



## Helen Thomas Resigns After Controversy

Notoriously liberal White House correspondent Helen Thomas was prompted to resign her position yesterday after a filmed interview with Rabbi David F. Nesenoff revealed Thomas' staunchly anti-Israel stance and bias.

The brief exchange between Nesenoff and Helen Thomas went as follows:

Nesenoff: Any comments on Israel? We're asking everybody today—

Thomas: Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine.

Nesenoff: Whoa! Any better comments?

Thomas, laughing: Remember, these people are occupied, and it isn't their land — not German, and not Polish.

Nesenoff: So where should they go? What should they do?

Thomas: Go home.

Nesenoff: Where's home?

Thomas: Poland. Germany.

Nesenoff: So just go back to Poland and Germany?

Thomas: And America, and everywhere else.

Nesenoff did little to hide his shock at Thomas' response. Later, he remarked that her comments were "insulting and hurtful".

Immediately following release of the interview, President Obama called Thomas' remarks "offensive," adding that her comments were "out of line."

Thomas' remarks incited opposition from a variety of groups, including the Nine Speakers, Thomas' speaking agency, who reportedly dropped Thomas after the controversy. Nine Speakers President Diane Nine explained, "In light of recent events, Nine Speakers is no longer able to represent Ms. Thomas, nor can we condone her comments on the Middle East."

Likewise, the Anti-Defamation League took great offense at Thomas' words. National director Abraham Foxman stated, "Her remarks were outrageous, offensive and inappropriate, especially since she uttered them on a day the White House had set aside to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of American Jews during Jewish America Heritage Month."

Thomas issued a formal apology on Friday after the video of her impromptu interview was posted on the Internet. She expressed her regret and indicated that they "do not reflect [her] heartfelt belief that peace will come to the Middle East only when all parties recognize the need for mutual respect and tolerance."





Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 8, 2010

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Unfortunately, Thomas' apology did little to gain the forgiveness of those who were offended by her remarks. Lanny Davis, former Special Counsel to and White House Spokesman for President Bill Clinton asserted that Thomas' apology "was not direct and didn't address the merits of her belief in the stereotype that Jews are aliens in Israel and don't belong there." Davis went on to assert that she should be "suspended from all privileges in the White House press room" and that Thomas revealed herself as an "anti-Semitic bigot."

President George W. Bush's Press Secretary Ari Fleischer shares similar sentiments to Davis, who led the call against Thomas in an e-mail on Friday to the Huffington Post stating that the Thomas' remarks were tantamount to "religious cleansing."

Davis went on to address an alleged double standard in the White House. "If she had asked all blacks to go back to Africa, what would White House Correspondents Association position be as to whether she deserved White House press room credentials — much less a privileged honorary seat?"

Fox News asserts that Thomas, who is of Lebanese descent, "has a long history of anti-Israel rhetoric at White House press briefings." When addressing the recent flotilla raid by the Israeli Defense Force, Thomas called the raid "a deliberate massacre" and "an international crime."

The *Media Research Center* articulated similar sentiments to those of Fox News. "Thomas has not been shy about expressing her left-wing views and reliably anti-Israel opinions since she became a White House 'columnist' in 2000."

In fact, Thomas blatantly admitted in 2002, "I censored myself for 50 years.... Now I wake up and ask myself, 'Who do I hate today?'"

Thomas has staunchly defended her liberalism by defending her "liberal bias" as simply, "[caring] about the poor, the sick, and the maimed."

Thomas, 89, made a name for herself at the United Press International, which she joined in 1943, and was considered a leader for women in journalism. By 1960, she began to cover the White House for the wire service, and by 1974, she was named to be the first female White House bureau chief for a wire service by the UPI. Likewise, she was the first female to be appointed officer at the National Press Club. In 2000, Thomas acquired her place at the front row of the White House briefing room after joining Hearst.

According to the *Joplin Globe*, sitting in the front row of the briefing room, Thomas "remained persistent to the point of badgering."

The controversy over the Thomas' Israel comments prompted Principal Alan Goodwin to cancel her appearance at the June 14 graduation at Walt Whitman High School. Goodwin explained, "Graduation celebrations are not the venue for divisiveness."

Similarly, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) are now considering renaming the "Helen Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement," which was first given to Helen Thomas in 2000. The board of the SPJ will be meeting in July to discuss a variety of issues, including renaming the award.

When President Obama learned that Thomas announced her retirement, he voiced his approval that she made "the right decision."

Photo of Helen Thomas: AP Images



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