

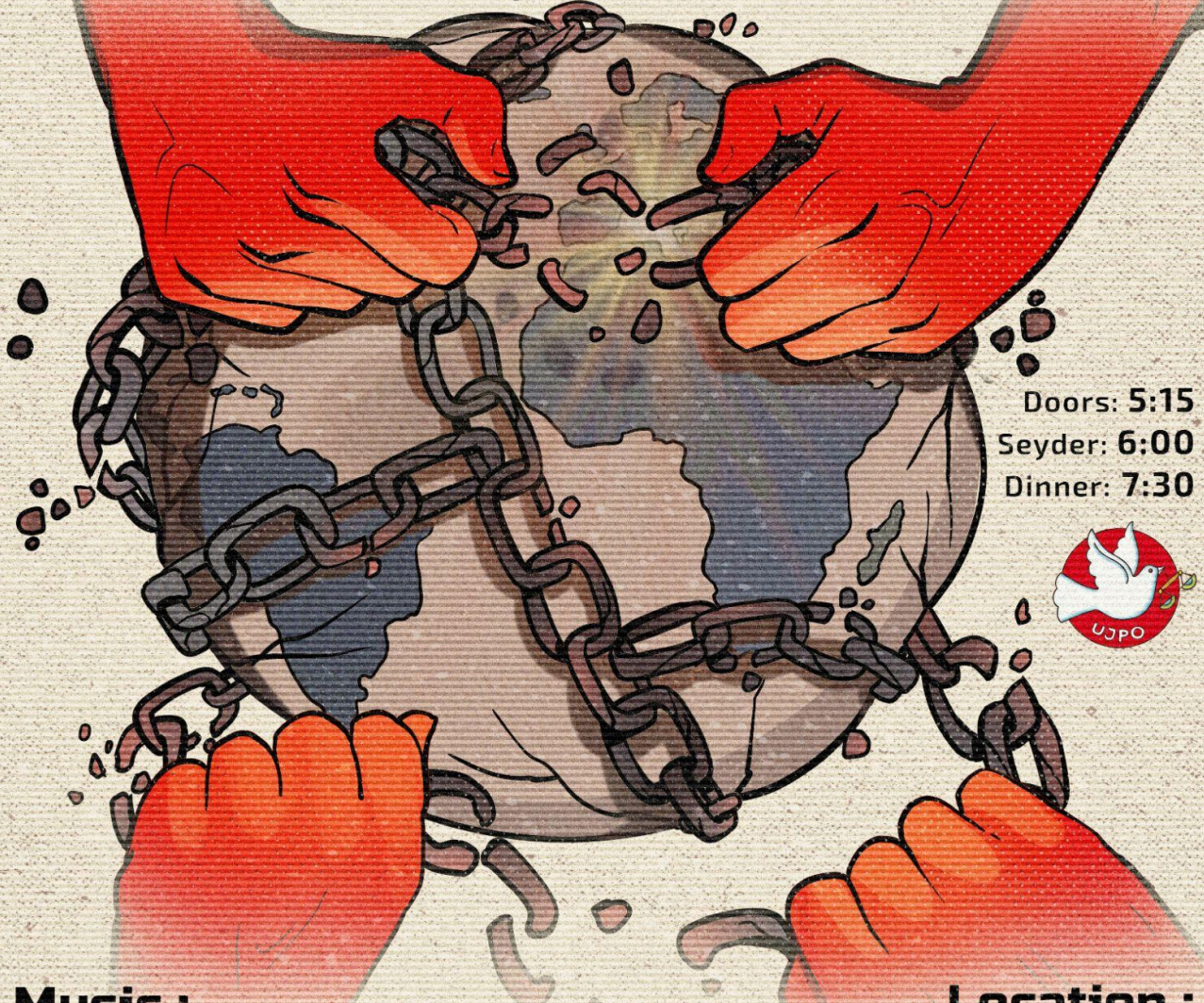
United Jewish People's Order & Friends

Annual 3rd Seyder

THIRD SEYDER

UNITED AGAINST FASCISM

Saturday, April 19, 2025



Doors: 5:15
Seyder: 6:00
Dinner: 7:30



Music :
David Wall &
Marilyn Lerner
& Special Guests

Contributions from
anti-fascist organizers
across Toronto

Location :
Lithuanian House
1573 Bloor St W
Toronto, ON

Welcome

Hello and welcome. Welcome to the UJPO/MWS annual in-person and virtual Third Seyder. For those of you who don't know me yet, my name is Sarena Sairan, and I'm the Executive Director of UJPO/MWS.

We are so excited for tonight. We are here with so many special guests and co-hosts to bring you something truly unique- our more than 300 person community, social justice Third Seyder. Take a look around! Feel the belonging of being here. Our theme this year is **United Against Fascism**. David, our cultural programmer, Shayle, our office and community manager, and I, have worked to curate our Third Seyder with extensive contributions from comrades, community leaders, organizers, and friends—towards a vision of coalition. But just before we introduce everyone, Shayle has some housekeeping notes to share:

Housekeeping

- Last year, as you may remember, we were in this same building, in the hall downstairs. As demand has grown, we have decided to move up to the main hall! You can find the bathrooms located to my left, in the adjoining room. There is one wheelchair accessible bathroom at the far end of the room. There is also an elevator if needed. If you need the elevator please find Kadisha and she will be happy to operate it for you. The seder program will be followed by dinner and an afikomen hunt for the kids.
- If you're here sharing space with us for the first time, we are happy that you found us. We are the United Jewish People's Order, a 100 year old social justice-focused, secular, cultural, political and educational Jewish organization, with branches in Toronto and Winnipeg, and membership across the country. We run all kinds of cultural programming, an experiential sunday school for children from kindergarten to B'Mitzvah, adult learning opportunities and a family-oriented, secular Jewish summer community called Camp Naivelt.
- On the table in front of you, you will see a few different QR codes. They are all labeled for various fundraisers and also to make a donation or become a member of UJPO. Most importantly is a QR code that will bring you to our Haggadah for this evening, so you can follow along. Also on the table are print-outs of the songs and poems you will be hearing tonight, if you prefer to use a paper copy.
- Also huge thanks to Lia Tarachanksy and Erfan Talebi who are managing the livestream. Erfan also worked on the Seyder artwork and social media presence. And thank you to June Epstein for running all our sound tech! Thank you also to Julia Barnett, for coordinating our delicious feast, to Carson, Jonah, and Sam for providing activities and childcare in the adjoining room, and to the generous volunteers who helped us with setup this evening

- Thank you to all our musical contributors this evening, David Wall, Sarena Sairan, Marilyn Lerner, Roula Said, Maryem Tollar, and Marching Disorder
- Now I'd like to introduce our wonderful head table. All these folks contributed extensively to the words you will hear tonight:
 - **Louise Smith** - a member of IJV, JSNTG and UJPO
 - **bh Yael** - a member of JFN and UJPO, artist/filmmaker, professor and mother of two sons who B'Mitzvahed at MWS
 - **Cece Berkovic** artist, designer, Kohenet and UJPO member
 - **Sarit Cantor** Kohenet, queer ritualist and community spiritual leader:
 - **Lesley Wood** from SURJ Toronto, JSNTG and the Indigo 11.
 - **Karine Silverwoman:** co-founder of a collective of Jewish social workers and therapists in support of a free Palestine, UJPO member, MWS parent, JSNTG member and member of Toronto Jewish Families.
- Now David Wall, our Cultural Programmer, will share a land acknowledgement

Land Acknowledgement

For those of us in Toronto, we gather today as uninvited guests, with gratitude and respect on the land on which Indigenous peoples have lived for over 10,000 years, on shores of the credit river, part of the credit river watershed. Anishnaabeg peoples, including the Ojibway and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as well as the Haudenosaunee peoples, have taken care of this place for centuries. It is here that they agreed on the Dish with One Spoon wampum and later signed Treaty 13 with the European settlers. These were agreements to share and care for the lands and waters around the great lakes. The agreement speaks about sharing of the resources of this place as though we are all eating out of one dish with one spoon. That means passing the spoon forward cleaner than we got it and making sure there's enough in the dish to go around. It also means there are no knives at the table. We commit ourselves to learning about the rich history of this place and its peoples, to better understand our roles as residents, neighbors, partners and caretakers. We are fully aware of the connections between the historical and current systematic oppressions of indigenous peoples the world over with the theme of tonight's seder, the ongoing fight against fascism and we commit ourselves to speaking out and acting for justice. We invite you to share in the chat the names of the lands that you are on. At UJPO we have established an Indigenous Solidarity Working Group. If you are interested in getting involved send an email to info@ujpo.org.

And now we would like to invite you to join us in singing our welcome song, Lomir Ale in Eynem, performed by David and Marilyn. Marilyn Lerner's work spans the worlds of jazz, creative improvisation, and klezmer.

Song: *Lomir Ale in Eynem* - A Song of Welcome

Framing

Thank you David and Marilyn for offering us the gift of music to help us as we journey towards collective liberation through art and culture and ritual. For tonight, I'd like to invite everyone to get comfortable, as we are about to be brave, testing our own limits, and going out of our comfort zones. Every person here and online is appreciated just for being here and being elastic, so we can together name the rise in fascism and right wing politics that we are seeing all around us, and begin to find our path to liberation through solidarity.

So welcome everyone, to our **Third Seyder: United Against Fascism**, a gathering that stretches beyond tradition to engage with the urgent realities of our time.

The leftist Jewish tradition of the Third Seyder emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as a communal, secular, Yiddish, socialist alternative to the traditional religious seyders taking place in Jewish households on the first two days of Passover. The goal of the Third Seyder was to make the Passover story relevant to current struggles for justice. Thousands of guests would attend these events to celebrate a common history, a shared ideology, and a better future.

Last year, we came together to talk about what it means to fight for a free Palestine *as Jews*—and to wrestle honestly and bravely with our history, our responsibilities, and our longing for justice. The hope for a free Palestine remains unfulfilled, and the struggle for justice, sovereignty, and an end to the genocide continues.

This year, we return not only to retell the ancient story of liberation, but to recognize the stories still unfolding around us. We are living in a time of immense grief, courage, and transformation. And as Jews—especially those committed to justice—we cannot look away. We cannot be silent.

The **Palestine Solidarity movement** has become one of the most powerful mass mobilizations of our generation. It is showing us what steadfastness looks like, what mourning looks like in motion, what it means to unite. It is shaping how many of us are thinking about the coming antifascist revolution. Not just resisting violence—but building something new in its place.

And even in these fascist times, there is hope. There is something so deeply **beautiful** that emerges in the struggle: the communities we build, the coalitions we forge, the bonds that form when we show up for each other, again and again, even when it's hard.

We are here tonight because we are **learning together**—and unlearning too. We are testing our own limits. We are sitting with discomfort. We are stepping outside of

the narratives we've inherited and asking what it would mean to *truly* be free. What it would mean to be good ancestors to the generations coming after us.

We do this not in isolation, but as part of a larger whole.

So let us name who we are, and where we are. Tonight we're in **Tkoro**nto—And we are joined here tonight by people from many walks of life: activists, artists, elders, youth, workers, queer and trans folk, organizers, healers.

Being Jewish right now means holding heartbreak and resilience all at once. It means saying “never again” and meaning it—for *everyone*. It means being present—in the spirit of *Doikayt*—wherever we are, showing up for justice *in the here and now*. And it means trusting in the **infinite light**, the *Ein Sof*, of compassion and solidarity that connects us to each other, across borders and across generations.

So tonight, this Seyder is not just a ritual. It's a call to action. A reminder that another world is possible—and necessary. A moment to open doors and uncover possibilities. To imagine together a world unburdened by genocide and oppression. Just as the Yiddish song goes, *oy di velt vet vern yinger - oh the world will grow younger*.

As we proceed with our Seyder tonight, may we hold all of this close- the grief and the joy. The questions and the clarity. The weight of history and the hope for the future. Let us find in our gathering the strength, inspiration, and courage to be agents of change, for our community and for the world. Solidarity, through coalition work, is our move forward.

Gut Pesach. Chag sameach.

First Glass of Wine

Our first cup of wine is dedicated to international solidarity. We start in the 1930s, when fascism was on the rise internationally, and locally.

Anti-fascist Jews in Toronto were internationalists. Many volunteered to fight fascism with the International Brigade in Spain, in some ways like the members of our community who are doing solidarity supporting Palestinians in the West Bank. Others, like Emma Goldman, organized against the deportation of immigrants, accused of subversive speech. Still others challenged local fascists organizing mass meetings at Dovercourt and Queen and Massey Hall. Those fascists called for “Canada First”, against Jews, against Bolsheviks, against immigrants.

With this cup of wine, we recommit ourselves to remembering this history and carrying forward the legacies of these giants, building on the foundations of their knowledge and bravery.

With this cup of wine we bless our movements as links in the chain of generations of resistance. May this cup of wine connect us to our lineages of solidarity and of feeling our stakes in collective struggle. Through this blessing may we remember and may we know in our bones what it means to need each other.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

On April 19, 1943, exactly 82 years ago tonight, on the first night of Passover the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began. Against unspeakable odds, and knowing they could not win, the people of the Warsaw Ghetto chose the path of resistance. It is traditional at Third Seyders, always to include a commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, an extraordinary example of Jewish anti-fascist resistance and collective action that remains an inspiration in our movements today.

Hirsh Glik, a young 24 year old poet and partisan in the Vilna Ghetto, heard of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and wrote *Zog Nit Keynmol*, which has become a resistance anthem for Jews everywhere. Typically we stand when we sing this song, so I invite you to do so here and at home, if you are comfortable and able, as we hear *Zog Nit Keyn Mol*.

Song: *Zog Nit Keyn Mol*

Seyder Plate

Thank you David & Marilyn. Now we turn to Sarit to lead us through the Seyder plate.

The seyder plate is a heartbeat, its an anchor, its a spell, it's mycellium connecting us to ancient webs of interconnectivity that are waiting to show us the path to freedom.

There is a Jewish teaching that says that every object on the seyder plate represents a part of our journey towards freedom and just like this teaching, we believe that every single person in this room holds profound skills, tools, wisdom and purpose that will lead us to collective liberation; we believe that every single person in this room plays a pivotal role in our justice work together.

Tonight we are asking the question: what do we do when the world is falling apart? To whom and to what do we turn towards? Take a moment. Really ask yourself that question - who and what are the forces that are keeping you afloat, that are holding you, that you are braided up with.

The seyder plate is about relationships. It is an invitation to really centre the ways we are woven together in struggle in grief, in rage and in love.

The waters of facism are rising, genocide in palestine is unrelenting, there is heightened censorship, state violence, floods, hurricanes, fires...

We are not going to solve it all tonight - but we can name what we are fighting against and we can name what we are fighting for. Together, through the ritual of the seyder, we are creating an opening and a portal for strengthening and building an enduring and profound resistance. Through uplifting the traditional and non-traditional items on our collective altar, we can remember that we have the tools and the skills for freedom.

We will now invite our guest contributors to present our seyder plate symbols.

Michelle Munk is a member of the United Jewish People's Order, the Winchevsky Shule Advisory Committee, and Toronto Jewish Families. Toronto Jewish Families works in coalition with Toronto Palestinian Families to hold the Toronto District School Board accountable for Anti-Palestinian Racism.

Kharoses

Charoset, the Ashkanazi mixture of fruit and nuts on our seder plate, reminds me of our work as a coalition of Jewish and Palestinian parents. The dates and the walnuts are foods from the Levant - a food heritage that we as Jews share with our Palestinian and other Arab neighbours. Charoset is delicious because of its heterogeneity. If it were only fruit, it would be too sweet. If it were only nuts, it would be too bitter. It is the exquisite balance of different tastes and textures that makes it work. Similarly, in our coalition, we are a mix of different personalities and backgrounds, and we are effective precisely because of our diversity.

As we eat the charoset, let's remember that it is the mortar, the clay, that we use for building the world we want - a world in which everyone is safe, seen and valued.

Chris Ramsaroop is an organizer with Justicia for Migrant Workers. He is also an instructor in the Caribbean Studies Program at the University of Toronto and a clinic instructor at the University of Windsor, Faculty of Law.

Maror

Maror or horseradish reminds us of the bitterness of slavery and oppression. We see this legacy in how we exploit migrants who help with harvest for tonight's feast, to the cruel ways we criminalize immigrant communities and the threats of mass deportation that are ongoing across the western world. As we remember the

bitterness we also come together to honour how during these dangerous times, collective resistance will guide us towards the path of freedom and liberation.

Beverly Bain has been an activist and organizer for 47 years. Throughout this time, she learned that Black survival, liberation, and freedom were intertwined with the freedom of other oppressed peoples everywhere. She worked in coalitions to end apartheid, gender and sexual discrimination, fascism, racism, settler colonialism and poverty. She built allies with racialized, Indigenous, and non-Zionist Jews in the struggle for a liberated world.

The Egg & Karpes

The site from which I speak as a Black radical feminist is capacious, containing histories of brutality, enslavement and world making possibilities. *Freedom is a Constant Struggle.* (Angela Davis, 2016)

Look, we in the struggle for freedom always knew that the struggle was long, that we would constantly be met with retaliation from the oppressors. As people who believe in liberation, we kept on resisting the onslaught. We were not prepared for what we have witnessed since October 7th -- the ongoing genocide by Israel of over 62,000 Palestinian women, children, and men. We were not prepared for the narratives of disinformation and dehumanization such as the reference to Palestinians as “human animals” to support the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians. We were not supposed to have empathy, to care or feel anything for what we were witnessing. “We were being asked to kill off a part of ourselves, we were being asked to dismantle the machinery of a functioning conscience.” (Omar El Akkad, 2025)

But many of us have refused the “theft of our souls” (El Akkad) and have taken to the streets, occupied our university campuses demanding an end to the genocide of Palestinians. We have been met with a level of state and institutional violence not seen since the 50’s and 60’s. The election of Trump has unleashed a wave of terror that has resulted in students and migrants abducted, imprisoned and some renditioned. “Liberal democracy has entirely failed and failed to even hide its fascisms” (Dionne Brand, 2023). So how then do we continue to build solidarity, and struggle together in these times when so much is at stake?

It is difficult in this moment to recognize how the fight for freedom and liberation is connected elsewhere as the US and Israel continue to bombard Palestine. The Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation and genocide and for liberation is connected to the historical and ongoing Black freedom struggle and the on-going ethnic cleansing in Sudan and Congo. Our liberation struggles have been cast in death, but aliveness always exceeds death and destruction.

"Is that you again? Didn't I kill you?"

I said: You killed me ... and I forgot, like you, to die (Mahmoud Darwish, 2007).

At this time during Passover where Jews have come together with Palestinians, Blacks, Indigenous and racialized people in the struggle for justice and liberation the **Beitzah, (Egg)** seems fitting because it symbolizes liveability amidst the bombings by the oppressors to ethnically cleanse Palestine of Palestinians.

Here in the diaspora those of us who believe in freedom and liberation must continue to strengthen our alliances with each other. Fascism and tyranny have elevated the stakes.

For those of us in the pro-Palestinian movement, the anti-racism movements, the feminist and trans and queer movements. We must be ready and willing to support abolition that demands an end to militarization, policing, surveillance technologies and prisons. As we join in struggle with the people in Palestine to end the Israeli genocide taking place. We must simultaneously begin to reimagine new worlds. The Passover **Karpas (Parsley)** symbolizes renewal, aliveness, a stubborn fearlessness, and determination to blossom and recreate otherwise.

Salt water

I am here to speak of the salt water on the seder plate. The salt water represents the many tears we have cried over the past couple of years, the fractured relationships in our community, the sorrow and despair for Palestinian lives, the rise in oppression and facism and the unimaginable ways in which grief has weighed us down. Remember that our tears can hold many truths. That our tears are sacred, and can be filled with both rage and longing for a better world. Let our salty tears fall and guide us toward collective liberation.

Jacob Wynperle is an activist in the anti-imperialist peace movement as a member of the Toronto Association for Peace and Solidarity. He is the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, whose family is forever indebted to the anti-fascist struggle.

The Shankbone

As we lift the Zeroa, it reminds us of the sacrifice that broke Pharaoh's chains; of what it took to organize a people united in struggle. Tonight, we honor this sacrifice by committing to our most urgent task - Uniting against fascism and the soil from which it grows: monopoly-capitalism.

Today, we face new Pharaohs: the billionaires who hoard wealth while the cost of living skyrockets, the bosses who slash jobs as profits soar, and the far-right forces growing bolder by the day—from the arms manufacturer exporting genocide to the politicians scapegoating migrants for a crisis created by capitalism. But just as the Zeroa reminds us of the sacrifices it took to shatter oppression, so too must we

remember: our strength lies in our unity— in the outstretched arms of the people, locked together in solidarity.

So, what is fascism? Fascism is the bloodied fist of big business. It is the weapon of capital when democracy becomes inconvenient. It is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of the ruling class. Fascism is the logical result of the NATO-imperialist drive to war; of the capitalists' goal to crush internationalist working class resistance; and of the monopolies' desire to conquer the global market. Therefore we all understand that a fight against fascism must ALSO be a fight against monopoly capitalism.

Fascism in Canada doesn't march in a brown shirt. It drapes itself in the flag and wears a suit, telling us that the problems in society are driven by immigrants, trans people, and by homeless people receiving the bare minimum social services. Instead of attacking the root causes of poverty and racism, the solutions promoted by these people involve "putting Canadians first" and supporting Canadian capitalists.

The Zeroa reminds us that today's fascist offensive can only be defeated by making sacrifices in order to unite the working class and its allies. We've seen this unity in action in Canada before. In 1919, it was the Winnipeg General Strike. In 2023, it was CUPE Ontario mobilizing against the Ford government. Today, it is workers and people of conscience who picket arms manufacturers which arm genocidaires. This is what the ruling class fears, which is why they need us divided—worker against worker, migrant against citizen, nation against nation. But we know: an injury to one is an injury to all. Organizing together and developing a people's alternative is an absolute imperative if we are to defeat the far right.

Now is the time to build a powerful peace movement in Canada and engage actively in the struggle against imperialism, the greatest enemy of the peoples of the world and their desire to live in peace. The Toronto Association for Peace and Solidarity welcomes all people of conscience to join with us in the struggle against the use of military repression to enforce exploitative international relationships, and to fight for a world without war and oppression.

Tonight, we say "Avadim hayinu"—"We were slaves." But we also say: "We will not be slaves again. Not any one." The lesson of Passover rings true to this day: no one will be freed alone. The Hebrews did not escape Egypt by praying alone—they organized, they sacrificed, and they struck when the time was right.

Today, our liberation from exploitation requires this same unity and this same sacrifice: Solidarity in the workplace; an alliance against monopoly capitalism; and Militant working class resistance to the far right

This Passover, let us commit: Next year we celebrate in a Canada out of NATO; Next year in a free Palestine; and Next year, in a world where the peoples' will governs- in a world of peace and solidarity, Thank you.

Orange

The orange was added to seyder plates in the 1980s to symbolize the recognition and inclusion of lesbians and gays in Jewish communities. Today we are faced with unparalleled escalatory threats to the human rights of trans and queer people. In a climate of environmental destruction, constant war, and economic instability, scapegoats abound. The very existence of trans and queer people, like the possibility of a disruptive orange on the seder plate, pushes uncomfortably at the fascist institutions, of capitalism, white supremacy, and the heteronormative family, that our right wing leaders trick us into believing are where we will find comfort and safety.

But we know true safety comes from coming together to fight these fascist forces. We need ambitious coalition-building that recognizes how the anticapitalist, anticolonial, antiracist struggle is inherently tied to the struggle for freedom for trans and queer people. Our queer and trans elders know the importance of coalition building. The orange reminds us that our community's living memory argues for community care, collective action and solidarity toward a liberated world for all.

Daniel Roth is the executive director of the Center for Jewish NonViolence or CJNV. He's been an activist for most of his life here in Toronto and in Israel/Palestine for a decade and a half bringing Jewish people from around the world into co-resistance work on the ground.

Olives

I am honoured to be a part of this Seyder and to speak about the olive. I grew up with the olive branch as a symbol for peace as many of you did I am sure. When I moved to Israel/Palestine to get involved in anti-occupation work I began to understand just how important the olive tree, its branches and fruit, is to Palestinian life and identity there.

The olive harvest is an important time, economically and culturally and the olive is an important symbol of connection to land and nature in Palestine and of the sumud/steadfastness of the Palestinian people. Under Israeli occupation, the olive harvest is also a material and symbolic act of resistance to land theft, and settler-state violence.

As Jews, it is a beautiful addition to our tradition to include this olive on our seyder plate as we retell the story of our march to freedom. It is also a meaningful act of

co-resistance to show up with our partners in this moment to harvest, document human rights violations and show up in solidarity. Last fall a dozen activists, including a member of the UJPO community joined the olive harvest in Burin, in the North of the West Bank.

Many of you know Maddy who couldn't join us this evening. I had the chance to get to know Maddy last fall in Burin, and she sent these words about that experience and about the olive on our Seyder plate.

From Maddy: I have spent all 25 Passovers of my life at UJPO Seders, reading from the UJPO Haggadah. Each year, someone recites the passage about the olive, explaining its symbolic presence on the plate as a marker of solidarity. This year feels different for me. The olive is no longer a metaphor, but a tangible object – one which I spent 3 weeks devoted to, working with Palestinian farmers and activists to harvest in the thousands across fields and groves of the West Bank. When I close my eyes I am brought back there: to the tactile repetition of plucking olives off branches, the dust coating my clothes while sifting heaps of fruits on fabric tarps, the nicks on my arms from climbing trees to reach the highest clusters.

I am also brought back to the more difficult moments of the harvest: locking the doors of our house while soldiers parade through the village, keeping watch for settlers throwing stones at us from their outposts, listening to our Palestinian comrades tell us story after story of the relentless violence they face on these hills every day.

When hearing about life under Occupation, I have noticed a common response from sympathetic North Americans: people saying that they *can't imagine* what it must be like. This refrain is intended as a consolation, but really, it shields us from our own discomfort. Imagining can often feel painful; it forces us to stretch our empathy muscles and to walk in the shoes of our Palestinian cousins. If we didn't imagine this daily struggle, we wouldn't have to reckon as deeply with its injustice.

For the short time that I spent in Palestine, I didn't have to imagine what life was like – I experienced it firsthand. But since returning home, it has been an intentional practice to move past the disconnect of just reading the news, and to envision that I am back there, standing on those fields, protecting those sacred fruits, vulnerable to state brutality. Only then do I feel truly reminded of what's at stake.

In the face of these ongoing atrocities, it is no longer an option to turn away, to say that *we can't imagine* living through them – we have to imagine it. It is a moral imperative which we owe to Palestinians to see, feel, and experience our safety and our struggle as intertwined with theirs.

So as we look at the olive on our Seder plate tonight, I invite us to see it not as merely a symbol of this reality, but as a pathway into visualizing and confronting it.

Like other ritual items which guide us – salt water as our sorrow, *charo set* as our hope, and so on – let this olive be not only our solidarity, but our imagination, too.

If anyone wants to hear more about the fundraising work and/or join on the ground work, Maddy is always available to check in (and I am here too).

All of these seyder plate objects are the tools at our fingertips. This is a template that our ancestors have passed down for us, not just theoretically, not just metaphorically, but for us to practice and use and offer to others. By listening and embodying this wisdom, by telling our stories and questioning them, by infusing ourselves into these traditions, this is how we can learn to get free.

Please join us in singing *Reverse the Curse*; written by American activist Nomy Lamm.

Song: *Reverse the Curse*

Yachat

Traditionally, around the mid-point of the Seyder, the middle matzah on the table is broken, this is called Yachat.

Let's take a moment to find the Matzah on our tables. Let's all hold it in our hands together.

Before we break it, let's consider what it means to break. Breaks are cracks, ruptures, tears in the fabric of the world. We will not hide from the brokenness of ourselves or of this political moment in time.

What must we break?

The silence that shields genocide.
The laws that criminalize protest.
The jails that cage those who resist.
The borders that turn people into prisoners.
The myths that say this violence is inevitable.

Our ancestors have risen up before.
Through fire, through exile, through centuries of empire and tyranny—
They have fought back. In the streets, in the forests, in the factories and fields.
Partisans, rebels, workers, dreamers—
They broke barricades, broke rank, broke out of burning ghettos.
They shattered the lie that we must only suffer, endure.

And now, it is our turn.

We step into their footprints.
We break with intention.
We break for justice.
We break for each other.

Let's raise our pieces of matzah together and break them at the count of 3.

Now we take part of this broken matzah and we hide it: this is the Afikomen.

But we do not hide it in fear. We hide it with hope.

The kids will search for what has been hidden after dinner. They will look in corners, under tables, behind cushions. They will not stop until it is found.

And when they do—when they hold it up in their hands, when they bring it back to the table—*they remind us why we fight, why we dream, why we do not give up.*

Because liberation is never gone.
It is waiting to be found.
It is waiting for *us*.

Call and response all together:

*We break what must be broken.
We will not be silent.
We will not be afraid.
We will not stop until all are free.*

Please help yourself to some karpes/parsley dipped in salt water, and remember that amidst our tears, life is renewed. You're also welcome to help yourself to some matzah and charoset and maror. And yes! We have some gluten-free matzah, just approach our community seyder table and help yourself.

Here to sing Patti Smith's *People Have the Power* is our very own Saskia Laufer. Saskia is a MWS B'Mitzvah grad, who worked for a while as UJPO's Social Media Specialist before moving to England to get their Masters.

Song: *People Have the Power*

Maggid

We now turn to the portion of the Seder known as the Maggid, in which we tell the story of the Moses-led, Jewish Exodus from Egypt. The story is one of profound oppression, group punishment and mass migration, all themes that obviously resonate today. But what can we, as progressive, liberationist Jews and allies glean

from these ancient ideas? For example, this year beloved author Naomi Klein wrote that we need “an Exodus from Zionism”. Maybe another way of expressing this is to commit to inverting the Exodus story; instead of idolizing the idea of a God-given homeland, can we pledge to be in solidarity with everyone who is marginalized and on the move? Can we fight for liberation and the rights of all, wherever we may be?

Let us say together, “**Next year in a liberated world!**”

Hassan & Sophie are here to speak of their exodus from Africa, to detainment in Israel and then to Canada. Sponsored by our Refugee Sponsorship Working Group, we are so happy to welcome them to our Seyder again, and hear from them about their experiences.

Hassan and Sophie Speak

Refugee Sponsorship

We now invite Lia Tarachansky, to talk about UJPO’s Refugee Sponsorship Working Group. Lia was our MWS Education Director for many years, a journalist, a filmmaker and professor. She is joined by Michelle Munk, Tracey Thomas-Falconer

Since Passover 2019 we here at UJPO/Winchevsky have been sponsoring African refugees out of Israel. Some we’re sponsoring directly, like Hasan and Sophie and their two sons, Samsom, Aster, and their two daughters, and Shira & Keeso and their two sons. I’m thrilled to say we just got approval for another Eritrean friend stuck in Israel. We’ve assisted a dozen others in settling here, co-signing for security deposits, accompanying to appointments or other indirect support. We can do this work because Canada is one of only two countries where regular citizens like you and me can privately sponsor refugees. This is amazing!

That is, it was amazing. In December former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cancelled one of the two programs, claiming the system is too backed up to process applications. If the current trend persists, the precarious future of these sponsorship programs will be further affected. It is therefore more urgent than ever that regular Canadians come together and help make sure this country continues to be a safe haven for those fleeing persecution and unimaginable hardship. Most of the African refugees who ended up in Israel got stuck in endless limbo, got imprisoned for seeking asylum after having already survived horrors that should never exist.

Doing this work has been the most immediate, rewarding, difficult, and hands-on activism I’ve ever done. It is something we can *actually* do. It is something that directly repairs the harm done by Israel’s Ethnocratic regime and by doing it we can effect change in the lives of real people. It’s a little complicated but in all honesty, it

isn't hard. It involves filing a little paperwork, assisting in settling people once they arrive, helping them get their SIN, their Health Card, helping them find apartments, furniture, find jobs, and send their kids to school. At the moment we are waiting to hear on the case of nine applicants for which we have already filed. Even though their lives are in immediate risk, it will take years before they get here.

For each family we've brought here, we raised \$31,000. For each individual we've raised \$16,000. Most of the money came from Israeli, Eritrean, and Sudanese activists, friends, and family. Now we desperately need your help. Our upcoming sponsorship of Keeso & Shira's family depends on us raising a final \$4500. If you can donate or help us fundraise, please come see me. If you can't do either but you want to help them settle once they arrive, there's a short volunteer training you can do. Just like with Sophie & Hasan, we'll need a whole community of trained volunteers who are ready to help with the kids, with housing, with legal issues, administrative issues, and so on. This community is you. Help us file, help us fundraise, help us with settlement support. In short - Come find me, let's form a working committee and get to work

Thank you Lia. Now we would like to invite some special guests to join us. Please welcome Roula Said and Maryem Tollar to the stage. **Roula Said** is a Juno-nominated vocalist, poet, dancer, actor, wedding officiate and end-of-life care specialist. **Maryem Tollar** is a renowned Egyptian-Canadian, award winning singer, actor and composer, who has performed with multiple ensembles.

Songs: *Horreyya (Freedom)*, and *Not Just Passing*

Second Glass of Wine

Thank you Roula and Maryem. The second cup of wine is **dedicated to those who challenge hate**. The 1960s was a time of growing wealth, and civil rights struggles, but it was also a time of rising anti-Black racism, anti-indigenous racism, anti-Catholicism and antisemitism.

In May 1965, the Canadian Nazi Party announced a rally in Allan Gardens. Toronto Jews were divided about what to do. The more established organizations argued for ignoring the event, choosing to work behind the scenes, lobbying for regulation of hate literature and hate speech. Others, especially many Holocaust survivors, felt it was important to take a direct approach. The day of the rally, 4000 Jews, including many survivors; activists like Michael Englishman and Jacob Egit showed up to confront the Nazis.

With this cup we bless our sacred refusal. May the blessing of this cup show us how to practice freedom through decomposition. May we feel our hearts beat in rage, in

pleasure, in grief, in breaking, may our refusal remind us that our movements are not only saying no to hatred, but yes to an entirely new, expansive, intimate world of freedom.

The Four Questions

Passover would also not be Passover without the Four Questions. Yoshi, a B'Mitzvah graduate and current Grades 4-6 Educator, is here to lead us through the Ma Nishtana. We invite anyone else to join in as well. Also- mazel tov Yoshi on completing your teaching degree!

Poem: *Red Sea*

Poet, storyteller, artist, historian and teacher Aurora Levins Morales wrote the following Passover poem in 2002.

Red Sea

by Aurora Levins Morales

This Passover, who reclines?

Only the dead, their cupped hands filling slowly
with the red wine of war. We are not free.

The blood on the doorposts does not protect anyone.
They say that other country over there
dim blue in the twilight
farther than the orange stars exploding over our roofs
is called peace.

The bread of affliction snaps in our hands like bones,
is dust in our mouths. This bitterness brings tears to our eyes.

The figs and apples are sour. We have many more
than four questions. We dip and dip,
salt stinging our fingers.

Unbearable griefs braided into a rope so tight
we can hardly breathe,

Whether we bless or curse,
this is captivity.

We would cross the water if we knew how.

Everyone blames everyone else for barring the way.

Listen, they say there is honey swelling in golden combs, over there,
dates as sweet and brown as lovers' cheekbones,

bread as fragrant as rest,

but the turbulent water will not part for us.

We've lost the trick of it.

Back then, one man's faith opened the way.
He stepped in, we were released, our enemies drowned.

This time we're tied at the ankles.
We cannot cross until we carry each other,
all of us refugees, all of us prophets.
No more taking turns on history's wheel,
trying to collect old debts no-one can pay.
The sea will not open that way.

This time that country
is what we promise each other,
our rage pressed cheek to cheek
until tears flood the space between,
until there are no enemies left,
because this time no one will be left to drown
and all of us must be chosen.
This time it's all of us or none.

Tonight we have Karine (Toronto Jewish Families) and Jalila (Toronto Palestinian Families) to say something about Our Children:

Hi Everyone. I am speaking on behalf of Toronto Jewish families and Tikkun olam. We seek to build coalitions with other groups who share our principles of solidarity and anti-oppression. We work in collaboration with these groups to make the TDSB a safer, more vibrant place.

I No Longer Care If You're Good
by Fara Tucker

to your children. Show me
how you care
for other people's children.
I'm unimpressed
by how you treat your kin.
Tell me how your blood boils
and bubbles over with rage
at the persecution
of a stranger. Meet me
in the street to scream
about injustice for people
you look nothing like

and will never
have the pleasure
of meeting.

For me, the work of Toronto Jewish Families is deeply connected to my and Winchevsky's Jewish values. Now more than ever, when I am feeling overwhelmed by the world, I think about the activists and ancestors behind me that fought for a better world.

Think of someone in your family, or an activist that is no longer here. Put your hand on your shoulder to bring in their memory, bring in their strength, their hope for a better world. I also think about the future of our children, their children and their children. I imagine a world where all children are free, safe, protected and this is what grounds me and roots me. I am also here as a mother. I cannot stop thinking of the children in Gaza. They are imprinted on my soul. These children matter. Their parents matter. The earth that they lived on and played on matters. These children are being killed in our name in the name of Jewish people's safety

I'd like to ask all the parents in the room who are in Toronto Jewish Families to wave. I welcome others to find these folks throughout the night and see how you can get involved. Every action matters, every conversation matters, every learning and unlearning matters. May we fill this room with hope for a better world for all children.

Back to sing John Lennon's *Working Class Hero* is Saskia Laufer.

Song: *Working Class Hero*

Third Glass of Wine

Thank you, Saskia. Our third cup of wine is dedicated to those who built coalitions to fight a revival of fascist organizing in the 1990s in Toronto.

At that time, neo-Nazis were becoming visible in the streets, and the Heritage Front was legitimizing racism, homophobia, and xenophobia, groups like Anti-Racist Action and the Jewish Feminist Antifascist League pushed back. They were part of a broad movement of feminists and antiracists who succeeded in pushing neoNazis off the streets, and revealing the true colours of the fascists in suits.

This cup's blessing is a blessing of belonging. With this cup, you are invited to feel your revolutionary ancestors at your back. Feel their hands on your spine, feel their prayers for freedom joining ours. We have been here before, and we are not alone. We are rooted in collectivity. We have wisdom for the struggle. We remember and we bless those who came before us so that we can remember and we can know that we are going to win.

We now invite David and Sarena to lead us in singing the protest song "In Contempt"

Song: *In Contempt*

Ten Plagues

Thank you for the music, musicians! Now to take us through the 10 Plagues, are Louise and Yael.

In reciting the ten plagues, we have to acknowledge the inherent questions and struggles over this part of the Haggadah. Do we celebrate the plagues as phenomena that contributed to liberation or do we see these as emblematic consequences, resulting from bad leadership, and inevitably leading to destruction?

Were the people of Egypt punished for the sins of their leader, against whom they held no power?

The cruelty of the plagues was intended to bring an end to the cruelty of slavery. How do we wrestle with freedom granted at such expense?

The central purpose of the recitation of the plagues in the Haggadah should not be to celebrate these plagues. The triumph of Passover is diminished by the sacrifice of many human lives as the plagues were "visited upon" the people of Egypt. No one should take joy in the suffering of others. Therefore, let us diminish the wine in our cups as we revisit the ten plagues that befell the people and the land. As we recite the name of each plague, you are invited to dip a finger in your wine and then touch your plate to remove the drop:

Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Beasts, Cattle disease, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Endless Darkness, Death of the First-Born.

Ancient plagues are mirrored in modern tragedies. In our own time ordinary people suffer and die as a result of the actions of the tyrants who rule over them.

We won't let these obstacles define us. We can turn to the Exodus story to recognize sacred acts of liberation and let them call us to action.

1. Recognition of Injustice/Hearing the Cries of the Oppressed: Although he grew up in privilege, when Moses as a young man witnesses violence against workers, he becomes angry enough to murder. (Exodus 2:11) Later,

when he is 80 years old, he knows he must respond to the injustice of Hebrew enslavement in a different way, with change to the whole structure of oppression, rather than on an individual basis.

2. Civil Resistance: The Bible tells us that the midwives, Shifrah and Puah, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. *(Exodus 1:17) In this selfless act, which put themselves at risk, the midwives did not acquiesce to the demands of tyranny.*

3. Reaching out to the Other: When the daughter of Pharaoh opened the basket, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She had compassion for him and said “This must be a Hebrew child.” She took him in and raised him as her own. *(2:6) Despite her upbringing, she was able to see their shared humanity.*

4. Humility and/or pushing beyond comfort zone: *Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh....?” (3:11)* He is hesitant to believe that he can have an impact. He is shy because he is “slow of speech”. But God tells him he must go anyway and can take his brother Aaron for assistance (4:10).

5. Speaking Truth to Power: Moses and Aaron repeatedly went before Pharaoh with the request to let the people go (5:1) . It was not a one time ask; they did not have immediate success. Instead they needed to keep returning, with conviction and courage, making their demands of Pharaoh before he relented.

6. Memory: The injunction is repeated a few times in the text that the freed slaves are to remember **and celebrate** (12:14). *This is a crucial part of the Passover story - the retelling of the story so that we don't forget how we overcame challenges.*

7. Joy and Celebration: The Bible tells us “*Then Miriam the prophetess took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels.*” (15:20) *We are reminded to take the time to revel in what we overcame and to find joy with those around us.*

8. Lighten the Burden: Once in the desert, Jethro, Moses' father in law, advises him that he cannot be the sole counselor or judge, otherwise he will wear out (18:18). He instructs Moses to teach the statutes and laws and to share in communal responsibility. Our fights and struggles still benefit from this lesson. None of us can fight oppression alone.

9. Honesty and truth telling: Moses is instructed to select those who are “of truth” and who “hate dishonest gain.” (18:21) This is part of building towards the new world and the relationships that Moses is being invited to create, a new community that is based on justice and truth.

10. Pledging to Create a More Just World: In closing out this chapter of liberation and setting up the framework for this new emerging world, *Moses leads the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain to receive the commandments. (Exodus 20)*. Together, this newly recommitted community share a vision for a future that is better than the past. (21)

Call and response all together

May we heed these lessons in every generation!

Here to offer an original song, born out of the moment and our collective movement, is David, Sarena and Marilyn - performing *I'll Still Amplify*.

Song: *I'll Still Amplify*

The Fourth Glass of Wine

This seder, we have honoured our heritage of struggle against fascism. We are standing on the shoulders of those who have come before to resist the forces of authoritarianism, Trump, Zionism, transphobia, extractivism, hate and fear.

And so, **our fourth cup of wine is dedicated to liberation**. Liberation for all. We know it is us, the people, who will win liberation together.

With this glass of wine, we recommit ourselves to remembering that every drop of water can cause a flood. That each person is essential to this movement against fascism and towards collective liberation.

May our togetherness embolden us towards self-knowing and collective care & may our togetherness fuel us towards deeper accountability, wider capacity, and allow us to take greater risks for freedom. With this cup we remember that the world is round and we touch everything. The world is round and everything remembers you.

Call and response all together:

We remember ourselves, we remember each other, we recommit to hope, to love, to liberation.

Dayenu

Dayenu means enough. When we arrive at the singing of Dayenu in the seder we have moved through most of the retelling. We have tried to relive the story of Exodus as though we ourselves were enslaved and freed, we have tasted the tears and the

bitterness of persecution and the sweetness of liberation. We have remembered the lessons of our ancestors, our sacred symbols, our generations of ritual. Now we are asked to reflect and to say *enough*. That any of the many miracles that aided the Jews in the journey to liberation would have been enough.

This moment challenges us. We know that the successes in today's struggles for liberation are far from sufficient. Each day we wake up to a world that, like Pharaoh's heart, seems further hardened against us and our comrades every day. And though we return to the struggle again and again, it has not yet been enough. But rather than turning Dayenu on its head and declaring "not enough", we want instead to recognize Dayenu's gift to us. Dayenu offers us an opportunity for gratitude. It asks of us to remember joy: in all our big and small accomplishments, in the beauty of the movement, and also in each other.

Hope begins with taking stock of the achievements, the passion, the power, and the delight of the present moment. Even as we feel the creep of despair we can look around us and recognize the small wins: a day of good media coverage, dropped charges, a big turn out at the march, one family finding safety, a new bill outvoted, charitable status revoked for organizations funding war and occupation. And we can also give thanks for each others' humanity, present all the time: a baby born, a new comradery, sharing a song with an old friend, being in ritual together.

We often resist Dayenu because it seems so preposterous to look at the world around us and declare, *this is enough* - but what if for a moment we tried to imagine that what we already have is enough. That liberation can be won with the tools we already have. With the people power we *already have*. What if we really are enough?

We'll now hear Dayenu led by David and Marilyn. Please join in. And for those of you on zoom- you sing too!

Song: *Dayenu*

Nirtzah

We have arrived at NIRTZAH; the closing of the seder. We mark this journey of remembering the suffering of the past to envisioning a future of freedom and wholeness for all. We close with an excerpt from Diane di Prima's poem *Revolutionary Letter #68: LIFE CHANT*, first published in 1971.

We invite everyone to place your hand over your heart and join us in this call and response-type poem.

cacaphony of small birds at dawn

may it continue

bitter taste of early miner's lettuce

may it continue

music on city streets in the summer nights

may it continue

kids laughing on roofs on stoops on the beach in the snow

may it continue

triumphal shout of the newborn

may it continue

deep silence of great rainforests

may it continue

clumsy splash of pelican in smooth bays

may it continue

clean snow on the mountain

may it continue

fierce eyes, clear light of the aged

may it continue

rite of birth & of naming

may it continue

rite of passage

may it continue

love in the morning, love in the noon sun love in the evening among crickets

may it continue

love in thick midnight, fierce joy of old ones loving

may it continue

without police

may it continue

without prisons

may it continue

without empire

may it continue

thru the wars to come

may it continue

tho the earth seem lost

may it continue

thru exile & silence

may it continue

as breath continues

may it continue

as stars continue

may it continue

may the wind deal kindly w/us

may the fire remember our names

may springs flow, rain fall again

may the land grow green, may it swallow our mistakes

we begin the work

may it continue

the great transmutation

may it continue

a new heaven & a new earth

may it continue

may it continue

Closing Remarks

Solidarity is a journey that demands much of us. It calls for relentless self-reflection, the building of transparent accountability structures, and an unwavering commitment to both learning and critical thinking. It asks of us humility and empathy, hope and love—qualities that are foundational to forging meaningful solidarity.

We cannot do this work alone— It demands we unite. The future is a giant coalition. Our liberation is bound together, and only through deep, sustained relationships can we begin to shift the systems that harm us. Make your connections. Deepen and reinforce your alliances. Count on one another. Count on everyone here, tonight. Tonight we shared this space and by showing up we have become united. Together, we can smash fascism—through resistance, through care, through collective power that refuses to back down.

Echoing the words of Jewish American lesbian feminist Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, we are reminded: *“Solidarity is the political version of love.”* It is with this sentiment that we close our gathering—rooted in love, inspired by resistance, and committed to carrying forward this legacy through our actions, today and every day.

For our closing song, please welcome **Marching Disorder**, performing Woody Guthrie’s *All You Fascists Bound to Lose*, with new words by Cassie Norton. Marching Disorder is a Toronto-based music-making collective that grows out of traditions of radical brass bands and social justice activism.

Song: *All You Fascists Bound To Lose*

Thank you so much for joining us this evening! A big thank you to all our community partners. Once again, thank you to all our musicians, our tech helpers for audio & zoom needs, our community organizing comrades, our staff, our volunteers, our membership, and all of you- our guests.