



The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

IS SIR TIM HUNT A SEXIST MAN AT “HARTS” (HEART)? OR, DO WOMEN IN SCIENCE CRY* WHEN THEY ARE CRITICIZED?

*The Yiddish word meaning to cry or weep is “veynen.”

The Yiddish word meaning to criticize is “kritikirn.”

A critic who criticizes things that don't exist or that are uncriticizable:

“Er kricht oyf di gleicheh vent!”

by

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Syosset, New York

Oh, such “skandal”--scandal! The British biochemist and Nobel laureate, Tim Hunt, 72, offered his thoughts on “di tsore” (the trouble) with girls. At a Korean lunch, he said:

“Three things happen when they are in the lab: You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticize them, they cry.”

These remarks erupted into a storm of outrage. The word “omnishambles” is perfect: n. A situation or person that is a mess in every possible way. Shall we call in “HuntGate”?

Hunt said he was attempting to be jocular, but he was forced to resign from his research post at University College of London. His comments were astounding; he had worked with female colleagues, whose contributions he had praised. Why he's even married to a prominent female scientist/immunologist, Mary Collins.

Athene Donald's blog, 6/16/15, asked, “What next after Tim Hunt?”

Donald says that “an extraordinary number of column inches (virtual and real) have been devoted to demonizing the man....I believe we should judge the man not by the stupid, offensive remarks made in bad taste on the fly but the totality of his contributions, not just to science, but also to furthering the careers of the young.” (He has traveled “di velt”—the world-- to speak to young audiences, encouraging them and inspiring them.) Donald continues, “He is, as has been said, a man of his generation who undoubtedly was educated in different times and can say outrageous things on many topics, often with a twinkle in his eyes (“oygn”). But my impression is firmly of a man who genuinely supports people, whatever their gender, background or specific interests.”

FYI: As of today, NOT ONE WOMAN stepped forward to say how Tim Hunt blighted their career by refusing to promote them, support them, actively behaving inappropriately or demeaning them.

Donald says that “Curing the issues of women in science needs each and every one of us to be vigilant and to speak out about the everyday sexism that is all around us, not just wait to bay at a celebrity (which of course Nobel Prize winners are) who says something crass, suggesting he holds views that most of us think are Victorian.”

Donald says that “we should all be pro-active, not look the other way.” He shares an easy list to help people make that commitment, and a few examples are shown below: The Yiddish has been added by the writer.

- . Encourage women to dare, to take risks.
(The Yiddish word for “risk” is “aynshtelinish.”)
- Act as a sponsor or mentor.
- Refuse to serve on single sex panels or at conferences without an appropriate level of female invited speakers. (The Yiddish word meaning “to invite” is “fargetn.”)
- Don’t let the bold (male or female) monopolise the conversation (“shmu’es”) in the classroom (“der klastsimer”) or the apparatus in the laboratory, at the expense of the timid (“shrekeydik”) (female or male).
- Tap women on the shoulder (“di pleytse”) to encourage them to apply for opportunities they otherwise (“andersh”) would be unaware of or feel they were not qualified for.

- Call out teachers who tell girls they can't/shouldn't do maths, physics, etc. The writer adds, "Who can forget the fracas that occurred in 1992, when talking Barbie doll said, 'Math Class is Tough.' The ensuing brouhaha caused the doll to be recalled after a huge PR nightmare from women saying the idol should not be telling girls that 'Math Class is Tough.'" Note: The Yiddish word for mathematics is "matematik."
- Be prepared to be a visible ("kentik") role model.
- Gather evidence ("raye"), data and anecdote, to provide ammunition for management to change ("baytn").
- Listen and act ("firn zikh") if a woman starts hinting there are problems; don't be dismissive because it makes you uncomfortable.

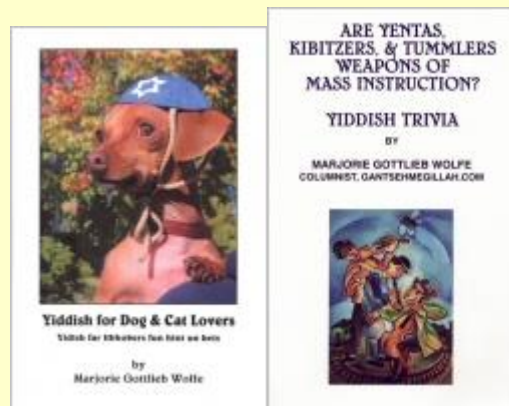
Athene Donald ends this wonderful piece by saying, "If every reader signed up to #just1action4WIS (or came up with another one to add to that list and acted upon it), that would be much more appropriate than pouring all the vitriol onto one man but doing nothing ("gornisht") about the bigger picture."

Source: Athene Donald's Blog, brought to you by Occam's Typewriter, 6/16/15.

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish

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