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Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech by Victoria Saker Woeste (review)

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HENRY FORD'S WAR ON JEWS AND THE LEGAL BATTLE AGAINST HATE SPEECH. By Victoria Saker Woeste. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2012.

Victoria Saker Woeste's, *Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle Against Hate Speech*, contributes significantly to our understanding of the dramatic libel lawsuit brought by Aaron Sapiro against the American automotive pioneer. Woeste's meticulously researched book thoughtfully examines the complex circumstances and personalities behind the case, the intricacies of the trial, and the implications of its resolution. She analyzes Sapiro's suit within the framework of American libel law and argues compellingly that, contrary to most interpretations, the case represented a lost opportunity in the struggle against hate speech.

The book draws on previously published biographies, as well as new archival research, trial transcripts, and interviews to portray the major players in the lawsuit and the conflicts among them. In the years following WWI, Henry Ford increasingly embraced anti-Semitism, and in 1920 turned his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, into a medium through which to voice his concerns about "the disproportionate influence of the Jews on politics, culture, entertainment, diplomacy, industrial capitalism, and the state" (47). Over the next several years, Ford published a series of accusations about individual Jews and "International Jewry." Louis Marshall, a prominent attorney and President of the American Jewish Committee, was among those targeted by the paper. He responded by urging restraint, arguing that Jews were better off demonstrating good citizenship than stooping to respond to anti-Semites. The paper also attacked Aaron Sapiro, a lawyer involved in organizing farmers' marketing cooperatives. Incensed by charges of personal and professional misconduct, Sapiro rejected Marshall's path of restraint, and opted instead to sue one of the most powerful men in America for libel.

Woeste's book chronicles the case of Sapiro v. Ford, detailing the strategies employed by defense and prosecution, and contrasting Sapiro's quest for vindication in an individual libel suit with Marshall's behind-the-scenes pursuit of a means to silence the voices of anti-Semitism. In many accounts, Marshall emerges as the hero, ending the legal proceedings by extracting from Ford an apology to "the Jews" and a promise to stop publishing anti-Semitic material. Woeste questions this interpretation of events. She argues that Marshall might have used the apology to reinforce the still-ambiguous concept of group, rather than individual, libel in American law, thus effectively combatting anti-Jewish hate speech. Instead, she depicts him as outmaneuvered by Ford, who appreciated that an apology would free him from the headaches of the lawsuit, but without legal enforceability, offer virtually nothing of substance to either Sapiro or the fight against anti-Semitism.

Woeste's study clearly reveals the pervasiveness of anti-Jewish sentiment in American society, but interestingly it also demonstrates its limits. Woeste takes note of the many farmers, organizers, and ultimately, jurors who supported Sapiro. This aspect of the case is worth further consideration for what it reveals about the complexities of American anti-Semitism during the interwar period, and the difficulty of determining how best to fight it. Woeste's book, however, offers a fascinating and

rewarding account of *Sapiro v. Ford*, and what the case teaches us about hate speech, libel law, and the anti-Jewish crusade of an American icon.

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IN THE CROSSFIRE: Marcus Foster and the Troubled History of American School Reform. By John P. Spencer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2012.

Those who study the history of education realize that there are no quick fixes for providing equal educational opportunity for all. Throughout America's educational history, some groups (Whites and European immigrants) were given increased participation in public schooling while others groups (people of color, women and non-European immigrants) continually faced limitations. After more than a century of limited schooling opportunities for African Americans nationwide, and shortened efforts to address inequality, a new breed of school reformers believe that addressing the achievement gap, devoid of lessons from the 1960s will be the cure all for the problems of urban school reform. John P. Spencer poses the biographical experiences of Marcus Foster as a "cautionary lesson" for current school reformers. In Marcus Foster, author John Spencer writes, "we see that problems of access, of achievement, of resources, of responsibility, were more complicated than they appeared to be in polarized public debates over who was to blame" (3). Furthermore, Foster's story provides a sense of what is possible with school reform while confronting the restrictions of that same reform.

In the Crossfire chronicles the school leadership experiences of Marcus Foster. As the principal of three Philadelphia schools and the superintendent of Oakland Public Schools, Foster was able to turn around schools others considered a failure. With compensatory funding, Foster targeted teacher expectations, student and parental attitudes and involvement, as well as community and business support to revitalize the educational environments of the schools and district he led. His charming personality as well as his ability to bring diverse people together to solve school problems served as an asset in fulfilling his goals. Unlike Foster, current school reformers have taken a more adversarial approach by demonizing teachers and unions rather than working with them to solve problems. Each time Foster became a principal at school, he gave teachers and other groups a seat at the table in determining how they would reform the school. This inspired the teachers and gave them buy-in for the changes that would be necessary at each school.

Spencer argues convincingly that liberals in the post-World War II period expressed conflicting views about school problems. Some blamed the school system and racist society for problems students experienced in schools. Others used cultural deprivation arguments to determine that situations beyond the schools led to the problems by blaming the lack of abilities on students and their families. Marcus Foster's leadership bridged this ideological divide among liberals. Foster took a more holistic approach to solving the problems in urban schools, recognizing both the societal and familial difficulties his students faced.