

Tenuous Alliance: More than the lines that divide us

By Arlene (Ari) Istar Lev

I believe that each of us stands at a unique place, with our own particular view of this world, and that each of us tells the story of what we see with the only language we have. I keep growing, so my own perspective keeps shifting and the words that I speak to tell my story continue to evolve. I have no doubt that the narrative I now tell you will continue to shift and transform as I continue my journey. I cannot wait, however, for the finished product -- the perfect place or language or perspective -- but I must jump into the fray with all that I am at each moment and tell my story with all the truths that I can contain.

This is my story: I am a white-skinned Euro-American Ashkenazi Jewish lesbian. Ashkenazi means that during the 2000-year exile and dispersion of the Jewish people, my ancestors settled in Europe. After surviving numerous expulsions and pogroms they made their way from Eastern Europe to the United States three generations ago and settled in Brooklyn, the *shtetl*¹ of the New World. Most of my people who did not make that journey died in the camps and ovens of Nazi Germany.

Being Jewish was not always an important part of my identity. My Jewish identity -- insulated in the Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn -- was something I tried to avoid, disconnect from, not knowing of course that this was the oppressors' hope, to white wash my culture and history so that I could melt into the American dream, the Great White Hope.

Long before I ever realized that anti-Semitism existed -- as a child of the sixties and an early student activist -- I was actively engaged in anti-racism work. Racism, especially how we experienced it and discussed it during the early Civil Rights Movement was tangible and clear. I grew up amidst the struggles of integration and busing; joined school groups committed to ending what we then called prejudice; hung out in mixed race social groups, and to the horror of my family dated men, and later women, who were not only not Jewish, but were not even white. In college I studied sociology and political science; I minored in women's and "minority" history. As a radical lesbian-feminist in my early 20's I studied in the great 'think tanks' of the women's and gay liberation movements and took workshops called 'Being a White Ally', and 'Confronting Racism'.

I do not say any of this to win points and be perceived of as a "good ally" -- or to lose points with those of you reading this who find these attempts at white accountability puerile --; I say this simply to identify where I stand on these issues. I am a woman who has taken the challenges of the last few decades to heart. Issues of multiculturalism, as well as actively challenging racism and oppression, has been an important part of the forming of the very fiber of my being. I examine my language, my social groups, the neighborhood I live in, and the content of the classes I teach; I push myself, my friends, my students and my clients to recognize our privileges and to

not turn away from the ugliness of blatant racism, or the ubiquitous quality of its more subtle forms. My awareness of my white skin privilege, is both a blessing and a curse, in the way that all awareness brings great responsibility. I take this responsibility seriously, and act with conscious intention against racism as often as I can. I am also painfully aware of my limitations, all that I do not do, cannot change, and all the ways that I walk with, and take advantage of, privileges that others do not have.

My understanding of my own history as a Jew, and my connecting this history with modern anti-racism struggles, came years after my commitment to ending white racism. The immediacy of color racism in this country took precedence over even my own personal journey. As racial and ethnic awareness has grown in this country, it challenged many white skinned people to become aware of our own ethnicities, cultures and diverse histories. How can white people witness the rich language, music, food of non-white cultures and not wonder “where is the richness of my own culture?” In Yiddish there is a word *tam*, which means taste or flavor; it refers not only to food, but the essence, the fullness, the vibration of a thing. I needed to know more about the *tam* of my own community, the flavor of *yiddishkeit*.ⁱⁱ

My journey back towards the words and rituals, food and language of my own people has indeed been a fertile one. I have learned much about myself on this journey, my sense of humor, my love of learning and books, my ethical visions and political commitments. So much that I once thought was uniquely mine I have come to see as part of the customs and cultural ways of my people for centuries. I have also come to understand more thoroughly about anti-Semitism and the centuries of expulsions and violence. I learned that we had been evicted from many countries long before Hitler decided on the Final Solution, and that European Jews -- who were not considered citizens of the countries that we lived in -- were forbidden to enter into many professions. Often the only livelihood allowed was money-lending and of course Jews were then labeled money-greedy people. I came to understand that anti-Semitic rhetoric had its roots in centuries of oppression. I learned that my "pushiness" and my "smartness" that had always embarrassed me was my own internalized oppression, and that being smart and pushy were some of my strong Jewish survival skills.

I have spent hours contemplating this tribe of people without a land, who have lived among the people of all other lands. I have learned that although I am a white-skinned Ashkenazi Jew, that most Jews in the world are not white. Most Jews are dark-skinned people from the Middle East, and Sephardic Jews of Spain and the Iberian Peninsula. When Columbus set sail on his imperial journey in 1492, the port cities were so full of fleeing Jews who had just been expelled from Spain he had to leave from a different port than he originally planned. After the dispersion of the Jews from Palestine, thousands of years ago, Jews have settled in Africa, India, South America and Asia, as well as Europe, and because of intermarriage, conversion and sexual exploitation now look identical to the native people of these lands.

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Jews have been defined as a nation, a religion and a race; however, Jewish identity overlaps national, religious and racial categorizations. Jews live within the borders of many nation-states, practice different religious rituals or none at all and are members of all the worlds' races. I am most comfortable seeing Jewish people as part of a diverse international tribe with the similar religious, historical and national identities. Seeing the Jewish people as simply a nation, *or* a religion *or* a race ignores the complexity of this tribe with its roots deep in antiquity who, though having lived among all the worlds peoples have always been treated as "outsiders."

Though the Hebrew people once belonged to a strong nation, the dispersion of the Jewish people has meant that Jews, until recently, were without a national land for much of our history. When the Tibetan people became refugees from their own land, the Dali Lama, in his wisdom, summoned Jewish leaders of the worldwide community to ask, "How have your people survived for so long without your land; what can you teach me to help my people survive?" For the past 50 years, due to great shifts in international power and loyalties, the Jewish people once again have a land to call their own. But "ownership" to a land that others too call home has raised huge questions about the role of political and economic power in establishing legitimacy for a people's right to a 'landed' existence, and -- most poignantly --how easily an oppressed people can become oppressors.

The cultural life of a community is often entwined with the religious convictions of a people, and certainly this has been true for Jews. Although Jewish people have many different relationships to their religion, from extremely orthodox to atheistic, much of the cultural traditions even for non-religious Jews revolve around the religious life of the community. Although the term "Jew" conjures up a religious notions for most people (and is the box that one is expected to check on forms), for many people who identify as Jews particularly in North America, it is their cultural, historical and political affiliations -- more than their religious ones -- that define their Judaism.

Although Jews are a "nation" both historically, and currently, most Jews do not live within the national border of Israel, and many do not feel connected to this ancestral home. Jews are also a religious entity, though the differences among us regarding religious beliefs, values and practices as so enormous, that the similarities are at times barely recognizable. So are Jews, therefore a "race"? Based on Roget's thesaurus race is defined as a "family, tribe, clan, genealogy, descent, caste, breed, sisterhood, mankind, and human species," and certainly Jews fit into those general guidelines. The word race, however, assumes that races are distinct and that people are genetically different from one another in scientifically provable ways; a concept that is questionable both biologically and politically.

White European and Euro-American men originally developed the racial classification system outlining the three racial categories -- Caucasoid, Negroid and Mongoloid -- to establish a pseudo-scientific pecking order; we know who they perceived as genetically superior. This system of racial classification is clearly flawed, creating a human hierarchy that serves not only to divide us into arbitrary groups and keep us

separated from one another, but reinforces an oppressive social system as if it is organically derived.

This standard racial classification system also renders entire groups of people invisible, disappears them outside the human discourse. Simply put, not everyone *fits* into this classification system. For instance, Caucasians are technically people whose ancestors come from the Caucasus Mountains in Russia; white people are, of course, the decedents of numerous European cultures with diverse tribal and national affiliations, not just descendants from the Caucasus Mountains. The tribal groups and nation-states of Europe have been warring with one another for centuries, have oppressed one another, and who, until very recently in world history, saw each other as different racial groups of people. Our word slave comes from the Slavic people, who were once the slaves of many other European people. The word Anglo, often used for all white people, refers to white, English-speaking people from a particular geographical area of Europe. How did these diverse people, who spoke different languages, come from different countries and worshipped within different religious systems become unified into one overarching category?

If all whites have been lumped together under this label "Caucasian," should all dark skinned people be called "Negro's?" In this tripartite classification system where do American Indians, or Puerto Ricans *fit*? Are all native peoples from North and South America the same racial group, and should they subsumed under the category of "white" *or* "black"? Both Jews and Asians have been classified as "Blacks" in various renditions of the U.S. census bureau over the past 150 years. Some groups of people, like Southeast Asians and Puerto Ricans, as well as many American Blacks, have members that represent a diverse spectrum of colors. Should they be classified differently from other family members based on the color of their skin though they are technically of the same tribe or group, and if not which group should they be assigned to? What of "mixed" race people, where do they *fit*?

The arbitrariness of these divisions is apparent. Jews are simply one of the most obvious examples of a tribe of people that transcend the edges of national, color, and cultural parameters, and are not easily assigned a racial category with contains them. In the USA, Jews have now been assimilated under the banner of "whiteness," a category that they do not easily fit into, as any member of the Aryan Nation will attest. Amoja Three Rivers ⁱⁱⁱ reminds us that "whiteness" is a political alliance, a way of creating an "us" (white people) and a "them" (dark-skinned people). There is a special word for Jewish racism; it is called anti-Semitism. But we must not forget that anti-Semitism is just another word for racism, a particularly virulent form of racism that transcends color. Without denying the privileges associated with having white skin, Jews can choose to reject any association with this white political alliance.

The truth is simply that we are all members of the human race. We, all of us, all humans, are a diverse people who come in many different colors, with different textured hair; we speak different languages, worship different gods, wear different kinds of clothing, practice different spiritual and lifecycle rituals, have different habits

and beliefs but ultimately we are all one people. The cultural, language, color and theological differences among us have been used to create power differences between us and are then used to discriminate, oppress and even annihilate groups of people. It is the work of the *racists* to try to classify races as definably different from one another in a hierarchical way.

This does not mean that we should (or could) deny the differences among us, or dilute the value of these differences. Each group or tribe has unique qualities and distinctive attributes that should be honored and that collectively contribute to the mosaic of the human family. We each crave to be with our own people -- to be around others who talk, think, move, and look like us -- and feel a sense of "home" that is conveyed in the American Black expressions "homeboy" and "homegirl." Smelling the foods of our grandmothers' kitchens, and seeing the familiar faces of those who look like us, is a universal feeling of homecoming. Each of us knows the sweet *tam* of our people, as well as the particular bitterness we have each endured. It is possible to denounce the discourse of "race" as a concept invented by the racists that encourages, justifies and solidifies racism, and yet still celebrate our own unique cultures and tribal histories.

It is difficult to balance these two divergent truths: that there is, on one hand, no such thing as race, and on the other hand, ubiquitous racism exists that must be challenged. We are all impacted by racism, wherever we fall on the privilege, color or class continuum. Standing up against racism, without falling into the simplistic categorical divisions set up by the oppressors, is a difficult task of modern life. Knowing who we can trust and build alliance with, and who are our "enemies," can be a quickly shifting territory, while we balance within our own lives the realities of our own privileges, as well as own oppressions.

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As a Jew and lesbian I walk in this world with oppressions that are rarely visible. If I withhold my breath/spirit^{iv}, nobody needs to know that I am either a Jew or a lesbian. The mainstream community will just assume by default that I am gentile and straight ... isn't that what everyone is? It is a strange merger that exists within this lesbian body: To be a privileged white-skinned woman in a country where whiteness rules, and yet to be a Jew who knows that the history of racial bigotry is part of my people's history, that racism has followed my people like a rabid dog, from country to country, and from century to century.

Here in this country, at this time, I -- as a Jew -- am not the object of the worst of racism; it almost appears at times that I am accepted into the privileged class. Yet it has been the history of my people to know how quickly the tides can turn. White-skinned Jews may have certain privileges in the United States, but in pre-Nazi Germany, right before the destruction of European Jewry through the murdering of six million people less than a half-century ago, Jews were assimilated citizens in high ranking professional and government jobs.

The realities of color and culture in this world is that even if one wanted to renounce their inclusion in certain oppressed groups, no matter how much you try to assimilate, the power and history of oppression will not let you hide. There have always been light-skinned Blacks and Latino's that have tried to pass, as there are Jews who try to pass, as there are Queers who try to pass, but, in truth, there is no where to hide from the oppressor's wrath.

A number of years ago I was part of a group of lesbian women working together to examine the relationships of racism, anti-Semitism and classism. A white-skinned Latina from a well-to-do family questioned what made her a "woman of color" eligible for inclusion in women of color-only spaces when other white-skinned women were not included. In answer to this, another woman who is the daughter of a white Jewish father and Puerto Rican mother talked about going to Hebrew school in NYC, while her mother was the "cleaning lady" at the school. She said, "You are an "other," and if you do not see yourself that way, trust me, whites do." Our inclusion and identity within certain cultural groups make us vulnerable to social and economic realities that can never be white washed. Latino's, particularly those with light skin, share a similar experience to that of Jews, belonging to a people who live in many countries, cross all color lines, but share a culture that is clearly discernible and identifiable both to those inside and those outside.

I believe it is important to not rank oppressions. Yet I also know that as painful as my invisible oppressions are they do not provoke street violence and racial slurs, and have not stopped me from attending the university or limited my job opportunities. I know that my white-skin privilege *is* a privilege that allows me to walk in this world with an illusion of safety that darker skinned people cannot afford.

As with all privileges there is the tendency to "forget" where you come from, to try to blend in and fit where you have not been allowed. Those that cannot hide are still the targets, and those that can hide often minimize the ugly truths about racial hatred. They often turn away from those who are targeted, as if it is too hard to acknowledge the privilege they have, how much they can lose, and the real dangers that others live with. Racism for most white people is something "out there" that they witness from the comfort of their living room, watching the violence on the evening news. They click their tongues and shake their hands and switch the station to something less stressful. They view themselves as non-racist and do not see themselves as participants in racist behavior but as somehow above or outside of it. This of course veils their own racism and absolves them of any daily responsibility in the perpetuation of the racist system.

My students in the University "find it hard to believe" that American Blacks have been lynched in this country, in this century, in this decade. One Black woman said she felt angry that I was reminding her how awful it still was. Other students have trouble "remembering" that within many of our lifetimes the Japanese were placed in concentration camps on American soil, while the U.S. fought the Nazi's to release prisoners from German concentration camps on European soil. They often do not

understand that repressing the Spanish language in our school systems today is an act designed not to encourage young Latino's to succeed in an English-speaking country, but to separate them from the very soul of their people and *that* can never be considered success.

Most Jews know that hiding and passing do not work, which might explain the large presence of Jews in social justice movements. Even though, one cannot see my otherness simply by looking, I have never been one to hide who I am, or be less than I am, even if who I am provokes fear or confusion from others. I have always chosen to be fully out as a raised working class Jew and as a femme lesbian. White-skinned Jews may pass for white on the streets, however few have "forgotten" the real possibility of a knock at the door at midnight and the permanent disappearance of family members. In this very world we live in today, men scooped the dead bodies of their wives and children into ovens, because they had to do this to survive themselves; they had to live to tell us stories that the world has not yet been willing to hear. In a world of power and privilege, have and have-nots, the tides can turn quickly, and I know few Jews, whatever their wealth or apparent social privilege, who do not believe that it can happen again. I know that to the white supremacy groups that continue to grow in numbers, as an out Jewish lesbian, I am, and will always be, just one more 'colored' person.

Most whites have turned their faces from the bitterness of blatant racism, but the dilemma for American Jews is that both whites and people of color alike have turned away from the daily realities of anti-Semitism, and refused to see the historical as well as modern similarities between the treatment of people of color and the treatment of Jews. Sharing the same enemy is not always the foundation for a strong friendship. To people of color, who live with the reality of racist violence each time they walk out of their home, I will always first be seen as a privileged, educated woman, and not necessarily someone trustworthy or safe.

The work of challenging racism, of undoing, unlearning, and fighting racism is life-long work. One does not necessarily make many friends doing anti-racism work. Inevitably white people are uncomfortable around you, and feel challenged by you for always bringing race issues into the discussion. Inevitably you disappoint people of color mostly because you will make mistakes, but also because there is so much to do and whatever you do can never be enough. For me, as a Jewish lesbian, it has also meant, confronting anti-Semitism and homophobia within communities of color. This raises the stakes for forging ally-building strategies, and sadly makes my anti-racism work questionable, instead of more honorable.

I do know one thing, that I have become a more effective ally for people of color, after I did my own homework. The more comfortable I became with my own legacy as a Jew, the more I could let into my heart the pride, and pain, that people of color experience. It became easier to look at people of color in the eye, and realize that we are all much more than the lines that divide us. In our efforts to build coalitions across our differences, we can not just buy into the simplistic and racist categories that the

oppressors have developed to classify and label us, but must face the challenge of embracing the intricacies, depth and complexities of the racial, cultural and ethnic legacies we all bring to the table.

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In 25 years of anti-racism activism, I thought that I had recognized and owned my privilege, but I did not realize how much white privilege I had until it was revoked. It was revoked when I first held my child in my arms, and took on the yoke of all it means in this culture to be a mother. Adopting a child of color meant that I was no longer fully a member of the white privileged elite even if I wanted to be. I no longer had the choice of moving within white culture as if it were my own. I was marked as a "nigger-lover" as my mother had warned me I would be, and indeed in the most powerful of ways, I am.

My oldest son is African-American, the birth child an unknown father and a mother who could not raise him. He is being raised within an extended family, which includes his lesbian parents, and three grandmothers -- my mother, my partner's mother and his birth grandmother -- as well as aunts and cousins, both biological and adopted. The picture of our family hangs on the wall of his grandmother's dining room, the only white faces on the wall (though not the only lesbian ones). He is being raised in a very queer family, of Jews and gentiles, Blacks and whites, where his uniqueness is treasured.

The challenges of parenting (lesbian parenting) a child of 'another' race, in a racist world is enormous. I am raising a Black son in a war zone, and I am reminded of this each time I watch the evening news, realizing in terror that in this world my son's life isn't worth squat. I was warned by more than one African-American mom: they are only cute till 6 or 7, then they are in trouble. I worry that his childish antics will be seen as violence, that his teenage horseplay will be seen as dangerous; I worry that his mere presence will bring the white man's law down on his back, that someone will mistake his wallet for a gun. As one friend said, "The Black man is held to different standards."

I fear that he will feel the loss of that certain *tam*, that certain flavor of being in, living in, African-American culture. Even though my own social circles and neighborhood are racially integrated, and we try to give him all that we can of his own cultural heritage, there will be a loss for him to grieve. As Janna Wolff has taught, white parents are always "tour guides" within Black culture, and it is a very real fear that the vibrancy of African-American culture " ... will be reduced to its souvenirs."

I know that despite the reality that most Jews in the world are of color and that most Jewish people are warmly welcoming to him and accept him as a Jew, he will undoubtedly face rejection within the Jewish community in this country. I know that some people of color will pity him for growing up with white people. I know that many people, of all cultures, will think it is terrible that lesbians -- and rather gender-bent lesbians for that matter -- are raising him.

I do not think that being the white mom of an African-American child has made me more conscious of racism. I do not think it has made me a better anti-racism activist. What it has done is point the rage of the racists in my personal direction; it has made me more vulnerable. Wearing "practice anti-racism" buttons in public did not provoke the hostility that a small Black child yelling "momma" while running towards a white woman can.

As a white skinned woman, I have lived all my life with racism as something "out there," not something directed at my child. I was born to this world with a shiny white privilege, even as a Jew, even as a raised working class girl, even as a dyke. Although, I have lived my whole life "out," never hiding in any closets, I did not consciously realize that some of my survival skills have been skills of stealth, and that being out has always been a choice. I have learned to sound more educated, to use my hands less when I speak, to not reveal my sexual identity when it is dangerous to do so. Many of my skills are skills of privilege, and with my white skin, I have been able to move freely in the world. These skills will not help my son, a tall Black male, survive.

My son needs to develop skills that I am poorly equipped to teach him. As Jana Wolff^v has said, "Becoming black is an inside job, ... [my son's] evolution into a proud black man will occur largely outside the walls of our home ... well beyond the reach of my loving white arms." I am challenged to raise my son to survive in a world I will always have limited access to. Although I have lost my membership to the white world, I have not necessarily gained admission to the Black community. My family maybe a threat to white supremacy and white racists have now targeted us as their enemy but that does not make us any more welcomed into communities of color.

The simple divisions of human beings into categories of "us and them" simply do not fit in my life; my family spills outside of the boxes we've been assigned. When I voice my opinions about the treatment of young Black boys in the public school system it is viewed as a liberal white concern, not the voice of an angry mom. When the administrators realize that I *am* the mother of a Black son is my privileged voice heard more clearly than the voice of Black mothers? If I use my voice to speak out, is this a positive way to use my privilege to make changes that we all reap the benefits of, or am I disempowering the voices of Black mothers by taking up so much space as a pushy Jew? Are my expectations that my son be treated with the same respect and dignity as white boys just the foolishness of white privilege, or is it good anti-racism practices?

I do not believe there are simple answers here. We are a complex people, us humans, with a complicated legacy, coming from rich and vibrant cultures and we have been wounded deeply by one another. I have learned to not fall prey to the simplicity of the oppressors' definitions of who are and to the simplistic divisions that divide us, the racial demarcations that were invented by white male racists. I realize that the only hope for our children -- all of our children -- is the healing of wounds that divide us, and ultimately that we are each others' healers.

My son carries the history of two brave cultures in his small body -- the vibrant and majestic cultures of West Africa and the awesome and dynamic cultures of Diaspora Jews. He carries a legacy of multiple slaveries, oppressions and violence. He carries a history of music and learning, of hands that make tools and weavings and hand print Torahs. He carries tribal roots that that go back into antiquity; his ancestors will speak through him; my job as a parent is to teach him to listen.

My 4-year old son was swirling 'round and 'round in the kitchen, the way children can, with reckless abandon and nary a fear in the world. He stopped suddenly and looked at me, the way children can, and asked me, "Momma, are we still slaves." He had just finished studying Martin Luther King Jr. in his Montessori pre-school and had been singing "We Shall Overcome" all week; we were beginning to prepare for *Pesach* (Passover). I wasn't sure which slavery he was referring to, but at the Passover table every year we are admonished to never forget that the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt. I looked at him and said, "No, *we* are not slaves anymore, but we must never forget that we once were."

We adopted another son at birth this year. He was considered a "hard-to-place" child because he is bi-racial with a white Irish birthmother, and an unknown Black father; another potentially adoptive family withdrew from adopting him when they met his brown siblings. At the time of this writing, he is 5 months old, lighter skinned than his olive complected momma, with big blue eyes. The reality of raising a bi-racial child with very light skin has been yet another layer of awareness for our family. Everyone of course wants to know "what" he is as they admire his blue eyes. I imagine they are thinking that *this* child will have it easier than his older brother, and sadly they are probably right.

Although he will experience less overt racism he will also develop his racial identity and pride from the example of his older brother, who at nearly five is proud that he is of African descent, and assures me that he knows more about Africa than I ever will. When he overhears the news of a war overseas and knows enough to ask if someone is trying to hurt Africans. When speaking to himself in the mirror I hear him say, "I think my lips are the nicest part of my face."

At first I worried the he would feel still feel "alone" as the darkest person in our family, but although he asks many questions about skin-color, he absolutely perceives his baby brother as African just like him. When my older son's biological grandmother called she never asked "what" he was -- but only to inquire, "How are my boys?" -- warmly welcoming this light-skinned mixed race child into *her* extended family.

As a Jewish mother, I bring one skill to my parenting that I think will serve this family just fine. It is a legacy of my oppression as a Jew, a tool honed sharp by generations of women who carried their babies from country to country wrapped in blankets at their breasts while their older children huddled around their skirts. I have been told that this skill may or may not serve my sons. I have been told that it just might break my heart.

It has been suggested that my expectations for Black men in racist America are too high -- I've told this by well-meaning Blacks, and not so well-meaning whites. I've been told that I cannot protect my sons.

I am a pushy Jewish mother and I bring the only skill I have -- I expect my boys to survive.

Endnotes:

¹ shtetl : the small village ghettos of European Jewry. Jews were confined to these townships because of their outward differences in clothes and lifestyles; their freedom of movement varied from country to country and during different eras but by and large Jews lived their lives within the parameters of the shtetl life.

¹ Yiddishkeit: the culture of Eastern European Jewry, exemplified in the Yiddish language -- the mother tongue of Eastern European Jewry. Language is so embedded in cultural identity that my grandmother, who spoke fluent Yiddish, never called the language Yiddish; she called it Jewish, as in, "Do you speak Jewish?"

¹ Amoja Three Rivers is the author of a wonderful book called Cultural Etiquette, which outlines respectful relationships between people of different cultures, and examines racist assumptions. She includes examples from the experience of people of color, as well as Jewish people.

¹ In Hebrew, like Sanskrit and Latin, the root words for spirit and breath are the same word. When one holds their breath, we hold in our spirits.

¹ Jana Wolff, Black Unlike Me (1999) The New York Times. February 14, 1999

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