



UJPO News



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The United Jewish People's Order is a national, nonpartisan, socialist-oriented, secular organization, serving Canada's progressive Jews in individual organizations since 1926 and collectively as the UJPO since 1945.

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Banner graphic by Avrom Yanovsky, 1911-1979

'You can't let them get away with these dirty deeds,' says protester removed from Queen's Park Wednesday

By Samantha Beattie, Toronto Star Staff Reporter, Sept. 13, 2018



Toronto Star photo by Richard Lautens

Ester Reiter lived through discrimination as a Jew in Cold War America, marched to protest the Vietnam War with two babies in tow, and visited a mass grave in a southern Poland forest where her grandparents, aunts and uncles were likely murdered in the Holocaust.

When she woke up on Wednesday morning, the 77-year-old didn't hesitate to stand up for what she says is another great injustice – the Ontario government passing legislation that a judge ruled violates the Constitution.

She cancelled her recorder quartet practice and made her way to Queen's Park.

"You can't let them get away with these dirty deeds without witnessing the thing," said Reiter of the Progressive Conservative government invoking the "notwithstanding" clause to ram through cuts to Toronto city council in the middle of a municipal election campaign. "This is outrageous. It's like shredding everything I care about."

Within minutes of grabbing a spot in the legislature and watching others make noise as question period began, Reiter and the rest of the audience were told to leave. She refused, and made it known why.

"I am 77-and-a-half years old and I hate the destruction of democracy," Reiter yelled from the balcony as opposition MPPs below clapped in support.

Two security guards intervened and escorted Reiter out of Queen's Park. She later told the Star the only reason she didn't try to stay longer was not out of fear of being criminally charged, but because she was concerned that if her wrists were handcuffed behind her back it would injure her shoulder.

"Why do I care about having a record?" said Reiter, a retired professor of women's studies at York University.

She wasn't arrested or charged, nor were two other protesters who were also escorted out, according to Toronto police.

The last time Reiter was at Queen's Park was in 1996, when she went to protest the Progressive Conservative government of then-premier Mike Harris. She was kicked out of the legislature that day, too.

"How I honour my identity as a Jew is to get my ass out and protect everybody, to protect the rights and freedoms of everybody and really try to struggle against any injustice," she said.

Reiter's Brooklyn accent hints at her past. Her parents immigrated to New York City from Eastern Europe in the 1920s. When Reiter was born Jan. 13, 1941, her mother and father were struggling to find out what had happened to their own parents, brothers and sisters, who were still

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NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

FROM WINNIPEG

By Mark Golden

This summer UJPO-Winnipeg celebrated both Roz Usiskin's 90th birthday and the publication of her most recent book, *A Lifetime of Letters. The Wolodarsky Family: The Legacy Continues 1922-1979*. A sequel to *The Period of Separation 1913-1922*, the book includes the translations of Yiddish letters written by the Wolodarsky family in Canada. These detail their experiences as immigrants, as workers, as secularists and as North End Winnipeg Jews. There are also a few letters from the family in the Soviet Union, evidence for their lives in the turbulent times after the Russian Revolution.

UJPO Winnipeg co-sponsored "Israel, Palestine and International Law", a conference held at the Fort Garry Hotel from 7 to 9 September. Speakers included Suha Jarrar (Ramallah), a researcher on environmental and gender issues for the human rights organization al-Haq; the Palestinian human rights lawyer Jonathan Kuttub (by Skype from Jerusalem); Dimitri Lascaris (London), a lawyer and formerly the federal Green Party critic for justice; Michael Lynk (London), associate professor of Law at the University of Western Ontario and the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories; David Matas (Winnipeg), senior honorary counsel to B'nai Brith Canada and a well-known immigration lawyer; and Virginia Tilley (Carbondale), professor of Political Science at Southern Illinois University, the author or editor of several books on Israeli-Palestinian relations. Among the 125 registrants were members of many different communities interested in human rights and social justice in Palestine and 15 students whose fees were covered by a generous donor. The conference was live-streamed and a video recording is available at [youtube.com/redriverpete](https://www.youtube.com/redriverpete). ♦

From Winnipeg: Israel Palestine International Law Symposium: dueling perspectives

By Paul S. Graham, Sept. 24, 2018 (abridged)

The Israel, Palestine and International Law symposium was held in Winnipeg September 7-9, 2018 to explore the rights and responsibilities under international law of Palestine, Israel and Canada in the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory.

In this clip, David Matas defends Israeli practices and policies with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territories

(OPT). Michael Lynk argues that Matas's arguments are not supported by international law.

The symposium was sponsored by (alphabetical order): Independent Jewish Voices Canada, Mennonite Church Manitoba Working Group on Palestine-Israel, Palestinian Canadian Congress, Peace Alliance Winnipeg, **United Jewish People's Order (Winnipeg)** and the Winnipeg Centre Federal Green Party Association. Additional information, including Power Point presentations, a video of the above-mentioned clip and other documents are available at the conference website:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=78&v=OOHeVVNHxHI ♦

Usiskin publishes new book about Wolodarsky family

By Martin Zeilig, *The Jewish Post & News*, Sept. 5, 2018

Roz Usiskin confesses that she originally intended her latest self published book, *A Lifetime of Letters: The Wolodarsky Family: The Legacy Continues 1922-1979* (edited by Bill Wolodarsky: Design and Production: WeMakeBooks.ca 277 pgs.), to be "meant just for the family." But, then she realized that it would have a wider significance.

The book, which had its official launch on July 25, 2018, is a sequel her earlier book, *A Lifetime of Letters: The Years of Separation 1913-1922 (1995)*. Usiskin, 90, was interviewed by *The Jewish Post & News* at her home in Garden City.

Usiskin translated the letters, which were written by her late father Joseph and other family members, from Yiddish into English.

The story told in the first book culminated in the immigration to Canada of Joseph (Yosef) Wolodarsky, followed by his mother, Chaya Rivka Forman, and his sister, Polly (Pesel) Wolodarsky, Usiskin, who was the first president of the Jewish Heritage Centre/Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, says in the book's foreword. "After its release in 1995, there were two lingering questions," she writes. "What was life like for the Wolodarskys after immigration to North America – the Goldene Medina (America-the Golden Land). Secondly, what was it like for the Wolodarsky family remaining in the Soviet Union? "To partly answer the first question, life after immigration was not the Goldene Medina as expected. While the immigrants avoided the pain and suffering experienced by their Soviet relatives, they were nevertheless prone to all the vicissitudes that many immigrants experienced in North America: anti-Semitism, discrimination, unemployment, recurring economic recessions, and the 1929 Wall Street crash leading to the

1930s depression. World events such as the rise of fascism, WW II, the Holocaust, and the war's aftermath in North America, also had an impact on immigrant families. All of these cataclysmic events are depicted in the letters and give an indication of how they affected and shaped, in particular, the Wolodarsky family in North America. "The letters from the Soviet Union deal with the effects of the Russian revolution, the Pogroms (anti-Jewish violence in Russia in the 19th and 20th century), the (Russian) civil war, the difficulties of building a socialist society, and how the family fared under these momentous historic events." Usiskin observed that the goal from the outset, with both books, was to honour and give meaning to the lives of the original Wolodarskys – Chaya Rivka, Joseph, and Polly. "In particular, these books have fulfilled Joseph's dream of one day recording the family's life voyage, a dream he was unable to realize because of his debilitating illness," she said.

In 1937, Joseph, who was trained as a sheet metal worker in Ukraine and employed by the Canadian National Railway in Transcona after immigrating to Canada, wrote of this dream to his sister Polly: "If I will have a long life and will be physically well, and still be creative enough to continue writing as I am now, I will be ready to fulfill my dream to gather my writings in a book. You could probably take any Jewish family and put them into the same situation, Usiskin said. "This was the history of the Jewish immigrant community at the time, looking for work, the problems with language, the problem with neighbours, discrimination," she added. "There were these themes that run through it (the letters) that would have a very similar appeal to others."

Usiskin, who gained her fluency in Yiddish at home and by attending the former Peretz School (a Jewish parochial school), said the entire process of going through those letters began in 1985. "I've been picking away at it bit by bit, and, not realizing that I would ever have another book in the making," she continued. "It was just for my own satisfaction to see what these letters contained, and, of course, there was more there than I anticipated. Once I started it just kept me going. Once I had as many translated that were worthy of translation, I began to think, 'Well maybe there's a book there.' But, I wasn't prepared to do the slogging and gathering pictures and everything that goes into making a book."

Then, Usiskin's brother, Bill Wolodarsky, in Toronto, who had recently retired from work, expressed an interest in helping her with the project. "He became involved in editing the book," Usiskin, a longtime member (along with her late husband, Larry Usiskin) of the secular United Jewish People's Order, said. "So, that started the process and this is the result. Now, we're into the sixth generation of Wolodarskys, and it's really for them more than anyone

else to give them some inkling of their history and their ancestors and the life that they had to lead. That was the goal: to leave them the legacy." ♦

<file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/Downloads/Roz%20Usiskin%20story.pdf>

FROM TORONTO

By Rachel Epstein

Shana tova from Toronto, where we continue to feel the



August Anti-fascist demonstration. Photo by Errol Young

daily sting of our new Provincial government, and to watch in horror the shenanigans occurring in the United States. Through all of this, we are consistently reminded how important it is to support and stand up for one another, and to continue to build community!

Camp Naivelt: Camp Naivelt has completed another highly successful season and will be winding down for the winter with a final potluck this Thanksgiving weekend. One highlight of the summer was the August 5 Peace Tea with special guest Chief R. Stacey Laforme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. Chief Laforme is notable not only as a Chief, but as a storyteller and poet. His talk generated ongoing discussion about how to continue a respectful and reciprocal relationship between Camp Naivelt and the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

The Camp Naivelt Strategic Planning Task Force continues its work with consultant Sue Pulfer, moving towards finalizing a five-year Strategic Plan for the camp, accompanied by an operational plan that puts things into action! The Camp Committee will also be reviewing the Camp Manager position, and making recommendations for next year. For those who want to gather in the winter, the annual Midwinter Mingle is being tentatively planned for Saturday, Feb. 23, 2019.

Morris Winchevsky School: As Camp Naivelt gears down, the shule gears up, having been running now for three weeks, including a lively Sukkes party around the fire in Dufferin Grove Park last weekend. We are delighted to

welcome two new teachers to the staff: Shifra Cooper in the Kinder Kapers classroom, and Lainie Basman with the B'nai Mitzvah students.

Zing! Zing! Zing!: UJPO's monthly singing group held its first fall meeting at the Free Times Café in downtown Toronto. The turnout was good, the singing was lively and a good time was had by all. Plans are afoot to continue meeting at the Free Times Café, where you can come for dinner, and stay to sing!

Archives Project: Our resident archivist, Ruth Grossman, recently completed a comprehensive report on the state of the archives project; what has been done, what remains to be done and some things to think about. Amongst these, of course, are questions about digitization and access, and about the ongoing maintenance of the archives once the main project is complete.

Other Programming: Our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur events were well-attended this year. For both events we honoured the late and great Aretha Franklin by inviting special guest Alana Bridgewater to belt out some of Aretha's greatest songs. On RH she sang *Think* and on YK we were treated to Alana's version of *RESPECT*. A pretty good way to bring in the new year, especially given the attacks on women's rights and feminism we are currently witnessing. We also dedicated our YK ceremony to 68.5 million people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 25.4 million of these people are refugees and of these, 5.4 million are Palestinian. Because of our close ties, as Jews, to the plight and struggles of Palestinians, we featured in the program, the work of four Palestinian poets, some of whom continue to live in Palestine and some of whom are the children of refugees.

Fall events included a special evening on Oct. 20 in honour of our longtime member Richard Lee, who recently received the Order of Canada. We also co-sponsored an event on October 26 with speakers Sahar Vardi and Tarek Al-Zoughbbi, discussing the current context and challenges in Palestine/Israel, and are planning a Friday evening Shabbat in December featuring Hershel Russell's presentation on "The Joys of Gender." We've also been active, in coalition with others, fighting the rise of the extreme right, participating in a commemoration of the Christie Pits uprising and the organizing of an anti-fascist demo in August.

We continue to be committed to making our building, the Winchevsky Centre, fully accessible and are working with various consultants to determine what work is needed and to find the necessary funds. If you have ideas or knowledge in this area, please get in touch.

Finally, the Annual General Meeting of UJPO-Toronto and the Morris Winchevsky School is being held on Sunday, November 4, 2018 at the Winchevsky Centre. A light breakfast will be served at 10:00 a.m. and the meeting will begin promptly at 10:30.

It is an important and exciting time of rejuvenation and renewal for these organizations, so we ask that you plan to attend the AGM. We are also seeking new Board members, and ask, if you live in Toronto, that you give this some consideration. ♦

FROM HAMILTON

By Lyn Center

One of our Hamilton friends, Nicole Shapiro, recommended we visit Toronto's Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, so on August 26 five of us took the bus/subway/bus in the morning so we could arrive in time for their architectural tour.

The tour guide was extremely interesting and led about 20 of us around the stunningly designed building – from the outdoor pools, gardens, chess set – through the interesting hallways, stairways and display rooms. The architect, Fumihiko Maki, used white granite and glass to create a very open and airy space in a very modern design.

After the tour, we visited the beautiful display entitled "Emperors & Jewels: Treasures of the Indian Courts". Then we headed back to Hamilton and had some good discussions on the bus.

The Aga Khan, a Shia Ismaili Muslim with British citizenship, funded the museum. His goal was "to offer unique insights and new perspectives into Islamic civilizations and the cultural threads that weave through history binding us all together. My hope is that the Museum will also be a centre of education and of learning, and that it will act as a catalyst for mutual understanding and tolerance." To read more about the museum, see this link: <https://www.agakhanmuseum.org/about/index.html>

On Nov. 18 Lil Blume will host a pot-luck lunch and will speak on the topic "Growing Up in a Household of Human Rights Activists and What I Found Out About My Father from Google". ♦

HONOURABLE MENTSHN

In Memoriam: Peter Golden (1952-2018)

By Carl Rosenberg

I was terribly saddened by the passing of Peter Golden, a wonderful activist and human being – a true *mensch* – whom I wish I had known better. I only met Peter in person on two occasions, when he and his brother Mark looked me up on their visits to Vancouver. (I've known and worked

with Mark for many years when he was a contributor to and Associate Editor of *Outlook* until its folding, and through our common involvement in UJPO.)

A native of Ottawa and long-time resident of Victoria, Peter was a staunch advocate for human rights and social justice as a lawyer (he graduated from McGill Law School in 1991, receiving the Scarlet Key award for leadership) and activist in many areas. He was a union organizer and advocate for victims of poverty and family violence. He was a founding member of the Victoria Central America Support Committee, and in the 1980s took part in human rights delegations to Central America. He was an active member of Independent Jewish Voices Canada, and worked on its Expose the JNF campaign.

Peter was best known for his support for immigrants and refugees, and was a founding member of the Victoria Coalition for Survivors of Torture. He and his former colleague Marlene Tyshynski worked to help boatloads of Chinese migrants who arrived in Canada in 1999. In recent years he took part in resisting refugee health care cuts imposed by the Harper government, and spoke on this subject at the International Academy of Law and Mental Health Conference. He taught courses on the legal standing of immigrants and refugees in Canada at the University of Victoria.

Family, friends and colleagues remember Peter's warmth and good humour, qualities vividly clear to me during our two meetings. His daughter Darcy recalls that laughter was frequently heard from behind the closed door of his office.

Mark gave a moving speech at his brother's memorial service in which he said in part: "Nature makes mistakes; that's why we're here today. One of those mistakes was in having me be born earlier. Yes, I was older, but I generally thought of Peter as my big brother, mainly because I looked up to him. He was so sensible, so capable, so reliable. Always there ... and then he wasn't. He's a big presence in my life and he always will be."

My heartfelt condolences to Peter's wife Charlotte Bell, his mother Molly, his daughters Julia (Jonathan) and Darcy (Jordan), his grandchildren Jacob, Mari and Jessy, his brother Mark (Jo-Anne), his nephew Max (Stephanie), and his cousin Heather (Jerry).

To continue his legacy, family and friends have established the Peter Golden Social Justice Fund at the Victoria Foundation. Readers of *UJPO News* can gain more information through the Victoria Foundation (250-381-5532). ♦

WHAT'S IN ORDER

Mazl Tov to...

In Winnipeg:

- Dr. Lee Anne Block who received the University of Winnipeg's Campus Sustainability Recognition Award for her research and education of students in the core values of sustainability, particularly cultural sustainability.

In Toronto:

- Max Wallace on winning the Canadian Jewish Literary Award in Holocaust Literature for his book, *In the Name of Humanity: The Secret Deal to End the Holocaust*.
- Charna Gord on her 65th birthday.
- Abbie Bakan and Paul Kellogg on the marriage of their daughter Rachel Kellogg to Michael Stephens. (Ester Reiter delivered a beautiful Yiddish *brokheh* to the couple.)
- Lyn Center on her mother Elaine's 94th birthday and her move from Florida to a seniors' residence in Toronto where she has made many new friends.

Welcome New Members...

- Lee Gelbloom

Speedy Recovery to...

- Ross Morgan and Natalie Zemon Davis

Heartfelt Condolences to...

- Rob Howarth and Marilyn Tate on the passing of Rob's mother, Norma-Jane Howarth. ♦

GETTING TO KNOW OUR UJPO MEMBERS

Dr. Lee Anne Block

Since when have you been a member of UJPO?

I joined UJPO Winnipeg in 2007. At the time, my mother and father were on the UJPO board. But it was Roz Usiskin who reached out to me, convincing as usual.

What brought you to UJPO?

Family history was significant. All my grandparents immigrated to Winnipeg from Russia before WWI. They were all lefties, especially on my mom's side, card-carrying Communists. My work as an educator has been focused on educating for change, for equity.



In which boards and/or committees are you active?

I continue to be a board member, working on programming mostly.

What are some of the projects or activities your committee or board has been or is involved in?

We hold forums, have a book club and choir, cultural events, an annual memorial for the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. One aspect of our work is to connect with other grassroots groups, including Indigenous community groups.

What is your life outside UJPO?

I have seven grandchildren under seven, who light up my life. I am Professor of Education at the University of Winnipeg, doing community-based research. Recent project is the Healing Forest in St. John's Park, Winnipeg, a living memorial to Indigenous children and families lost to or affected by the residential school system, and an outdoor learning place. I had been a classroom teacher in the North End for 20 years before joining the university.

Are you able to bring your non-UJPO activities and skills into a close relationship with your UJPO activities?

I enjoy and need to integrate the two.

Are other members of your family involved in or members of UJPO?

My partner, my daughter and our two grand-kids who live in Winnipeg.

How do you see yourself contributing to the health of the organization?

Collaborative work enriches us all.

Last and not least – recent book and/or movie and/or play you recommend?

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer, a biologist and Knowledge Keeper.

Anything you would like to add /comment/suggest...?

UJPO is a significant part of Prairie cultural history and of the Winnipeg Jewish community. ♦

POETRY & SONG

Angel Of Freedom

By Phil Cohen, 1996

Phil Cohen left home in New York City at the age of sixteen and ended up as a city bus driver in North Carolina. There he succeeded in building a solid union local of transit workers.

Since 1988, he has been a lead organizer and troubleshooter for Workers United, (now called UNITE), a

major industrial and service trade union. (UNITE - Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees).

Chorus:

We are the children of the angel of freedom
We are the soldiers of the good fight
In unions across this land that we live in
We are the workers joined by UNITE

We make the products that America runs on
The yarn and the cloth and the clothes that you wear
For so many years we were taken for granted
'Till we stood together to get out fair share

You know that our struggle it never comes easy
You'd never guess all the scars that we bear
We live in a land where the law's stacked against us
But the law ain't as strong as our faith and our prayers

I remember the days when we started our union
Our power was hope and their weapon despair
They did all they could to hurt and divide us
All we wanted was justice and a wage that was fair

We stood at the gate when the rain was a 'freezin'
We were lied to and fired, sometimes we were scared
But we never backed down, we just kept a 'commin'
And our contract bears witness to all that we dared ♦

<http://www.hardmilesmusic.com/phil.html>

CULTURE

Khanike-Shmanike 2017

Adapted from a Toronto presentation marking the UJPO's 90th anniversary.

By David Abramowitz, December 10, 2017

What's wrong about us marking khanike is that we eat *potato* latkes. Potatoes didn't get to Europe or the Middle East for centuries!

Ashkenazi Jews made fried blintses, and Italian Jews, in the 15th century, made fried ricotta cheese pancakes ("cassola") which were arguably the first "latkes." Fried cheese memorialized the heroine Judith, who was central to khanike observances in those times. The Book of Judith, a feminist version of David and Goliath, isn't in Jewish scriptures, possibly due to its sexual content. She went to the camp of the enemy general, Holofernes, with whom she ingratiated herself; gaining his trust, she got into his tent one night. As he was drunk she decapitated him, taking his head to her countrymen. Although Judith was described as a "virtuous" woman she was also a murderess, and the basic message of her story is that the end justifies the means. That sort of fits the story that's told on khanike.

But in our era, much is being “reimagined.” Does anyone recall that last April [2017] there was an article in *Canadian Jewish News* about the fact that numerous rabbis of various Jewish denominations agreed that the Exodus tale was a myth?

I felt there was more fiction than fact in the khanike story for decades and decided to research it about 35 years ago. The results were presented at our khanike celebration about 15-20 years ago under the same title. But there’s been much more research recently. I wasn’t surprised to find an article on *myjewishlearning.com* titled “The Maccabees: Heroes or Fanatics?” by Michele Alperin which starts with “**The Maccabees triumphed over the Syrian Greeks and liberated the Temple, but their legacy is not so clear.**” I will quote from it to trim back my ideas.

The Maccabees were/are celebrated as heroes who saved Jewish practice and law from suppression and repeal by the Syrian Greeks. The Maccabees are portrayed in the First Book of Maccabees as religious zealots, murdering coreligionists who had chosen the path of Hellenism.

“The historical reality is murky, refracted through the political and religious agendas of First and Second Maccabees (books eliminated by the rabbis who chose not to include them in the Hebrew Bible). This ambiguity, may give both interpretations some legitimacy, and later commentators choose the one most consonant with their orientation.”

If you personally experienced anti-Semitism you might identify Mattathias M. as a hero, loyal to his religious identity in the face of an anti-Semitic Greek civilization. On the other hand, civil libertarians might judge the Maccabees less generously, criticizing their infringement on the civil rights of their co-religionists [the latter of whom may also have treated those belonging to the Maccabean party in a similar manner].

Hellenism was an ideology whose universalistic outlook was based on Greek ideas and athletic prowess. Hellenism became a political tool used by the Syrian Greeks to consolidate their power among the wealthy bourgeoisie. *Aha, I smell a class struggle!* The aristocratic elites who embraced Hellenism gained access to the social and economic perquisites including the right to mint coins, to participate in international Hellenistic events, and be protected by the city’s founding ruler.

It wasn’t just a pragmatic relationship between the ruler and local economic elites; it also described an “enlightened” worldview – the way of the future. Thus the pressure to acculturate to Hellenism was quite intense in Judea. The people of Judea had to decide whether the universalistic focus of Hellenism constituted a danger to

their ancestral religion or whether it just represented a more modern and “progressive” way of life that could be merged with Jewish practice.

The question is if the Maccabean liberation depends on whether the Hellenists are viewed as unfaithful or as Jews who have adapted some Greek ways as a means of survival. Remember the conversos? In the 14th century the Jews of Spain, forced to become Christian still had among them a large number who secretly, and with great difficulty, maintained their Jewish faith, including dietary laws. **There were parallels in Maccabean times.** There is much research to inform this fact. We just don’t have enough time to explore it now.

So without any concept of due process, the Maccabees and their followers first slaughtered fellow Jews to sanctify the Temple, and went on to kill those who whether inwardly or only outwardly practiced Hellenism, over a 25 year period. And remember war in those days didn’t involve guns or explosives. It’s more like today’s ISIS.

I have difficulty with its history when marking what to most is a “fun” holiday. So without addressing khanike gelt, the kanikea or dreydls I’ll close with one of my childhood memories of khanike when we celebrated at 7 Brunswick, in the 1940’s. The chairman stood up to greet the crowd and it was clear he hadn’t used his denture-grip. Instead of saying “*Tayere Khaveyrim*” i.e. “**Dear Comrades**”, he uttered “*Tayere Khaseyrim*” i.e. “**Dear Pigs!**”

Khanike, shmanike? Lets eat! ♦

YIDDISH

Shtisel's Ghosts: the politics of Yiddish in Israeli popular culture

By Shayna Weiss

In a recent episode of the Israeli television drama Shtisel, Shulem Shtisel, a middle aged widower, visits his mother accompanied by his new fiancé Menucha. Bubbe, ninety years old and a Holocaust survivor, lives in a religious nursing home. She is starting to show signs of dementia. The entire conversation between Bubbe and her visitors takes place in Israeli Hasidic Yiddish, subtitled in Hebrew. After Menucha offers up ill-timed platitudes, Bubbe calls her a klatfe [bitch]. Menucha is offended, and leaves the room. Shulem tries to placate Menucha, to little avail. The day after the episode aired, the show’s Facebook page posed the following question to its viewers: Do you think Menucha is really a klatfe?

Is Menucha really a klatfe? (via *Shtisel*’s Facebook page)



Mark Etkin, Judy and Larry Haiven, at the Independent Jewish Voices (IJV) 10th anniversary conference, attended by several members of UJPO. Mark is one of the founders of IJV, and Judy and Larry are on the executive. All three were on the UJPO tours, and it was a UJPO tour in 2005 that spawned IJV, by Mark Etkin and (now deceased) Michael Benazon. More on IJV in our winter issue.

Bubbe's use of a mild Yiddish curse word is not just for comedic effect, but also serves as instruction for Shulem. Shortly after Bubbe's outburst towards Menucha, he breaks off the engagement with barely any explanation. Functioning as a one-woman chorus, Bubbe's Yiddish outburst reveals a truth that could not be expressed in the Hebrew in which Menucha and Shulem converse: Menucha lacks proficiency in their language of intimacy, Yiddish. This conflict over Bubbe's use of the word *klafte* prompted me to wonder what *Shtisel's* success says about the intersections between Yiddish and Israeli popular culture, and what Yiddish on Israeli television can tell us about Zionism and its linguistic discontents – especially Arabic, the language of Israel's biggest minority.

What does *Shtisel's* Yiddish say about this minoritarian moment in Israeli television? How does linguistic diversity contribute to an understanding of Israeli popular culture – especially when considering a language despised by so many Zionist thinkers?

Shtisel recently completed its second season. The series focuses largely on the saga of the Shtisel family, and in particular on the father-son duo Shulem and Akiva Shtisel, after the death of Devora, their respective wife and mother. Shulem is the principal of a *cheder*, a Haredi elementary school for boys, and he struggles to balance his grief with his desire to find a new spouse while caring for his aging mother. Akiva, an over-the-hill bachelor at twenty-seven, is negotiating newfound feelings for his first cousin Libi as he attempts to professionally pursue the visual arts, a career path that upsets his father and extended family.

Shtisel has been lauded by the ultra-Orthodox community for its nuanced portrayal of Haredi society. Many reviewers commented on the show's authentic feel, part of which is due to its extensive use of *mame-loshn*. Several scenes in nearly every episode take place completely in Yiddish. Even when speaking Hebrew,

characters often sprinkle their dialogue with Yiddish sayings or Hebrew words pronounced in an Ashkenazi accent, indicating a syncretic Israeli Haredi Hebrew that mirrors similar dialects in American and Canadian Ultra-Orthodox communities.

The show's creators wanted to include Yiddish on the show in order to reflect the realities of Haredi life in Israel. One of the most consistent questions was – when should characters speak Yiddish. In other Israeli television series, it was obvious that characters would speak their minority language (i.e. Russian or Arabic, or even Moroccan-Judeo Arabic slang) amongst their families and in their homes, while speaking Hebrew when interacting with the larger Israeli public. But the uses of Hebrew and Yiddish in the Haredi community are not as clearly delineated. With the exception of a very small minority of Haredim who reject modern Hebrew, Israeli ultra-Orthodox Jews freely mix Yiddish and Hebrew in their everyday conversations for both work and pleasure. Both Shulem and his brother Nochem are fluent in Hebrew, but they tend to speak Yiddish to one another, which the writers use to emphasize both Nochem's lack of Israeliness (he has chosen to live abroad), as well as the brothers' connection to Bubbe Shtisel, who is far less fluent in Hebrew than in her native Yiddish.

The show's setting in the Geula neighborhood of Jerusalem indicates that while the characters are fully Haredi, they are more open to secular society than their neighbors in Mea Shearim, which is known for religious extremism. Geula's moderation is reflected by the characters' frequent use of Hebrew in daily life. As a general rule, the older the character, the more they speak Yiddish in their daily life. Yet the younger characters clearly understand Yiddish, even if they speak it less frequently, reflecting the increasing integration of Haredim into wider Jewish Israeli society.

Yiddish dialogue in the show poses additional challenges. While writing the first season, the creators of *Shtisel* worried that given the show's unusual subject matter, the use of Yiddish, even with Hebrew subtitles, would further alienate potential viewers. Therefore, in the first season, they minimized its use. Several of the older actors had a working knowledge of Yiddish, while others listened to Yiddish-language materials to gain a familiarity with the language. Budgetary and other practical constraints limited the amount of Yiddish dialogue. But after the success of season one, the staff decided to include more Yiddish in the second season in order to more accurately reflect Haredi life.

Even in the first season, the show exhibited the most Yiddish ever seen on the small screen in Israel. Yiddish

made periodic appearances on Israeli sketch comedy skits in the 1960s and 1970s, and more recently a handful of shows, but nowhere close to the level seen in *Shtisel*. Assistant Director Tamar estimates that up to 20 percent of some episodes take place entirely in Yiddish. The show also incorporates a significant amount of *loshn koydesh*, using Hebrew and Aramaic phrases that emerge from the canon of Jewish religious texts such as the Torah or Talmud. *Loshn koydesh* phrases are pronounced with a Yiddish accent instead of the modified Sephardic accent of Modern Hebrew, to indicate their distinct and elevated status. Several of the characters have their own *loshn koydesh* catchphrases, including Shulem's "*khosdey hashem*" [God's kindness], a similar analog to *borukh hashem* [Thank God].

Several of the show's expressions have entered mainstream Hebrew – some newspapers have even published lexicons to aid less-educated viewers. Favorite phrases include "He went to sell *beygelekh*" ["He went to sell pretzels," meaning the person in question has passed away] and the *loshn koydesh* expression "*resha'im arurim* [Cursed wicked ones]," the favorite insult of Uncle Nohem which inspired one fan to create the catchy Resha'im Arurim remix.

What can we learn from *Shtisel's* Yiddish? Firstly, the Yiddish of *Shtisel* offers a post-vernacular Yiddish different than the standard American formulations and reminds us to think more expansively about Yiddish in non-American contexts. Yiddish in the series is ever-present, not only when its characters speak entirely in Yiddish, but as part of a larger constellation of languages and cultures in the Israeli Ultra Orthodox community. Yiddish and Hebrew coexist and co-influence each other, and the very notion of *loshn koydesh* further complicates clean boundaries between the two in contemporary Israel. Haredi life is far from static, and its linguistic landscapes reflect that complexity. Local politics matter, as we are reminded when Shulem's brother Nochem, who lives in Antwerp, mocks Shulem for submitting to Zionist influences.

Secondly, the show's Yiddish forces us to think about politics of multilingualism in contemporary Israel more broadly. *Shtisel* reminds me of that a monolingual *yishuv* in Mandate Palestine was far from the reality. Jews used multiple languages in their daily lives even while promoting Hebrew. The Yiddish of *Shtisel* mirrors a long tradition of Israeli multilingualism amidst Hebrew dominance. For many non-Haredi Jews, the Yiddish of *Shtisel* is both exotic and familiar. The historical disdain for Yiddish as *zhargon*, inferior to Hebrew, is absent from the show. It is absent both because Yiddish no longer threatens Hebrew's dominance, and because the fracturing of the

Zionist narrative creates entry points for narratives previously absent in Israeli popular culture, including the bilingual saga of the *Shtisel* family. Yiddish seems both stickier and more flexible than other minority languages in the Israeli public sphere.

In the Seinfeld-esque comedy Arab Labor, which focused on an Israeli Palestinian journalist and his family, the Israeli Palestinian characters spoke Arabic with their family members, and Hebrew when interacting with Jewish Israelis. Arab Labor included many discussions about the prejudices Arabic-speakers face in Jewish Israeli society, including the main character's decision to work for the Hebrew-language press. In *Shtisel*, the boundaries between Hebrew and Yiddish are more fluid than they are for Hebrew and Arabic because its characters do not share the same concerns of discrimination when speaking Yiddish.

The popular embrace, in newspapers and talkbacks, of *Shtisel's* Yiddish stands in contrast to the unease with which Arabic is received in Israeli society, even on television; Yiddish is a softer, safer other for mainstream Jewish Israeli viewers. Yet Yiddish is not feminized and defanged, because *Shtisel* succeeds in challenging those stereotypes by displaying the breadth of Yiddish in the Israeli Hasidic context. *Shtisel* also humanizes Israeli Haredim, whose reputation among secular Israelis is often stereotyped to the point of invoking anti-Semitic tropes. Not all non-Hebrew languages in Israel are created equal.

Yet Arabic and Yiddish in Israel share more than one might think. In one of *Shtisel's* most moving scenes, there is a romance of sorts between Bubbe and an elderly Mizrahi man in the nursing home. When they are together, he speaks only Arabic, while she speaks only Yiddish. Yet neither one seems to notice the lack of mutual comprehension, and they connect via their non-Hebrew languages in a way that horrifies Bubbe's children. This scene reinforces connections between Israel's disparate minorities, despite its absurdity and quick erasure. The common cause between Bubbe and her lover is one created by Hebrew dominance, a force so crushing that at times resistance to it unites subjects who otherwise do not have much in common. As Bubbe's romance indicates, Yiddish in Israel is deeply connected to Arabic, whether it is the almost-eradicated Arabic of Mizrahi Jews or the Arabic of Palestinian Israelis. Israeli Yiddish exists not just in relation to Hebrew, but to Hebrew's other others as well. ♦

<https://ingeveb.org/blog/shtisel-s-ghosts-the-politics-of-yiddish-in-israeli-popular-culture>

Shtisel Season 1: <http://shtisel.com/en/season-1/>

CANADA

Chairman of Ontario's Anti-Semitism Subcommittee caught in excuse to exclude groups critical of Israel

By Wolfe Erlichman, *Rabble.ca*, June 25, 2018

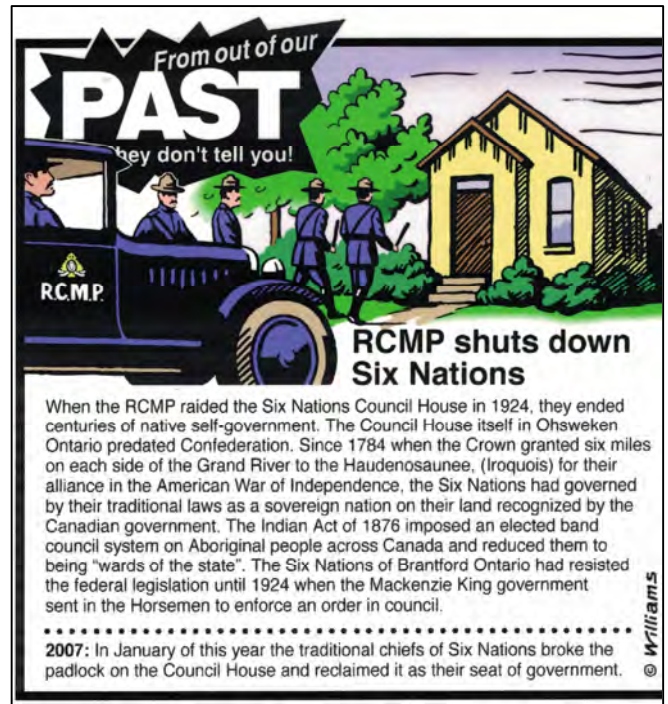
Ed. Note: The provincial government, under Premier Doug Ford, has since disbanded several sub-committees of the directorate discussed below.

Now Magazine has published articles by Rachel Epstein, Executive Director of the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO), and Harry Shannon, Professor Emeritus at McMaster University. ("Why was pro-Palestinian Jewish organization denied a seat on an Ontario Government's anti-Semitism committee?" in 2017, and "Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate's anti-Semitism committee stuck on Israel," in March 2018.) They complained that UJPO and another group called Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) were excluded from membership on the Anti-Semitism Subcommittee of Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate.

An article was published in the *Canadian Jewish News* about Ontario's anti-Semitism subcommittee. In the story, Mr. Bernie Farber, co-chair of the subcommittee, was quoted as saying that the United Jewish People's Order and Independent Jewish Voices Canada should not sit on the subcommittee because the people who chose the subcommittee focused on including "those Jewish organizations which deal specifically with anti-Semitism. The focus of UJPO and IJV is not anti-Semitism."

However, if one examines the groups which are on the subcommittee, it turns out that three out of the approximately eleven groups are not Jewish: Mosaic Institute, Legal Innovation Zone Ryerson University, and Carpenters District Council of Ontario. On their web pages, there are no references to Jews specifically, or to anti-Semitism. Of the eight groups which are Jewish, only two (Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre and B'nai Brith Canada) mention anti-Semitism prominently. One group (La'ad) barely mentions it in passing, and the remaining five do not mention anti-Semitism at all.

If we use Mr. Farber's criterion of focusing on anti-Semitism, then eight, and possibly nine of the groups do not qualify to sit on the subcommittee. It should be pointed out that six out of the eight Jewish organizations are strong supporters of Israel. Indeed JSpace, which has Mr. Farber on its Board of Directors, says on its web page that it rejects "...all attempts to vilify, demonize or delegitimize the State of Israel."



Cartoon by John Williams

A careful examination of the facts seems to confirm the accusations by UJPO and IJV that they are not on the Anti-Semitism Subcommittee because they are critical of Israel's treatment of Palestinians in Israel, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza. ♦

Since his retirement Wolfe Erlichman has been involved in the successful protest against uranium mine exploration in the Sharbot Lake area of Eastern Ontario, and the ongoing protest against the closure of farms in federal penitentiaries across Canada. He currently lives north of Kingston, ON and is a member of Independent Jewish Voices Canada.

<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/independent-jewish-voices-canada/2018/06/chairman-ontarios-anti-semitism-subcommittee>

USA

Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 11/9 explores parallels with the rise of European fascism

By Ken Eisner, *Georgia Straight*, September 24, 2018

A fitting bookend for the era that began with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the latest from people's polemicist Michael Moore takes its title from the date when the worst person in the USA became the most powerful man in the world. The orange menace is only occasionally seen and heard here, fortunately. But the film's bad news is that the tribalism, greed, and naked misogyny he represents is now pretty well entrenched in the remnants of liberal democracies just about everywhere.

MIDDLE EAST

Isha L'Isha Haifa

By Shlomit Segal

This is the fourth in a series on Israeli and Palestinian NGOs, alternating each UJPO News issue between the two.

Ed. Note: In UJPO, across all sections, many members are active in various NGOs, most often human rights, anti-occupation, housing, etc. Two members (quite probably more!) are the founders of two (different) NGOs – both in Israel! In this issue, Shlomit Segal describes the Israeli NGO, Isha L'Isha, Woman to Woman, – of which she is one of the founders. Shlomit has been an active UJPO member for over 15 years, instrumental in many committees including Camp Naivelt and the Culture/Social Justice



L to R: Lesley Sachs, Tovia Bat-Leah, Chana Levy, Shlomit Segal, Chemda Arad, Tali Shechori. Crouching: Avital Schlanger

Committee in Toronto.

Lately the news from Israel and Palestine is getting worse and worse and it's natural to look for some speck of hope somewhere in the region. My little bit of hope comes from Isha L'Isha, a women's centre in Haifa that I helped found in the 1980s.

Haifa has a history as the most progressive of Israel's cities: of feminism, labour activism and of Jews working in solidarity with Palestinians. The first women's centre in the region, Kol Haisha, (Voice of Women) was also started in the 1970s by several women, among them prominent U.S. born feminist Marcia Freedman, but was open for only a few years.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, feminists continuously met at gatherings and conferences, and in 1983 a group of Haifa women founded the Isha L'Isha Centre. Today it is situated in a municipally-owned large apartment on Arlozarov Street in the working-class Hadar neighbourhood of central Haifa. The Centre supports several feminist

The gadfly filmmaker gained extra cred in the fall of 2016 by being one of the few voices to get it right about the chances of Trump winning. (Cue clips of supposedly smart pundits laughing at the notion.) He doesn't *always* get it right; in 2007, Moore told this writer he was certain that Hillary Clinton would be elected in 2008.

Obviously the timing of this cinematic pronouncement is connected to the midterm elections. While it's hard to imagine any Cult 45 member being swayed by this nifty encapsulation of everything that went wrong in the past two years – including Russian interference, rampant voter suppression, and Republican blindness to their new leader's ill intent – it doesn't really seem aimed at them.

Indeed, the movie is fairly tough on the Democratic Party establishment. Moore oversimplifies the process that Bernie Sanders fans feel "robbed" him, but there can be no doubts about the smug complacency of the old guard, and its timidity in the face of norm-smashing crooks intent on serving the NRA, big banks, and filthy-rich oligarchs, foreign and domestic. Here, there's some hope, in that the post-Parkland climate has unleashed a new slate of grass roots candidates, mostly female and including many people of colour.

As usual, the big guy skips around like crazy, sometimes at the expense of depth and coherence. At first, the side-trip to Flint, Michigan – his hometown, and main locale for the breakthrough *Roger & Me* – seems like a digression. But he builds a strong criminal case against governor Rick Snyder, who made millions for his rich friends by hollowing out the state's black-majority cities and poisoning the people of Flint for his own profit.

Then-president Obama comes off particularly bad in this (ongoing) episode, since his much-heralded visit to Flint turned out to be a meaningless photo-op – followed menacingly by explosive army exercises about which no one bothered to warn the residents. The militarization of police, demonizing of immigrants, suppression of dissent, and cruelty to women and children are just some of the parallels drawn with the rise of European fascism in the 1930s.

Some of Moore's trademark stunts, like going to the Michigan statehouse to "arrest" Snyder, feel like tired time-wasters. But his *j'accuse* at 100 million Americans who didn't bother to vote in 2016 rings loud, clear, and *now*. ♦

<https://www.straight.com/movies/1140851/michael-moores-fahrenheit-119-explores-parallels-rise-european-fascism>

**Dr. Miriam Garfinkle
1954-2018**

**We will have a tribute to Miriam in the
winter issue of UJPO News**

projects such as the Palestinian women's collective Kayan, an emergency crisis phone line for battered women and a feminist library.

In 2013, Isha L'Isha celebrated its 30th anniversary with a two-day conference at the Haifa Theatre. Besides the usual panels that are featured at feminist conferences, it featured a Jane-style walk through Haifa's feminist history, stand-up comedy by a Mizrahi lesbian and a presentation by Haifa's transgender youth group, who meet at the Centre.

The Centre is run by a collective, which meets monthly. Its current activities include supporting workplace rights for women, fighting trafficking in women, working with local feminist academics and speaking out about the pervasive racism in Israeli society.

To make a donation, see the website <http://isha2isha.com/english/>. ♦

I advised the Palestinian negotiating team. It was a mistake to have negotiated with Israel at all.

Buoyed by the Oslo Accords, I moved to the West Bank as a legal adviser to the PLO team. I was wrong. 25 years since that iconic Arafat-Rabin handshake, it's clear talks are futile – and Palestinians are no closer to freedom.

By Diana Buttu, Haaretz, Sept. 12, 2018

Twenty-five years ago this month, on the White House lawn, the lives of a generation of Palestinians changed forever when the late Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, shook hands with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. That handshake marked the start of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, with promises of a new era of peace, freedom and prosperity.

Twenty-five years later, Palestinians are no closer to freedom, as Israel has further entrenched, rather than lessened, its now 51-year military occupation.

Like countless others at the time, I was optimistic that the negotiations would finally lead to Palestinian liberty as promised and based on this, I decided to move to the West Bank to work as a legal advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team. During that period, I met with countless diplomats, worked on scores of proposals and even began a house-to-house campaign to speak to Israelis about ending Israel's military rule.

But while I and others worked to end occupation others worked to entrench it, including the Israeli government and its settlers: within the first seven years after the negotiations began, Israel used incentives to nearly double its settler population. Today, the settler population is more



Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat conferring after being awarded, together with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the 1994 Nobel Prize in Oslo. Photo: Ya'acov Sa'ar/GPO

than three times the size it was in 1993, with nearly 700,000 settlers living in the West Bank.

Back in 1993, settlements were, for the most part, confined to hilltops, with Israeli settlers considered to be fringe. Far from being ostracized, today, some Israel's largest cities are settlements, settlers have taken over homes in the heart of Palestinian towns and settlers command positions on the Israeli cabinet and on the Supreme Court. In short, settlers are the norm, not the exception. Today, Israeli settlers speak openly about annexing the West Bank or expelling Palestinians.

I am often asked why the negotiations process failed. It is easy to point to the rise of right-wing Israeli governments, poor leadership or weak or uninterested U.S. presidents. But the real reason for failure lie beyond these factors.

It is because the parties should not have started negotiating in the first place.

To demand that Palestinians – living under Israeli military rule – negotiate with their occupier and oppressor is akin to demanding that a hostage negotiate with their hostage taker. It is repugnant that the world demands that Palestinians negotiate their freedom, while Israel continues to steal Palestinian land. Instead, Israel should have faced sanctions for continuing to deny Palestinians their freedom while building illegal settlements.

Twenty-five years later, rather than living the joys of freedom, we mark each day, by thinking about how to maneuver the maze of Israel's more than 500 checkpoints, put in place to accommodate Israeli settlements, just to be able to get to work or to school. A 25 year-old in the West Bank has likely never been able to visit the sea – a few miles away – while a 25 year-old in Gaza has never been able to leave the Gaza Strip, to visit friends and family in the West Bank and Jerusalem or even abroad.

It isn't just movement of people that is affected. Palestinians have not been able to take advantage of technological progress for "security reasons". For example, as cancer treatment advances throughout the world, Palestinian hospitals are barred from acquiring radiation equipment. Even our postal system remains hostage to Israel's whims.

But, rather than recognize the mistake of negotiations, the world continues to demand that we continue the facade even though negotiations irrevocably broke down more than a decade ago. The negotiations process has, in effect, served as cover for the world to do nothing - while giving Israel the cover to build and expand settlements.

If peace is to be achieved, it must entail costs – and this time, not shouldered by the Palestinians. Rather, Israel must receive the strong message, the first in its history, that settlements will no longer be tolerated but rather reversed, and that Palestinians must be free.

I am under no illusions that the Trump Administration will put into place such sanctions. While previous administrations tried to maintain a semblance that they were helping "both sides," Trump has come decidedly in support of Israel's right-wing pro-settler movement.

Whether by declaring Jerusalem as Israel's capital or by attempting to extinguish the right of return, President Trump has shown that his "deal of the century" will undoubtedly accommodate Israeli settlements, take away Palestinian rights and reward Israeli wrongs. The closure of the PLO office in Washington D.C. this week is yet another check on Israel's wish list.

For Israel and its supporters, the past 25 years have been a victory. With Trump at the helm, Israel's settlers are at an all-time high, Palestinians are confined to bantustans and the U.S. is cracking down on Palestinians for demanding their freedom.

But this short-term fix has long-term implications. While Oslo changed the lives of a generation of Palestinians, this generation and the next have certainly learned its lessons: that negotiating is futile, and that our

rights cannot be compromised. With this, it is only a matter of time before we begin struggling for equal rights in a single state, rather than press for statehood. ♦

Diana Buttu is a Ramallah-based analyst and activist, and a former adviser to Mahmoud Abbas and the negotiating team of the PLO. She recently participated via Skype as a panelist at an IJV conference in Toronto.

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/oslo-accords-25-years/.premium-we-palestinians-should-never-have-negotiated-with-israel-at-all-1.6467921>

Continued from page 1

overseas during the Second World War. They would later discover that almost the entire family was murdered in the Holocaust.

"I didn't live through that hell, but I inherited my parents' grief and the understanding you don't fight (injustice) for yourself. You fight it for everybody," Reiter said. She still remembers her mother mourning her little sister, who had been trying to escape to the United States but never made it.

Reiter would eventually move to Winnipeg with her two boys in 1968, and then later to Toronto to get her PhD in sociology at the University of Toronto, driven to make a difference.

"I ask myself, what can I do to make sure what happened to my people doesn't happen to other people – to make sure my voice is there saying, 'No, no, no, it isn't right?' " ♦

Samantha Beattie is a city hall reporter based in Toronto. Follow her on Twitter: @samantha_kb

https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2018/09/13/you-cant-let-them-get-away-with-these-dirty-deeds.html

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