

Obscenity Laws, Jews, and American Culture: The Goldstein v. Goren Case in American Jewish History

In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled in *Goldstein v. Goren* that obscenity laws were constitutional. The case had a significant impact on American Jewish history, as it raised questions about the limits of free speech and the role of religion in American society.



Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews, and American Culture (Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History

Book 10) by David Mechanic

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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The case began in 1969, when Samuel Goldstein, a Jewish bookstore owner in Detroit, was arrested for selling a book called *The Story of O*. The book, which was written by a French author and first published in France in 1954, is a sexually explicit novel that tells the story of a young woman who is forced into prostitution.

Goldstein was charged with violating Michigan's obscenity law, which prohibited the sale of any book that was "utterly without redeeming social value." Goldstein argued that the book was not obscene and that the obscenity law was unconstitutional.

The case made its way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in a 5-4 decision that the obscenity law was constitutional. The Court held that the obscenity law was a valid exercise of the government's police power to protect the public from harmful materials.

The Court's decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* was controversial. Many people, including many Jews, argued that the decision was a blow to free speech. They argued that the obscenity law was too vague and that it could be used to suppress any book that the government deemed to be offensive.

The decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* also raised questions about the role of religion in American society. The obscenity law was based on the assumption that certain materials are inherently harmful and that the government has a duty to protect the public from these materials. This assumption is rooted in the Christian belief that certain things are inherently evil and that the government has a duty to suppress them.

The decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* was a setback for those who believe in the separation of church and state. It showed that the government could still use religion to justify the suppression of speech.

However, the decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* also had a positive impact on American Jewish history. It helped to raise awareness of the issue of obscenity and the role of religion in American society. It also led to the development of new legal strategies for challenging obscenity laws.

The decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* is a complex and controversial one. It has had a significant impact on American Jewish history, and it continues to be debated today.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the arguments for and against obscenity laws?
2. What is the role of religion in American society?
3. How has the decision in *Goldstein v. Goren* affected American Jewish history?



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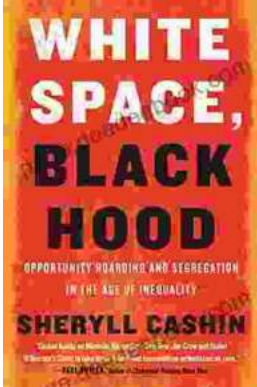
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