REUTERS)

Whatever you think of [Donald J. Trump](#), it's hard to make the case that he is an antisemite. So the recent headline, "Donald Trump is not a friend of the Jews," definitely caught my eye.

In her completely alternate world, the writer, Amy Neustein, tried to make the case that Trump single-handedly torpedoed Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's chances to become the vice presidential candidate in the upcoming [2024 US presidential election](#). Her reason: He manipulated the progressives in the [Democratic Party](#) to topple Shapiro's chances of being chosen by saying that any Jew who votes for the Democratic ticket needs to get their head examined ("Donald Trump is not a friend of the Jews," Jerusalem Post, August 13).

Neustein's contention is that Trump "freely assigning mental illness labels and cognitive impairment to any Jew who votes Democratic... he manipulated the progressives in the Democratic Party to topple Shapiro's chances of being chosen as Harris's running mate."

That's certainly one way to look at it – if you are unwilling to objectively examine the real reasons that contributed to Harris ultimately choosing far-left Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.



DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL candidate and US Vice President Kamala Harris and her vice presidential running mate Minnesota Governor Tim Walz attend a campaign event, in Las Vegas, last weekend. They are intent on 'bringing back the joy.' (credit: Kevin Mohatt/Reuters)

Because a more honest appraisal would be that the progressive wing of the party, which has been very vocal and unashamed to express their disdain for Israel and all Jews, by association, didn't need any manipulation in order to reject a Jewish candidate. It was clear that they would not tolerate such an individual no matter how much he attempted to downplay his once very strong and unequivocal support for Israel, following volunteer work that he performed on a kibbutz at age 20.

'an observant Jew who speaks openly about his faith'

It also didn't help that Shapiro is not a nominal, more secular-leaning Jew but rather "an observant Jew who speaks openly about his faith" ("Pro-Palestinian groups seek to thwart Josh Shapiro's chances for Harris's VP," New York Times, August 1).

In fact, his defenders, from his own party, are convinced that "he was rejected because he's an observant Jew," ("Shapiro wasn't picked. Was it antisemitism?", Politico, August 6) placing the blame on anyone or anything else, because they, of all people, understand the extreme element which has invaded the party, spewing hatred and real disdain for the Jewish people, are now viewed as enemies who need to be shunned and completely rejected.

But when the simple truth, which exposes their own toxic bigotry and ethnic prejudices comes to light, there needs to be a go-to scapegoat – and who better than Trump, the reincarnation of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Nero and Ivan the Terrible, all rolled up into one?

But this is not an article in defense of Trump. It is, instead, an attempt to be forthright and candid about what ultimately ruined Josh Shapiro's chances to clinch the nomination. And, in that regard, there is another crucial fact, absent from Neustein's very visceral narrative. Just days before the anticipated announcement of Shapiro's candidacy was to be made, very damning allegations were brought against him, accusing him of having covered up an incident of sexual harassment connected to his former cabinet secretary and top aide, Mike Vereb.

There is no question that the reported \$295,000 settlement, paid out by Shapiro's office, greatly contributed to sinking his own chances of being chosen as the best possible person to enhance Harris's chances of winning the coveted presidency. Once that unsavory scandal was disclosed, the forthcoming announcement seemed to undergo a bit of a delay, despite the embarrassing leak, by Philadelphia's mayor, who inadvertently published a tweet and video, stating that Governor Shapiro was, indeed, slated to be chosen as the VP pick.

Suddenly, with two strikes against him, his unacceptable ethnicity and the ugly sex scandal of his right-hand person, Shapiro was seen much more as a liability than the asset he was initially thought to be. Consequently, as tempting as it is to cast guilt on anyone else, especially a very reviled opponent, it's impossible to ignore the obvious causes that led to the rejection of Shapiro – that is, unless you are disingenuous and seeking to foment anti-Jewish blame where it doesn't belong.

'Victim of anti-Jewish sentiment'

While Neustein points to other cases where Jews were conveniently discarded or overlooked for political office, her claims that Shapiro, similar to these other incidents, was the victim of anti-Jewish sentiment, just doesn't hold water.

Because even if the centrist politician had been seen as a "potential threat to the Trump campaign," there was already much justification by Democrats to pass over Shapiro (forgive the pun), and go with a more compatible, like-minded, and less charismatic candidate who didn't have the potential of stealing Harris's limelight.

Yes, it's true that a Jew still has not served as president or vice-president, but it doesn't rise to the "deep wounds" which Neustein claims to suffer from her belief that there is a deliberate act of Jewish rejection, sparked by an ongoing prejudicial bias against them, which she likely asserts is still a ubiquitous influence amongst most Americans.

Those who resort to that kind of thinking are, sadly, turning to the useful tool of victimization, which is utilized all too often these days, especially by the progressive sector that has cleverly figured out the advantage that it offers when finding themselves as the underdog in any situation, whether political or otherwise.

For them, it serves to camouflage flaws, ineptitude or the talent which is needed to succeed and win in any contest of life and, instead, seeks to scout out others as the excuse for why they failed. This same mentality is responsible for the oppressor/oppressed narrative which provides all of the convenient reasons that one cannot rise to a higher level since they are being maltreated and are downtrodden by those who are more powerful.

The Jewish people have certainly suffered their share of that maltreatment, throughout history, but once we became a recognized sovereign nation with independence and self-determination, it was no longer possible nor desirable to be defined as victims who are being crushed under the weight of the gentile majority. In fact, to do so is to undermine the strength which has become the hallmark of the Israeli people who have realized monumental advances and achievements as a result of their hard work, skill and dedication.

That has become our legacy as we remain the unstoppable kids on the block, and it's certainly a much more attractive portrayal of who we are while also avoiding the politics of sour grapes.

The writer is a former Jerusalem elementary and middle school principal. She is also the author of Mistake-Proof Parenting, available on Amazon, based on the time-tested wisdom found in the Book of Proverbs.