

HIGH SCHOOL INTIFADA

A short play for Break the Wall

By Cary Gitter

11/18/17

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CHARACTERS

PRINCIPAL MILLER	Male. 40s. Jewish-American. A high school principal.
RIVVY	Female. 16. The child of Israeli Jews. A high school junior.

TIME

January 2016.

PLACE

The principal's office at River Hill High School in River Hill, a small town in northern New Jersey.

NOTE

This play is based on an actual incident that was covered in the following articles, among others:

"Tweets About Israel Land New Jersey Student in Principal's Office," *The New York Times*, January 7, 2016

"A NJ teen who tweeted 'Israel is a terrorist force' was called to the principal's office for 'bullying'," *The Washington Post*, January 8, 2016

Lights up on the principal's office at River Hill High School in River Hill, New Jersey. January 2016.

PRINCIPAL MILLER, 40s, sits at his desk, holding a sheet of paper. RIVVY, 16, sits across from him. Her phone is in her lap.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Rivvy.

RIVVY

Principal Miller.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Can you put your phone away?

RIVVY

What?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You're in my office. Can you please put your phone away?

RIVVY

It doesn't fit in my pocket.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

It doesn't fit in your pocket?

RIVVY

No. That's why it's on my lap.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Is it off?

RIVVY

Yes.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

It's off?

RIVVY

Yes.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Okay.

Pause.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Do you know why you're here, Rivvy?

RIVVY

You mean like existentially?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Is that a joke?

RIVVY

It was supposed to be.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

This isn't the time or the place for jokes.

RIVVY

Good to know.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Do you know why I called you to my office?

RIVVY

To tell me I've been named River Hill High School Student of the Month?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Was that another joke?

RIVVY

Oops.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I've called you here because of a complaint.

RIVVY

A complaint?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

A complaint about you from another student.

	RIVVY
What student?	
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
A complaint about bullying.	
	RIVVY
<i>Bullying?</i>	
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
Yes.	
	RIVVY
Like <i>I'm</i> the bully?	
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
Yes.	
	RIVVY
I'm not a bully.	
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
This student feels differently.	
	RIVVY
What student?	
	Principal Miller lifts the paper he's been holding. Reads.
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
"Oh God. Melanie Cohen and her pro-Israel posse are after me now. FUCK THEM."	
(looks up)	
Do you recognize that, Rivvy?	
	RIVVY
... Yes.	
	PRINCIPAL MILLER
What is it?	
	RIVVY
... It's a tweet I wrote.	

PRINCIPAL MILLER

That's right. It's a tweet you posted yesterday during school hours--

RIVVY

So Melanie complained?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes, Melanie complained. And her parents complained.

RIVVY

Because of a tweet?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You posted a tweet that mentions another student *by name* and uses aggressive language toward her. *While* on school property--

RIVVY

And that counts as bullying?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

We have the toughest anti-bullying laws in the country in New Jersey.

RIVVY

But it's my private Twitter account--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

It doesn't matter. We take bullying seriously at this school, and you're facing a potential suspension for this--

RIVVY

Suspension?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes--

RIVVY

For saying fuck Melanie Cohen and her pro-Israel posse--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Watch your language in here!

RIVVY

But you just--Okay, Principal Miller. Do you wanna know *why* I wrote that tweet?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'm not interested--

RIVVY

Well, sorry, but I'm gonna tell you. The paper you're holding--it has my tweets on it?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes--

RIVVY

So you've seen the one from this weekend?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Rivvy--

RIVVY

Read it.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'm not going /to--

RIVVY

That's okay, I remember it. I wrote, "Israel is a terrorist force. The stabbings are a symptom; the occupation is the disease."

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes, I've read /it--

RIVVY

And the night I posted that, somebody egged my house. And then when I got to school yesterday, Melanie Cohen came up to me in homeroom and got in my face and you know what she said? She said, "I saw your tweet, Hitler. How can you be a Jew and have Israeli parents and *still* be such an anti-Semite? You better watch your back, bitch." She called me Hitler *and* she threatened me. So why isn't *she* sitting here right now?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Because I don't have any proof of that--

RIVVY

Well, I'm *telling you* now. And the whole rest of the day she and her friends were giving me like menacing looks and whispers--like some high school Zionist mafia!

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Watch it--

RIVVY

So I reacted. I tweeted about them. 'Cause if there was no one at *school* to protect me, at least my *followers* would know about /it--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

That's another thing: you're a teenager. Why do you have seven thousand Twitter followers?!

RIVVY

Because I'm cool. I'm a 16-year-old, anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian Jewish girl with Israeli parents. People dig that. Not that I *wanna* be front and center. I want *Palestinians* to be front and center. It's *their* movement. I just do what I can.

Pause.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Rivvy, this is all beside the point--

RIVVY

Is it?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

This isn't about politics--

RIVVY

It's not?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

No, you're here right now because of inappropriate conduct toward your /peers--

RIVVY

No I'm not .

PRINCIPAL MILLER

What?

RIVVY

This isn't really about me calling out Melanie Cohen and her Jew crew on Twitter.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Then what's /it--

RIVVY

Be honest: I wouldn't be sitting in your office right now if I wasn't like publicly critical of Israel.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

What are you talking /about--

RIVVY

I'm talking about the fact that this is *Bergen County*. This is *River Hill*. There are a *lot* of Jews in this town. On the borough council. On the school board. There are a *lot* of Jewish *kids* in this school--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

So what's your point--

RIVVY

My *point* is, ninety-nine-point-nine percent of all of them support Israel. I'm the exception. And people here *know* me. They *know* I have an online presence. They *know* I'm part of a, a global community that wants to end the occupation. And they resent me for it. My own *parents* resent me for it. So I don't think you'd be out to get me like this if I wasn't the infamous "Anti-Israel Girl"--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'm *not* out to get /you--

RIVVY

I mean what about *you*, Principal Miller? You're Jewish. Are *you* pro-Israel?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You're way out of line, Rivvy--

RIVVY

See, you won't even answer the question!

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'm the principal of this school. You're a student who's in my office for a disciplinary matter. You have *no* right to ask me about my politics--

RIVVY

I know you're pro-Israel. You programmed that "educational forum" on the Middle East back in the fall, and you didn't even put one Arab or Palestinian speaker on the panel--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Well, the Palestinians' actions are speaking louder than their words right now.

Pause.

RIVVY

What's that supposed to mean?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Nothing.

RIVVY

Nothing?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'm not going to have a political *debate* with you, Rivvy--

RIVVY

No, let's have one. I'm down.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

No.

RIVVY

What did you just mean, though? What are the Palestinians' "actions" right now?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You know.

RIVVY

No, enlighten me, Principal Miller.

Pause.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

They're stabbing people in the streets.

Pause.

RIVVY

Oh, "they're" stabbing people?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes--

RIVVY

That's interesting.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

What is?

RIVVY

That that's what you're choosing to focus on.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

What--

RIVVY

Like hm, what about the *arson attack* by Israeli settlers in Duma in July? An eighteen-month-old Palestinian boy was burned to death, and his parents died later. Or what about the Palestinian woman killed by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint in Hebron while she was on her way to *school* in September?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Okay--

RIVVY

What about the Israeli fundamentalists breaking the law and trying to worship at the Temple Mount?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

All right--

RIVVY

Not to mention, generally speaking, almost fifty years of occupation and privation and human rights violations? Backed by Israeli force and American money--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You can stop lecturing /me--

RIVVY

And a few desperate Palestinians--people with *little to no* hope for a better future--pick up knives and resort to violence? *That's* the problem?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes--

RIVVY

No, Principal Miller, it's a symptom of a disease, and that disease is the occupation, and that's why I tweeted what I tweeted this weekend. Even though I knew I'd catch shit for it--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Hey--

RIVVY

--from Melanie Cohen and this school and this town. P.S., I'm not sorry.

Pause.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You know, it's really a shame.

RIVVY

What is?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

That such a smart, articulate young woman wastes her potential defending terrorists.

Pause.

RIVVY

Did you just call Palestinians "terrorists"?

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Yes. I'm a Jew. Of course I support Israel.

RIVVY

Well. Thanks for finally admitting it.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

And you're still in trouble. For the online bullying of your fellow students.

RIVVY

I'm not a bully. They're the bullies. I'm an activist.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I'll be the judge of that.

Rivvy stands up.

RIVVY

No, the media will.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

What?

Rivvy holds up her phone, presses the screen.

RIVVY

Nothing. I just recorded this whole conversation is all.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You *what*?

RIVVY

Yep.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

I asked you if your phone was off--

RIVVY

You did.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You said it was off--

RIVVY

I lied.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Give me that--

RIVVY

No thanks. You know what? I think I'm actually gonna leave school right now.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

You can't leave. It's not three o'clock yet--

RIVVY

I know it's not three o'clock yet, but I've got some tweeting to do. And I want to see if any news outlets might be interested in the story of a New Jersey teenager getting persecuted by her school for holding pro-Palestinian political views--

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Rivvy, that's not--

RIVVY

What did you just call the Palestinians again? "Terrorists"? No, they're heroes.

Rivvy starts to go.

PRINCIPAL MILLER

Come back here--

RIVVY

Later, Principal Miller. I wonder what the hashtag's gonna be. #IStandWithRivvy? Yeah. I like the sound of that.

And she exits.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY