

# UJPO News



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## Honourable Mentshn: Tribute to Rachel Epstein

By Paula David, April 9, 2022



Throughout its illustrious history, UJPO has faced many challenges and shepped much naches! For the past five years, we can thank Rachel Epstein, our Executive Director for her tireless efforts in leading us all through both aspects in our organization. Most people across the country know Rachel and most are aware of how she brought us through both the challenges and the naches.

Now, Rachel, after five years of unrelenting commitment, hard work and innovation is leaving her position as Executive Director of the Morris Winchevsky Centre, UJPO Toronto and UJPO Canada. The job itself is a demanding one, but like her predecessor, she has also been an active member, involved and committed to celebrating our history and looking to a strong sustainability for our future. She not only provided the leadership that her position required, but long before Rachel began working for the Organization, she was an integral part of it.

Now, Rachel, after five years of unrelenting commitment, hard work and innovation is leaving her position as Executive Director of the Morris Winchevsky Centre, UJPO Toronto and UJPO Canada. The job itself is a

We appreciated our good fortune on finding an ED who knew us well and arrived with an understanding of the requirements of the position. Rachel is a creative and imaginative soul...but she continued to learn of surprising and untold aspects of her new job. From her luxurious Winchevsky Centre office, she learned about managing and cleaning up antique toilets and related plumbing. While dealing with the tenants of the building, she learned about the joys of being a landlord, and as the Shule operated downtown, she met the challenges of a renter. She learned about the ins and outs (no pun intended) of working with the larger community to maintain and care for our cemetery. She learned to discuss rivers overflowing, septic tanks collapsing, bridges capsizing and mudslides with the City of Brampton.

While she was discovering the long-standing behind-the-scenes work involved in running our organization, she was also working hard on ushering our infrastructure and membership into a thriving future. She was committed to our growth and to creating a relevant welcome mat for a new generation of members. Rachel always appreciated the necessity of responsive change while maintaining the strengths and traditions of our vibrant history.

*Continued on page 3*

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.

**Volume #41, Issue #3**

Banner graphic by  
Avrom Yanovsky, 1911-1979



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# NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

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## FROM WINNIPEG

By Harriet Zaidman

UJPO Winnipeg was shocked and saddened by the unexpected death of one of our executive members, Lee Anne Block in February at the age of 70, from pancreatic cancer. Lee Anne worked on programming for our chapter, and she and her partner Richard Grunfeld hosted our end-of-the-year barbecues for many years.

Lee Anne had a PhD in Education, teaching at the University of Winnipeg. In her roles as teacher, mentor and nurturer, she helped create green projects surrounding the University, as well as the Kapabamayk Achaak Healing Forest in the historic St. John's Park in Winnipeg, a living memorial to Indigenous children and families lost to or affected by the residential school system. Lee Anne helped develop educational programming and curriculum so neighbourhood schools could use the space for outdoor learning. Lee Ann is survived by her mother Jeanette Block, her sisters Rhea Tregebov and Sheila Block, her partner Richard Grunfeld, her son, daughter and their partners, and her grandchildren. Our condolences to the family.

Jeanette Block is currently in hospital, recovering from a fall. We send our love to her and hope she is able to return home soon.

UJPO Winnipeg is currently surveying members and contacts to find out what kind of programming people are interested in. Our goal, as always, is to be a progressive voice in the Jewish community and a Jewish voice in the progressive community. The last two years have been challenging in many ways, and we hope to make use of the feedback we get to recruit members and expand our influence.

The North End Jewish Folk Choir will begin singing again at the end of April. Our warm-up season will extend to June, after which we hope to attract new singers and a new conductor. Our heartfelt thanks to Koren Kaminski, who has conducted us with grace and skilled musicianship since 2006.

This year the UJPO Book Club has held 2 meetings. Both were planned as in-person, but had to be held on Zoom, due to Omicron.

Our first meeting was on the book *Leonard Cohen: The Mystical Roots of Genius* by Harry Freedman. It focused on the religious roots of Leonard Cohen. We had a good discussion.

In March, we discussed the Tomson Highway memoir *Permanent Astonishment*. The first part was about his life in Brochet, Manitoba and living off the land with his family in sub-arctic Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the NWT. The second part was mostly devoted to his experiences at an Indian residential school near The Pas. We had a great discussion on a very well-written book.

Our April 24 meeting is on the Adreas Malm book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*. The following meeting will be in late May or in June. It will be on Ukraine. So far no books have been selected, but some articles were distributed to members.

If someone wants to join the book club, contact Henry Shorr at [hdshorr@shaw.ca](mailto:hdshorr@shaw.ca). ♦

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## FROM TORONTO

### Farewell from Rachel

By Rachel Epstein, April 2022

I guess the most significant news from Toronto is that I am leaving my position as Executive Director at the end of April. As I move on, I'd like to thank all the staff, volunteers, Board and Committee members and everyone else I have collaborated with over the past five years. I will miss many of the people I have worked closely with in all facets of the organization. It has been a pleasure to be part of moving the organization in new and different directions while continuing to value and respect its long history.

The Board has launched a hiring process and is looking at all the opportunities that change will bring. I'm sure there will be some bumps in this transition process but I have confidence the organization will pull through and come out stronger.

As you may have heard, there is a goodbye party being planned for Saturday, June 4, 3 – 5 pm at Christie Pits park in Toronto (see p. 4 for invite). I look forward to seeing many of you there and to the opportunity to say goodbye in person. Although of course it is not a real goodbye, as I'm sure you will continue to see me at holiday and other events. As for what I will be doing – I have a film to make, several other part-time gigs on the go, and I look forward to some R&R, starting with a week off the grid on South Pender Island in May.

Sending love to all, Rachel

See: <https://www.winchevskycentre.org/employment-2>

**Program:** On Sunday March 20 the Morris Winchevsky School held a live, in-person Purim party. We all wore masks but it was still wonderful to see real faces. The party was, as usual, lively and included much imbibing of triangle-shaped foods, our wonderful live pop-up band, and a spiel written by Education Director Lia Tarachansky and

performed by the MWS staff. People came dressed as a family member and the costumes were fabulous!

On Thursday March 24, Kendall Gnat, an Education student doing a short placement with us, facilitated a Passover Paint Night for the Winchevsky Youth Group. Each participant created their own seyder plate and they also shared information about queer Passover traditions. Kendall also produced a wonderful resource guide on Queering the Jewish Holidays which is available on our website: <https://www.winchevskycentre.org/>.

On Sunday April 10 we sponsored an event with Seniors for Climate Action Now! (SCAN!). We were joined by SCAN! members Alan Silverman and Patricia Hayward who outlined both what deep do-do we are in when it comes to the climate crisis and the activism the group is undertaking. SCAN! Is a relatively new group but they have grown exponentially and currently have over 200 members. Several people who attended the April 10 event subsequently decided to become active with SCAN! For more information, go to:

<https://seniorsforclimateactionnow.org/>

As I write this we are two days away from our annual **Third Seyder**. The theme this year is *Justice, Justice, We Shall Pursue* and we have a rich program lined up, filled with music and poetry. It is always worth thanking those who make our events happen. They include the organizing committee: sue goldstein, Sophie Bourret-Klein, Saskia Laufer and Rachel Epstein; our beloved musicians, David Wall and Marilyn Lerner; the readers: Ben Losman, shule parent and Shule Advisory Committee member, Barb Linds, long-time UJPO member and current UJPO-MWS Board member; Zoe Druik, current participant in the Adult Secular B'Mitzvah program, Sadie Kopyto Primack, shule grad, TA and youth group member and Ashira Levkoe-Stephens, youth group member and former shule student. Also huge thanks to our techie Gin Marshall and to all the fabulous staff at the MWS, including Education Director Lia Tarachansky. Hope to see many of you there!

**Winchevsky Art Expo:** The virtual Winchevsky Art Expo continues to showcase our community members' artistic talents and expressions. We encourage all UJPO members and MWS community members to submit their work from a range of disciplines. We are asking members to submit a piece of work that will be virtually displayed along with a bio for each artist. For more info:

<https://www.winchevskycentre.org/art-expo>

*Note:* Submissions are only open to UJPO members and MWS families.

Follow us on:

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/winchevsky](http://www.instagram.com/winchevsky)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WinchevskyCtr](http://www.facebook.com/WinchevskyCtr)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/WinchevskyCtr>

And visit our website: [www.winchevskycentre.org](http://www.winchevskycentre.org) ♦

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## FROM HAMILTON

*By Paul Weinberg*

In April three of us met on Zoom for our latest UJPO get together in Hamilton. The turnout was small, demonstrating how all of us are yearning for face-to-face contact in the near future. Still, none of us had seen each other for a while and so there was plenty to share.

Getting our fourth Covid-19 vaccination dose looms large since each of us is over 60. Also, the prospect of Doug Ford and PCs winning again in the June Ontario election is absolutely chilling. Ford and party remain ahead in the polls. Can that still be avoided? Is a minority government possible? Should the opposition, NDP, Liberals and Greens form an alliance to stave off another disastrous four years? I don't think we had any solutions since none of us are party strategists.

On a lighter note, we shared some books. What is a surprising good read is *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power* by former Liberal cabinet minister, Jody Wilson-Reybold. Whatever you might think of Justin Trudeau and his government, it illustrates how concentrated power is in Ottawa in the PMO. Another recommended book is *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, co-written by David Graeber and David Wengrow. These two academics provide some of the latest findings from anthropologists and historians. One that stood out was how the Age of Enlightenment in Europe came about because the Jesuits in the 1600s wrote about their encounters with Indigenous people in what was then New France. How members of the Wendat First Nation told the Jesuits that they had no interest living the restricted lives of the colonists from France, obsessed with property, getting rich and social hierarchy. ♦

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## HONOURABLE MENTSHN:

### Rachel Epstein

*Continued from page 1*

Just as she was settling in, the world and her position turned upside down and the role of ED suddenly took on a new dimension navigating through the world of the Corona Virus and community lockdowns. The office closed and our staff and volunteers took their technology home, adjusted to Zoom and reconfigured how we do things and how we could all remain active. Rachel ushered us into a unique space where UJPO could sustain our longstanding

commitments to social justice, education, activism and community involvement. She rose to this unprecedented challenge, and many of her initiatives throughout these times of uncertainty not only kept us going, but enhanced what we already had.

We became a virtual community and under Rachel's guidance, staff, volunteers and members reached out to those of us who were isolated. She continued checking in at meetings, gatherings and holidays to make sure people were remembered and okay. Committee meetings, Shule classes, celebrations, interest groups and programs were all reconfigured and went virtual. Under Rachel's leadership, our social media presence was upgraded, and our traditional way of operating was adapted. It was challenging but at the end of the day, new members arrived, new opportunities emerged, and new traditions evolved. More people attended more "gatherings" and many new folks joined our virtual holiday celebrations. Our post-pandemic organization will need to consider the positives of increased accessibility and participation that the virtual world allows and incorporate aspects of our current outreach when our world opens. Throughout the pandemic, Rachel was the main gatekeeper of possibilities.

She did it well and we have all enjoyed the influx of younger adults who have joined UJPO. They brought new energy, diversity and enthusiasm into our community. Our Shule has grown and blossomed, never missed a learning opportunity and enjoyed a staff who gave the students a dynamic out-of-the-box experience. Our holiday celebrations proudly maintained longstanding traditions while integrating new ideas and practices relevant to shifting and challenging times. We have a new and enthusiastic youth contingent who are developing their own UJPO identity. Our B'Mitzvah program continues to grow each year and once again, attract new participants. Taking full advantage of working online, Rachel established new relationships and friendships with various multi-faith, social justice and activist groups both locally and in Brampton. She introduced new networks of people to our programs, who in turn brought their energy and excitement to our activities. She was a strong leader and an active participant, securing our path forward.

Now she is leaving this position and beginning a new phase of her life which we have heard includes working as a filmmaker, mediator, fertility counsellor and ceremony officiant. We hope it will also include some rest! Knowing Rachel, she will figure out how to create a life that is rich in activity, discovery, friendship, new learning, and new opportunities. As our ED, she worked with commitment, intelligence and good humour. Her next chapter coincides with UJPO's next chapter, and we recognize and pay tribute to Rachel's contribution to its potential. She saw us

## Goodbye Party for Rachel

Join the United Jewish People's Order and the Morris Winchevsky School for a celebration and fond farewell to outgoing Executive Director, Rachel Epstein



Saturday, June 4, 2022 — 3:00 – 5:00 PM  
Christie Pits sheltered picnic area

Music and finger foods. And Rachel.  
Please join us in showing our appreciation to Rachel.

Please RSVP to [sgoldstein@winchevskycentre.org](mailto:sgoldstein@winchevskycentre.org) so we know how many to expect.

Interested in helping before or at the event? Contact Charna at [charna.gord@gmail.com](mailto:charna.gord@gmail.com)

Want to donate to Rachel's gift? Please make an e-transfer to [marilynptate@gmail.com](mailto:marilynptate@gmail.com)

through some challenging times, and she is leaving us with a solid foundation for moving forward. We are fortunate to have had her with us for the past five years and thank her for all she has given us during her tenure. For Rachel Epstein; a huge "Thank you" and a heartfelt "I'Khaim". You will be missed! ♦

## WHAT'S IN ORDER

### Mazel tov to:

Lia Tarachansky for her film **By the Side of the Road**. "The documentary features rare testimony from Israelis who took part in some of the most controversial military operations of the 1948 war. Meditating on the power of denial and the complexity of memory, the film aims to break longstanding taboos in Israeli society on discussing the Nakba." See <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/travel/.premium-tourist-tip-384-the-palestinian-nakba-on-film-1.5294151>

Lucas Meilach Boston and his partner, Tessa, on the birth of their daughter Mae Chapman, and to grandparents Janice Meilach and Michael Blazer.

### Get well to:

Gord Doctorow  
Schreiber-Sasaki Family ♦

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## POETRY & SONG

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### “Rainy” by Yannis Ritsos

*Introduction and research by Harriet Lyons*

Both the author and the translator of this poem are people that UJPO members should know about, if they don't already. Yannis Ritsos (1909-1990) was a leading Greek poet, resistance fighter, and lifelong member of the Greek Communist Party. He was sent to the infamous prison islands twice, once for fighting for the Greek Left in the Civil War that followed WWII, and once by the military junta who ruled Greece from 1967-1974. His poem *Epitaphios*, a memorial to a worker assassinated during a general strike in Salonika, was burned by the Metaxas dictatorship in a public ceremony near the Temple of Zeus in central Athens in 1936. It was translated into English in 2015 by Rick Newton. A musical setting by Mikis Theodorakis is well-known within and outside of Greece, where it is an anthem of the Left. Ritsos was nominated for the Nobel Prize, but upon receiving the Lenin Prize in 1977, said that that honour meant more to him than the Nobel would have.

Ritsos wrote prolifically, and his poetry encompassed a wide variety of subject matter, from the political to the erotic. This poem embraces a bit of everything, all contained within a series of evocative images of a poor neighbourhood in the rain. Music can be heard from a dance hall. A presumably political poster is being pasted on a wall. Violence is being plotted. Poverty is evoked by the shoes full of holes and the doctor who doesn't arrive, and there is a nod to eroticism in the young couple oblivious to everything but each other. There is a reference to a minor Greek poet, Tellos Agras, the pen name of Evangelos Ioannou, referred to in the translation only as “a certain poet”, who had been killed by a stray bullet in 1944. The original Tellos Agras was executed in 1907, and was considered a martyr for his role in the struggle for Macedonia. Poverty, poetry, politics, music, and dance can be found in the same streetscape.

“Rainy” was one of eleven poems by Ritsos translated by Rae Dalven (1904-1992), which appeared in the February 1964 edition of *Poetry Magazine*. The poem was originally published in Greek in a 1946-7 collection of Ritsos's poetry.\* Dalven, who lived most of her life in New York State, was a Romaniote Jew from Ioannina, in Northwestern Greece, where there was once a large Jewish population. Most of Ioannina's Jews emigrated to the US early in the 20th century, and most of the rest died at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Dalven wrote extensively about the Jewish community of Ioannina, and translated the work of

her nephew, Joseph Eliya, an important Romaniote poet. Although she didn't set out to become a translator, Dalven went on to translate many major and minor Greek poets into English, at a time when such translations were largely unavailable. Particularly notable were her translations of Cavafy and Ritsos, as well as her collection *Daughters of Sappho*, an anthology of 20th century Greek women poets.

### RAINY (Βροχερó)

*By Yannis Ritsos*

*Translated by Rae Dalven*

Poor music of Saturday night  
coming from the dancing school in the neighborhood,  
poor music, frozen by the cold, by the clog-dancing shoes,  
every time the unpainted door is flung open, it flies out on  
the streets,

it shivers with the cold under the lantern on the corner,  
it casts a glance upward at a tall window, or at the night,  
and then it casts its glance down to the mud,  
it looks for something, it expects something  
as if someone is ailing and the doctor is late.

Poor music. It is cold. Nobody is opening the window  
to treat you to a little lamplight, to a few black raisins,  
to tell you: “I remember,” twenty or thirty years ago  
some echoes of old carriages in the rain,  
a vapoury landscape painted on the spectacles of a certain  
poet.

But the shoes are full of holes and covered with mud.  
The young couples are hurrying down the street, they do  
not hear.

Somebody has stopped, standing close against the wall. He  
does not hear you, no.

He is pasting something on the wall. Only the knife  
on the table is a thought and a lustre.

Poor music, if you can squeeze in,  
enter through the holey elbow of the neighborhood.

*Translation published in Poetry magazine, 1964.*

**\* Thank you to John Kittmer and A.E. Stallings for  
their help in locating the Greek text.**

For more on Ritsos see

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/issue/70932/february-1964#toc>

For a memoir on Dalven by her niece, see

<https://www.geni.com/people/Rae-Dalven/600000000400728116>

For more about the Romaniote Jewish community, see

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romaniote\\_Jews](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romaniote_Jews)

To hear Theodorakis's *Epitaphios* go

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8OQJTNaEwc> ♦

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# A LITTLE NOSH

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## Cherry Tomato Spinach Galette

By Harriet Zaidman

Galette/Crostata – it's a “you say ‘tomayto,’ I say ‘tomahto’” kind of conversation. Either way you slice it, vegetables or fruit on a pastry base tastes delicious, made more appealing by the imperfect way the crust is folded around the contents. This recipe, with Dijon mustard spread all over the bottom, has a gentle and pleasing tang.

Adapted from [Comfort and Peasant](#), this dish is pretty to look at and makes a nourishing light brunch, lunch or dinner – a meal-in-one. It ticks all the boxes – enjoy!

This and other recipes are found on my blog, North End Nosh – [northendnosh.weebly.com](http://northendnosh.weebly.com).

*Note:* Sprinkle feta cheese and/or kalamata olives (chopped) on top of the cheddar and Parmesan for Greek flavours.

### Ingredients for the Crust

1 1/2 cups (195 g) flour, chilled in the freezer for 15 minutes  
1/2 teaspoon (2 g) sugar  
1/4 teaspoon (1 g) salt  
1/2 teaspoon (2 g) coarsely ground black pepper  
9 tablespoons (130 g) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2 inch pieces  
1/4 cup grated cheddar or gruyere cheese  
4 tablespoons sour cream  
4-5 tablespoons (60-75 ml) ice water

### Ingredients for the Filling

Cherry tomatoes (about 20-30), halved, to cover the galette filling  
Olive oil  
9 ounces (255 g) fresh spinach  
1/2 small shallot, finely chopped (optional)  
3 cloves garlic, finely minced  
3 tablespoons (45 g) Dijon mustard  
1/4 cup (37 g) sharp cheddar or gruyere cheese, grated, plus more for sprinkling on the crust, if desired  
1/4 cup (113 g) Parmesan cheese, grated, plus more for sprinkling on the crust, if desired  
Salt and pepper to taste

### Optional Egg wash:

1 egg yolk  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) water

### Method

In a large bowl, whisk the flour, sugar and salt. With a pastry cutter, your fingertips or a food processor,



incorporate the butter into the flour mixture until it resembles small peas, with some larger chunks here and there.

Add the sour cream, mixing until it is all combined.

Form a well in the centre and add in 4 tablespoons of ice water. Mix with your fingers until the dough holds together enough to form a ball. If it is too dry, add the rest of the water one teaspoon at a time.

Squash the dough flat between two pieces of plastic wrap or parchment paper. Wrap tightly and refrigerate for at least one hour or up to 24 hours.

Cut the cherry tomatoes in half and sprinkle with salt. Turn them upside down on a paper towel and let them drain for at least 30 minutes.

When ready to make the galette, preheat the oven to 400°F (204 °C).

Heat olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add in shallots, if using, cooking until slightly brown, about 3 minutes. Add the garlic and sautee for another minute.

Add the chopped spinach and salt and pepper and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

Remove the dough from the fridge and roll it between two sheets of plastic wrap or lightly floured parchment paper into a 14-inch (35.5 cm) circle. Make sure to loosen the parchment paper from the dough occasionally and add some extra flour if it sticks. If you have any issue with the dough sticking to the parchment paper, refrigerate it for 5-10 minutes, and then continue rolling it to the desired size.

Using the rolling pin and the plastic wrap and parchment paper, pull the dough onto the rolling pin and transfer the bottom parchment paper with the dough onto a baking sheet. If using plastic, remove it.

Leaving 2-inches (6 cm) at the border, spread the Dijon mustard over the dough, then scatter the spinach, cheeses

and halved cherry tomatoes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Top with sprigs of fresh thyme or dried thyme.

Fold the edges of the dough over the filling. Brush the folded dough with the egg wash and sprinkle with the extra shredded mozzarella and cheddar cheese.

Bake the galette for 35 to 45 minutes, rotating halfway through to ensure an even colour all around. Remove from the oven and take off the sprigs of thyme. Let it cool for about 10 minutes, then cut and serve with a side salad or enjoy it on its own! ♦

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## YIDDISH

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### By Invitation

*From Paula David*

Dr. Lesley Simpson is a Canadian writer, and a former journalist for Canadian daily newspapers. Her research explores Jewish ethical wills and paradigms of Jewish memory. She is collecting material to create a contemporary repository of these extraordinary letters for a new book featuring voices throughout the Jewish world. Jewish ethical wills constitute a small package with a big idea. If you have a letter to share, or want more details please reach out to [jewishethicalwills@gmail.com](mailto:jewishethicalwills@gmail.com).

When the Yiddish writer Solomon Rabinovitch wanted to pass on his life's wisdom, he wrote an ethical will in 1916. In that letter, he asked his family to remember him with laughter. He asked his family to choose the stories that made them laugh out loud, and to read those merry tales aloud on the anniversary of his death. Here is a link to his famous letter, reprinted in the *New York Times* in 1916:

<https://sholemaleichem.org/community/ethical-will/index.html>

I am collecting Jewish ethical wills for an innovative collection that will feature ordinary Jews doing this extraordinary thing: writing a letter for people whom they love about their values, hopes, wishes and dreams. I call these letters of non-material legacy.

In the contemporary moment, Boston artist Shira Rubin has started a wisdom exchange as a response to Covid, also inspired by the Jewish tradition of ethical wills. Her art project takes its cue from the Dead Sea Scrolls:

<https://www.shirahrubin.com/wisdom-exchange>

The concept of these letters has undergone evolution. American rabbi Elana Zaiman reimagines the letters as a “forever letter”.

<https://elanazaiman.com/my-book/>

These letters are often written as a response to a rite of passage or a liminal moment in a human life, whether as a response to joy (a child being born, a wedding, an unexpected recovery), or a response to sorrow (death, the diagnosis of terminal illness, a miscarriage or other losses). My book will be thematically organized to reflect the liminal moments that inspire this powerful form of expression.

If you have any queries about the book project do not hesitate to reach out to me at [jewishethicalwills@gmail.com](mailto:jewishethicalwills@gmail.com) and just title your query **Big idea in a small package**. ♦

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## CANADA

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### The Use and Misuse of Antisemitism Statistics in Canada

*By Sheryl Nestel, April 1, 2021, Independent Jewish Voices-Canada*

“Canadian Jews Most Targeted Group for Third Year in a Row” [1] proclaimed B’nai Brith Canada in a press release issued on July 22, 2019. Jews and others who are deeply troubled by the spread of anti-Semitism worldwide must have been alarmed to learn that Canada was being added to the growing list of countries where antisemitism is on the rise. [2] But how accurate are B’nai Brith’s claims? Upon close examination, it turns out that B’nai Brith’s interpretation of the state of antisemitism in Canada is misleading at best, perhaps deliberately so. The alarming headline actually obscures a complex web of established facts, dubious claims, overt and covert political agendas, avoidable inaccuracies, methodological opacity and unexplained exclusions – all of which demand examination.

Since 1982, B’nai Brith Canada has published an Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents which the organization claims to be an “authoritative document on antisemitism in Canada.” [3] Indeed, the Audit is very widely cited. It has been employed for decades by Canada’s unfailingly pro-Israel governments as well as by an impressive range of media outlets including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Globe and Mail, the Calgary Herald, Radio Canada, the U.S. State Department and numerous other mainstream news sources and civil institutions. The reliability of the Audit, however, is rarely questioned.[4]

The Audit’s shortcomings were, however, flagged more than ten years ago in an article by journalist Jonathan Kay who quipped “Reporters politely overlook the fact that B’nai Brith’s definition of “incident” is dumbed down: any web posting, stray comment or scrap of graffiti fits the

bill...Most readers don't stop to scrutinize how trivial these examples are: they just look at the impressive seeming bar graphs which purport to show a Jewish community in a constant state of terror." [5]

B'nai Brith Canada cannot be understood as a neutral source for reporting on the nature and scope of antisemitism in Canada. It has both apolitical and a financial interest (its fundraising relies largely on its positioning as the premier opponent of antisemitism in Canada) in touting increases in antisemitism. Of course, that alone does not make its Audit suspect. But there are serious criticisms that can be leveled against the Audit itself and against B'nai Brith's specific claims about antisemitism in Canada. Chief among these are: inclusion of expressions of criticism of Israel as incidents of antisemitism, complete lack of methodological transparency, obfuscation of evidence of low levels of antisemitic sentiment among the Canadian public, and disregard of evidence of the attitudes about antisemitism of Canadian Jews themselves.

Moreover, B'nai Brith's claim that Jews are the most targeted group in Canada fails to take into account that racialized and marginalized groups are much less likely to report incidents of hate and harassment. Primarily, however, the Audit has to be understood within the context of the increasingly vigorous criticism of Israel in relation to its human rights abuses as well as Israeli government strategy to suppress such criticism worldwide. ♦

For the full article: [https://www.ijvcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Sheryl-Nestel\\_Use-and-Misuse-of-Antisemitism-Statistics.pdf](https://www.ijvcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Sheryl-Nestel_Use-and-Misuse-of-Antisemitism-Statistics.pdf)

References:

[1] On March 29, 2021, just days prior to the publication of this report, Statistics Canada noted a decrease of 20% in hate crimes against the Jewish population. In 2019, then, 16% of hate crimes targeted Jews while 18% of hate crimes were directed at Blacks.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210329/dq210329a-eng.htm>

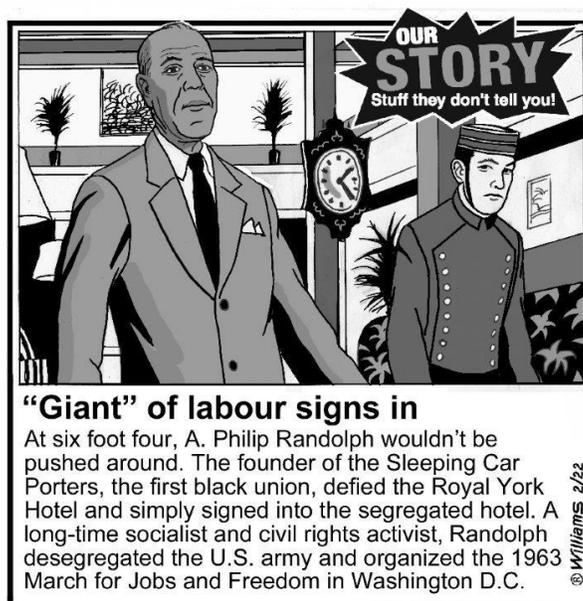
[2] <https://global100.adl.org/about/2019>

[3] Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2019 B'nai Brith. [www.bnaibrith.ca/audit](http://www.bnaibrith.ca/audit)

[4] For an extremely important exception see Robert Brym, "Antisemitic and Anti-Israel Actions and Attitudes in Canada and Internationally: A Research Agenda". *Patterns of Prejudice* 53. 4(2019).

[5] "Jonathan Kay: B'nai Brith Report on anti-Semitism Debunked" *National Post*, May 12, 2010.

<https://nationalpost.com/full-comment/jonathan-kay-bnai-brith-report-on-anti-semitism-debunked>



Cartoon by John Williams

## INTERNATIONAL

### Where Refugees Become Settlers

By Raef Zreik, March 22, 2022, +972 Magazine

<https://www.972mag.com/refugees-settlers-israel-ukraine-palestine/>

*Europeans may see the backs of Ukrainian Jews running for their lives, but Palestinians see the faces of soldiers and settlers taking over their land.*

For the Jewish refugees who have been arriving in Israel's Ben Gurion Airport over the past several weeks, fleeing Putin's war on Ukraine, any home not under Russian bombardment might serve as a safe haven. But given Israel's plans to dispatch them to Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Naqab/Negev – where Palestinians have been, or are being, forced out of their homes – those same refugees are no longer inhabiting a singular role as victims.

This tension perfectly encapsulates a far bigger story: that of Zionism writ large since the early 20th century, and how the noble aim of saving lives and resisting oppression ends up being used to justify the oppression of another people.

It is a story of how the dispossessed and powerless become powerful agents of dispossession themselves; of how Europeans see the backs of the Jewish refugees running for their lives, but we, Palestinians, see the faces of the soldiers and settlers taking over our land and our homes.

The neat clarity of watching a refugee being transformed immediately – within a few hours or days –

into a settler, deployed as a shield in Israel's demographic-geographic frontier war against the mere presence of the native Palestinians between the river and the sea, illustrates the more complicated picture.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one would need a heart of stone not to identify with the suffering of the Jews in Europe. One need not have been a Zionist to express sympathy with the Jews fleeing pogroms in the Pale of Settlement, for example, or with Captain Alfred Dreyfus, whose false conviction for treason by the French state on account of his being Jewish was one of the triggers for Theodor Herzl to convene the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. Emile Zola's famous "J'accuse!" letter in defense of Dreyfus did not emanate from Zionist fervor, while Bernard Lazar, a proud Jew who defended Dreyfus, did not adopt Herzl's solution to "the Jewish question."

Many have argued that Zionism did not actually reject the logic of European antisemites, such as those who persecuted Dreyfus, but rather adopted their central logic: that nation-states should be ethnically pure and belong to one ethno-national group, much like private houses belong to a single owner. Zionism accepted the exclusivist logic of ethno-nationalism, believing that the time had come for Jews to have a private home of their own – and in so doing, became the victimizer rather than the victimized.

If you pay heed to the way Israeli propaganda deals with antisemitism and victimhood, you would be forgiven for thinking we are still living in the 1890s. But, contrary to this distortion of reality, victimhood is not something that is passed on in the DNA of ethnic groups. Rather, it is a contingent historical condition, subject to the power relations within a given political, social, and economic constellation and period. The power relations at play in Israel-Palestine today are not the same as those in 1890s Europe; the settlers of Hebron are no longer the helpless, victimized heirs of Alfred Dreyfus.

It was perfectly possible to defend Dreyfus against his racist scapegoating by the French state without subscribing to a nationalist discourse, and to instead argue against antisemitism within the bounds of a liberal framework of civil and political rights. But one may counter that these individual rights are not sufficient, given that many Jews in Europe felt they constituted a collectivity and were therefore not willing to hide or surrender their Jewish identity in order to be granted equal citizenship. As Hannah Arendt once said: "When you are attacked as a Jew, you have to defend yourself as a Jew."

Yet that defense still does not automatically equate to Zionism. Visions of Jewish collective rights have never been homogeneous. Some have sought to achieve those rights inside Europe. Others have sought instead to leave

Europe as a geography but join its history and conceptual scheme from elsewhere, by adopting the image of a modern nation-state as it had been conceived in Europe while implementing its political project beyond its borders; or, put plainly: to become European outside of Europe. Among the latter group, some looked to Argentina or Uganda, while others insisted on settling in Palestine – either in pursuit of cultural flourishing under the Ottoman Empire, or in the form of sovereign Jewish political nationalism.

But even those who saw creating a sovereign Jewish national collectivity in Palestine as the solution to European antisemitism were not unanimous in their support for a national-ethnic state for the Jews; some were ready to accept a binational state for Jews and Arabs alike within one territorial unit. Even today, when an exclusivist Jewish nation-state has existed for over 70 years, there remains a (mostly theoretical) debate between those who are ready to limit this state's sovereignty to parts of Palestine and those who insist on establishing Jewish sovereignty across all of Palestine and thus settling every inch of it – even in the middle of Hebron.

The internal political story of Zionism is thus, in many ways, the story of those on the so-called left of the Zionist spectrum losing the war to the "right": the cultural Zionists, who believed in a spiritual Jewish center (rather than a state) in Palestine lost to the political Zionists, who insisted on sovereignty and statehood. The bi-nationalists, who believed in shared political sovereignty with the Palestinians, lost to those who insisted on a purely Jewish state. And those seeking to limit Israel's borders, which today we refer to as the "Zionist left," continue to lose to the territorial maximalists.

Whatever the reasons for Zionism going down these paths, the real issue today is that Israel has colonized almost all of historic Palestine, and those who have settled in Hebron want us to believe that they are still speaking in the name of Dreyfus so as to claim the moral high ground in their relations with the Palestinians. They want to take symbolic capital from another era and another continent, when Jews were a helpless, victimized minority, and to deploy it here and now – when Israel is an occupying force, a regional military superpower, and an economic empire.

The same holds for the recent refugees from Ukraine. Their tragic plight is being manipulated by the State of Israel, which, in providing them a safe refuge, is simultaneously deploying them in the struggle over the land. It is as if the state is saying: "We are ready to save you as long as we can use you in our demographic war." The body of the Jewish refugee thus becomes a weapon against the Palestinians.

The fact that Jews were Europe's victims – second-class citizens who were violently persecuted, faced genocide, and made into refugees – need not blind us to the fact that the State of Israel, in justifying itself as a refuge for those victims, has turned Palestinians into a nation of refugees and stateless people while occupying, besieging, and discriminating against the Palestinians who remain in our homeland. Equally, the fact of Zionist dispossession and colonization of Palestine should not overshadow the fact the Jews suffered for centuries under European powers and required an urgent solution to their victimization.

Only once both of these perspectives are fully acknowledged will we be able to start a meaningful conversation between both people – one that reconciles their past and their future. ♦

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### **Russia Bombs Ukraine, and the Whole Middle East Feels the Blast**

*By Hussein Ibish*

From the UAE, where Russian oligarchs stash their cash, to Moscow's client Syria, and from Turkey to Israel and Iran, Russia's invasion of Ukraine is convulsing the Middle East. Ambivalence won't be an option for long

Russia's invasion of Ukraine poses conundrums for almost every country in the Middle East. None stand to gain from Vladimir Putin's wanton aggression in Europe. The Gulf Arab countries, which have expressed a telling range of disparate responses, are each trying to navigate a delicate and challenging diplomatic problem.

It's not just Gulf states that are trying to thread the needle. Turkey is most deeply implicated, being a Black Sea power and a traditional rival of Russia in the region, not least in Syria. The crisis threatens an almost endless series of headaches for Ankara from virtually every direction.

Ankara and Moscow had to move quickly to foreclose a crisis that could have triggered NATO's Article 5 obligations of mutual self-defense when an apparent Russian missile struck a Turkish merchant ship in the Black Sea in the afternoon of February 23, pre-empting Moscow's initial attack on Ukraine.

Like earlier dangerous Russian-Turkish incidents, particularly Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane near the Syrian border in 2015 and the assassination of the Russian ambassador in Ankara in 2016, this latest incident was patched up and passed over by mutual agreement. But such flareups show that Turkey and Russia are not just at loggerheads on many fronts, but could also easily be sucked into actual violent confrontations.

Now Turkey, alarmed by this extreme aggression by its historic rival to the north, has hinted at the possibility of barring Russian warships from entering the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. Ukraine has been urging Ankara to invoke Article 19 of the Montreux Convention, which allows the denial of passage to belligerent powers in a state of war.

It would be a significant escalation in tensions, but Russian-Turkish suspicions are already so enflamed that Turkey has officially acknowledged the state of war exists, hinting it could indeed take this dramatic step.

We are witnessing yet another war in our region. President Erdogan has offered to mediate between Russia and Ukraine as we have strong relations with both countries. He also called for a unified stance on the part of the allies.

Israel, too, has had to walk a thin line on Ukraine. The Naftali Bennett government has obviously been forced to say more than it wanted to in defense of Ukrainian territorial integrity and the UN charter. The issue of territorial integrity is awkward because of Israel's endless occupation of Palestinian territories that have been controlled since 1967.

Moreover, Israel is one of Washington's Middle East allies that have prioritized strategic diversification, as the United States appears less engaged and reliable in the aftermath of its fiascos in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For Israel and some Gulf countries, this has meant courting Russia and, increasingly, China. But Israel's closeness to Washington meant that ultimately it had to join the chorus of condemnation. Yet as soon as the explicit criticism of Russia was issued, the Israelis began to tone it down. The pressure is not yet over, though.

The other American partners seeking new ties to Russia in the name of strategic diversification have been Gulf Arab countries.

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The other American partners seeking new ties to Russia in the name of strategic diversification have been Gulf Arab countries.

But, like Israel, Abu Dhabi may not be able to remain aloof. The UAE faces a major potential problem if there is a concerted campaign beyond Europe and the U.S. to target Russian oligarch assets stashed around the world.

After London and some other European cities, Dubai has been an important secondary repository for pilfered Russian wealth. The Emirates may be called upon not merely to say more but to enforce sanction by taking unwanted measures regarding valuable foreign holdings.

Saudi Arabia, yet another traditional U.S. ally seeking to diversify its strategic defense and economic options, has thus far been able to succeed where Israel couldn't, hedging its position between Moscow, Beijing and the White House, and largely remaining silent. Riyadh will maintain this ambivalent quiet as long as possible. Yet if the conflict drags on, pressure on the Saudis will certainly grow.

Other Gulf countries have taken a different tack.

Kuwait's unique experience of suffering the Iraqi invasion and occupation of 1990-91 pushed it to quickly speak up in defense of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. And Qatar spies another potential opportunity to resurrect its pre-Arab Spring posture as a mediator and broker in international relations.

So, as usual, the Gulf Cooperation Council lacks a unified stance, to put it mildly.

Even Russia's own regional allies potentially have much to lose. Syria promptly and effusively welcomed the Russian aggression. But the Assad regime had no choice because it remains dependent on Moscow, its preferred senior partner, patron and, arguably, savior, because Russia's demands on Syrian sovereign prerogatives are much less extensive than Iran's.

Yet Syria gains nothing by the invasion of Ukraine and stands to lose from the secondary effects of sanctions on

Russia, ramped up Turkish-Russian tensions inside Syria, and the potential weakening of its patron which may well become bogged-down, distracted and weakened by a quagmire in far-off Eastern Europe.

Even Iran mainly stands to lose. Some in Tehran may be hoping Putin has initiated the final dismantling of the U.S.-led international order and that China will soon inflict a coup de grâce to the global status quo in Taiwan. Since Iran's ambitions are entirely at odds with the legacy system, it's instinctive for Tehran to welcome a major blow against it.

But that's not how the Ukrainian crisis is playing out. Instead, U.S. President Joe Biden has surprised many with his resolute opposition to Russian demands and success in unifying and strengthening the Western alliance. NATO has not been this cohesive in at least a decade, and Germany's announcement of greatly increased defense spending is only the latest sign that Russia's aggression is reviving, rather than destroying, NATO and the Western alliance.

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Unless Tehran fundamentally alters its strategic goals, or the West falters, this is distinctly bad news for Iran. ♦

<https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium.HIGHLIGHT-russia-bombs-ukraine-and-the-whole-middle-east-feels-the-heat-1.10640739>

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The United Jewish People's Order develops and perpetuates a progressive secular approach to social and cultural matters, our Jewish heritage, the Yiddish language and holiday and festival celebrations; we sponsor secular Jewish education, musical and cultural groups, concerts, lectures, public forums, and take part in social action and related community activities.

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