

Free the ZOA, Part 2--The Entire Board Must Go

In last week's issue we discussed in detail the reasons why Mort Klein must be removed as the President of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) in order for that very important organization to survive and to reach the next level. The evidence is overwhelming clear that Mr. Klein has managed the ZOA with a shocking level of incompetence; bordering on dishonesty.

He has made himself a wealthy man from the ZOA coffers while the ZOA has seen its membership and financial base shrink; to the point that the organization is essentially moribund.

We concluded that the ZOA membership should seriously consider other options in their upcoming elections as new leadership is desperately needed.

The entire Board of Directors of the ZOA must resign. Why? Because it has not fulfilled its fiduciary duty to supervise the affairs of the ZOA. There should have been controls on Mort Klein's management of the ZOA. The Board should never have allowed Mr. Klein to take such a staggeringly high salary, especially as the ranks of the ZOA were diminishing and its donations were dropping precipitously.

The Board should not have allowed the ZOA to fail to file its Form 990s for three consecutive years, which is an inexcusable dereliction of duty. This failure cost the ZOA its status as a 501c3 non-profit organization effective May of 2011 until May of 2013.

It is also shocking that the Board of Directors allowed Mort Klein to conceal from the public that the ZOA had lost its 501c3 status. This constituted lying by omission, which is immoral and perhaps flatly illegal. Moreover, Mort Klein is

by way of example, there have been approximately 10 National Executive Directors in the 10 years of Mr. Klein's tenure as ZOA President. Not only is such deplorable behavior exceptionally harmful to the success of the ZOA, but it is in direct contravention to Torah principles and represents a Chilul Hashem (desecration of G-d's name). Such an embarrassing turnover rate is unacceptable under any conditions and adversely impacts the ZOA's effectiveness.

Finally, the Board of Directors is conspiring to prevent a democratic election for ZOA President. It accepted Mort Klein's decision to move the convention from New York, where it is traditionally held, to Philadelphia, Mr. Klein's hometown, where his friends



ZOA president Mort Klein has been mired in controversy as it was revealed that he was taking a salary of \$1.2 million from the embattled organization while donations were dissipating

reside.

Even worse, the Board of Directors is not allowing ZOA members across the country to vote by absentee ballot, by proxy or by e-mail. For a national organization to disenfranchise its loyal members across the country in such a

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tably that the ZOA's Board of Directors has been complicit in the gross mismanagement of the organization by deliberately turning a blind eye to Mort Klein's misconduct. To save the ZOA, it is not only imperative that a new president be elected but that the entire Board of Directors be replaced by people who are honest and competent.

Because we are living in perilous times, the State of Israel needs the kind of clear and strong voice that the ZOA once proudly represented. Earlier this week, we heard the words of Obama administration flunky Jack Lew, who addressed the AIPAC policy conference in Washington. He told those gathered that Iran will hardly reap any benefit from its sanctions relief and thus fair, AIPAC has been eerily quiet on this issue; giving the distinct impression that they are marching lock step with the Obama plan not to continue

to punish Iran with crippling economic sanctions, while Iran boldly forges ahead with its nuclear program.

There was once a time when the ZOA would have a crafted a strong policy initiative and would have had the wherewithal to buck the administration's efforts to coddle Iran. There was once a time when the ZOA would have been in the forefront of the opposition to the Obama-Kerry driven "peace plan" in the Middle East which essentially calls for Israel's destruction by imposing upon them the suicidal "two-state solution" idea.

The Jewish people and the future of the State of Israel need a resonant voice such as the ZOA but unless they "get their act together" and straighten out their murky financial situation, they will disappear as a significant player on the American Jewish scene.

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fashion, just to ensure the re-election of Mort Klein, is a monumental disgrace.

At this critical time for the State of Israel, the ZOA needs become vigorous and effective. To do that, it must clean house. We conclude sadly but inevi-

Letters to the Editor

Why I Support Mort Klein as ZOA President

Dear Editor,

There has been an organized effort to defame Mort Klein. Upon close examination all the charges fall apart:

1) Mort was paid an average of \$210,000 per year for the 20 years he has headed ZOA. He received no salary the first 5 years as he rebuilt the organization. The salary was developed by the Board of Directors compensation committee and voted approval by the Bd of Directors. (His opponent, Mr. Steve Goldberg is a member of the Board of Directors and third highest officer at the ZOA).

2) The pension plan approved by the Board of Directors is actuarially less than what a sanitation worker gets in NYC for a pension plan. The deferred pension plan was recommended by an outside consultant and approved by the compensation committee and the full Board. (again, Mr. Steve Goldberg is a member of the Board)

3) The ZOA filed extensions for their IRS 990 forms for three years. This is correct and appropriate when some data is not available. An entity in Israel was to provide additional financials. As soon as Mort Klein found out that the tax filings were not being handled correctly he immediately took action and all filings are up to date. (Again Steve Goldberg was a member of the board and should have been aware of this issue)

4) The wildest charge is that Mort Klein has purposely made strict rules regarding voting membership at the coming convention. This charge is factually false. NY State law and the ZOA constitution require that all votes be in person. Every ZOA member knows this. The annual meeting was lobbied by Philly members to be in Philadelphia. With the costs at half of what they would be in NYC or Washington DC, the ZOA chose Philadelphia. In past years it was held in Washington DC, New York and Philadelphia. (Again, Mr. Steve Goldberg is an officer and member of the ZOA Board..He should know these charges are false)

While we all want a more effective ZOA and there are many items to fault a leader of an organization on....I will not be part of the public hanging of the most effective Zionist leader in the nation.

Mort Klein Speaks For Me

Richard Allen - Founder; JCCWarch.org

ZOA, It's Time to Move On

Dear Editor,

Like many of you, I was shocked to have read the recent Newsroom expose on ZOA President Mort Klein. The most disturbing revelation was as follows: "Klein earned \$315,385 in 2007, the last year for which filings are publicly available. However, according to the Forward, his base compensation in 2011 was reportedly \$435,050. In 2008 alone, Klein's total compensation was \$1,245,851."

Wow! What a difference a generation makes! Till this day I remember vividly as a young activist sitting amongst people like you in the ZOA headquarters in New York, engaging in debate as to whether Mort Klein should have any salary at all. Prior to Mort, no president had ever received a formal salary.

As a zealous and impressionable (operative term being "impressionable") young Zionist activist at the University of Pennsylvania in the mid-to-late 1990's, I fell in love with Mort Klein. At the age of just 15, when the Oslo Accords were signed, I had the street-smarts and temerity to realize that it was a dangerous sham, and I was dismayed that no

mainstream Jewish leader seemed to feel the same way. Then, along came Mort Klein, waving the banner of security, reciprocity and compliance within the context of the new Oslo Accords. I was immediately drawn to him.

I was not the only one. In retrospect there was an irrational euphoria surrounding Mort Klein. Every right-of-center Zionist who felt ostracized at the time by the mainstream "pro-peace" crowd felt as if Mort Klein was their one true father they could lean on. We would have done anything for him at the time, including destroying the ZOA constitution, allowing him to become dictator for life, and making him the first president in ZOA history to have a formal regular salary. At the time (1996), and with some controversy, we approved his salary of \$50,000. Never did we imagine there would come a day where Mort Klein would become a millionaire from what was supposed to be a charitable ideological organization!

Again, I was in love with Mort Klein; and love is irrational. In my college and young professional years I supported him every step of the way and believed he could do no wrong. I thought, he would serve a good 8 to 10 years as President (since we had just destroyed the constitution allowing him to serve more than 4 consecutive years), and dreamt of becoming his successor and making him proud of me for continuing his crusade against the Oslo Accords and PA violations of the same.

Mort appointed me as President of the Young Leadership District of the ZOA in 2000, and I served honorably, increasing membership from our original six to over 180. We organized great events that attracted and galvanized Zionist youth from all over New York. Then suddenly and unpredictably in my third year as president of the YLD, my Zionist world was shattered. I got a call from Mort saying I need to come into his office immediately. I did just that. When I got there I was floored to find out he was removing me from my post as President of the YLD. I asked why, and he iterated in a round-about way some loshon hora he allegedly heard about me from his deputy Robert Jancu (who he subsequently fired anyway). I asked for an opportunity to defend myself against this false and/or misleading loshon hora, but no such opportunity was granted. Apparently no democratic process is to be honored in the ZOA.

After that incident, I fell into a mild depression, as the ZOA had been such a big part of my life for so many years. I felt as if a big part of my identity had been suddenly and precipitately ripped away. The rose-colored glasses had been taken off and for the first time in my life I began to do research on Mort Klein the man, versus Mort Klein the myth. What I found was an enormous stream of people who he had disappointed or wronged over the years. I was so ashamed of myself for having been duped for so long. It's amazing what political zeal can do to objectivity.

In that vein, I urge you to be objective as you elect your next ZOA leader, who should not be Mort Klein.

I know Mort Klein very well, and I know how he's going to respond to this letter. He's going to tell you that I am irrelevant and that I have not been involved in the ZOA for many years (his doing of course). He's going to tell you that I have not accomplished much as a Zionist activist in and therefore my opinion is not valid. The truth is that I would have accomplished much more for the Zionist world if Mort Klein had not railroaded me out of the organization in 2002. However, I have done a lot for Israel as a private citizen since 2002. That year, I published my book, Clinton Versus Israel and lectured on the topic to at least a dozen universities and Jewish institutions

I have no personal animus against Mort Klein. What he did to

me is between him and Hashem, I am asking you to replace him because he has not earned the honor of serving 10 consecutive years as ZOA president, let alone 20. I am asking you to replace him because his personal and ethical failings stand as an embarrassment to the entire organization.

It's time to move on. Perhaps if you do so, I and the younger generations will proudly join your ranks once again.

Zionistically yours, Dave Crystal

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