



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

[fff@fff.org](mailto:fff@fff.org) [www.fff.org](http://www.fff.org)

## **More Shame on WorldNetDaily** **by Jacob G. Hornberger**

On August 27, the conservative website WorldNetDaily published an article by its columnist Ilana Mercer ([email](#)) entitled “Judge Moore and the Godless 14th Amendment,” which defended an Alabama justice’s refusal to remove a monument containing the Ten Commandments from the state Supreme Court building. What a shame that the article didn’t mention the commandment forbidding the bearing of false witness against one’s neighbor.

As I pointed out in my article “[Shame on WorldNetDaily](#),” WND had earlier published an article by Mercer entitled “[Libertarians Who Loathe Israel](#),” which included the following sentence: “I understand that libertarians like Sheldon Richman (and the Holocaust-denying Institute for Historical Review) believe that all ‘the land’ belongs to the Arabs.”

The false, baseless, vicious, and malicious insinuation in the parentheses generated an indignant response from Sheldon entitled “[Disregard for the Truth](#),” which stated in part:

Placing me in the company of “the Holocaust-denying Institute for Historical Review” can only have been intended to imply that I am a Holocaust-denier. Re-read her sentence and the title of her article. Since the people at IHR are not known to be libertarians, there was no other purpose in mentioning the organization. In other words, Mercer has smeared me. Since I am a Jew, she was denied the opportunity to accuse me of anti-Semitism and so had to settle for hinting that I deny that millions of Jews were slaughtered by Hitler and the Nazis. As one who lost family in the Shoah, I find this more than a little ironic.

Mercer [answered](#) Sheldon’s response by claiming that her selection of the IHR was entirely innocent, being based simply on her “understanding” that IHR held the same position on the Israeli land issue as Sheldon. Sheldon’s letter in response to Mercer’s rejoinder was posted in WND’s letters section but unfortunately has now been removed; we have [posted](#) it on FFF’s website.

(Interestingly, on August 26 Mark Weber, the director of the Institute for Historical Review, sent an email to Mercer, a copy of which was sent to The Future of Freedom Foundation, in which he pointed out that the IHR takes no position whatsoever on the land issue in Israel. If Weber's claim is true, then it obviously causes Mercer's stated justification for comparing Sheldon to the IHR to disintegrate, a point that WND failed to disclose to its reading audience.)

While Mercer is now claiming that IHR was nothing more than an innocent selection for comparison, surely she and WND editorial executives haven't forgotten her article "[Israel Belongs to the Jews](#)," which was posted on the WND website on July 3, 2002, in which she stated:

Other than among its Arab adherents, one would expect such loony-tune historical revisionism from crackpots like members of the Institute for Historical Review. (The IHR is a motley of discredited oddballs, poseurs and pseudo-historians, whose members are dedicated to proving that Jews lied about the Holocaust. Intellectually, the IHR is a sort of malevolent version of the Flat Earth Society.)

Moreover, at the time that WND published Mercer's false, baseless, and insidious insinuation regarding Sheldon, both she and the executives at WND knew full well that there have been people whose professional careers and lives have been ruined because of their association with Holocaust revisionism. Out of all the national and international persons and organizations that supposedly share Sheldon's position on the land issue in Israel, what would motivate Mercer and WND to pick the one that would be most likely to damage him — along with the organizations and publications with which he is associated — the most? Only Mercer and WND can answer that question.

On August 26, WorldNetDaily editor and CEO Joseph Farah ([email](#)) sent an email to a WND reader (which was forwarded to us) that only piled additional shame onto this sordid matter. Here's what Farah stated in that email:

Detailed litany of allegations? WorldNetDaily stands accused and convicted of standing up for the free flow of ideas — publishing both Ilana Mercer's rant and Sheldon Richman's. We've been accused of no other offense and we are guilty of none.

"Free flow of ideas"? "No other offense"?

Pardon me, Mr. Farah, but unfortunately you've got it wrong. No one is charging WorldNetDaily with the "free flow of ideas." We're charging your institution with a very serious and grave offense: publishing a false, vile, baseless, and malicious insinuation against one of the finest and most fair-minded scholars in the libertarian movement — a person who has been associated with such libertarian organizations as the Institute for Humane Studies, the Cato Institute, The Future of Freedom Foundation, and The Foundation for Economic Education — a

person who is not only the author of three of the finest books in the libertarian movement but whose perspectives have also been published in such newspapers as the *Washington Post*, *Washington Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *USA Today*.

[\(See Wendy McElroy's thoughtful analysis of this matter, in which she carefully documents and explains Sheldon's background and beliefs with respect to Israel and the Middle East.\)](#)

How does WorldNetDaily respond to the *real* offense with which it is charged, Mr. Farah — guilty, not guilty, smokescreen, or mute?

If WND wants to take libertarians to task for our open-borders position (which was the subject of a yet earlier [attack](#) on The Future of Freedom Foundation by Mercer), so be it — that's the [free flow of ideas](#).

If WND wants to take libertarians to task for our opposition to the drug war, so be it — that's the free flow of ideas.

If WND wants to take libertarians to task for our opposition to Social Security, national health care, and other socialist measures, so be it — that's the free flow of ideas.

If WND wants to take libertarians to task for opposing government foreign aid to Israel and every other country in the world, then so be it — that's the free flow of ideas.

If WND wants to take libertarians to task for our foreign-policy positions on the Middle East and the rest of the world, so be it — that's the free flow of ideas.

But in that event, Mr. Farah, you have a moral duty to stick with the ideas, and leave out the publication of false, vile, baseless, and despicable personal insinuations about people with whose intellectual positions you might disagree, especially insinuations that you know are likely to cause tremendous personal and professional damage.

WorldNetDaily had a moral duty to refrain from publishing Mercer's false and vile parenthetical expression in the first place, especially without first determining whether there was any factual basis for it. After WND received Richman's denial, it had the moral duty to investigate the facts and publish a retraction and an apology upon realizing the truth. Those moral duties continue to exist.

Throughout the 1990s, conservatives took President Clinton to task for failing to take responsibility for his lies and deception — and rightly so. Unfortunately, however, WND is now finding that when it comes to moral and ethical principles, it's easier to talk the talk than it is to walk the walk.

*Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.*

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