

# UJPO News



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

Volume #, Issue #

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## CAMP NAIVELT TURNS 100!

### Camp Naivelt at 100

# Celebrate 100 With Us

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## AUGUST 23<sup>RD</sup> & 24<sup>TH</sup> 2025

*taking place at Camp Naivelt in Brampton, Ontario*

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# NATIONAL UJPO NEWS

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FROM WINNIPEG

By Harriet Zaidman

UJPO/Jews for Social Justice (Winnipeg) has had a busy winter and spring season. Members and supporters have participated regularly in the weekly Free Gaza rallies, as well as a silent vigil held in June at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, where participants held large pictures of Palestinian children for passersby to see.

Our Third Seyder in April was a huge success, with nearly 90 people in attendance, many of them new to our circles. A huge thanks to Jill Carr, who was our chief organizer, who also led the seyder, reading a progressive and inclusive Haggadah. The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming, and several participants remarked that they appreciated having a seyder with a positive message, that they had felt isolated in the Jewish community because they don't support or rationalize Israeli actions in Gaza.

Our Warsaw Ghetto Memorial on April 24 featured family therapist Judy Haid and psychiatrist Mark Etkin, who spoke about the immediate and long-term effects of trauma on survivors of the ghetto experience, with relation to people who are experiencing trauma today. The North End Jewish Folk Choir performed songs to complement the program, as their last performance of the season.

UJPO/Jews for Social Justice had a table at the North End Culture Fair this year to popularize our work and engage visitors in conversation about our work.



About 50 people attended our Windup Barbecue on June 12. We welcomed several new members and invited people to get involved in our current programs and discussed new initiatives that we're hoping to develop.

## Personal Notes

A Happy Birthday to our beloved Jeanette Block, who celebrated her 99th birthday on April 28.

Harriet Zaidman is now the children's book columnist for the Winnipeg Free Press. Her column will appear on the third Saturday of every month. Her latest novel, *What Friends Are For*, is available for pre-order now and will be in bookstores on October 14. Set in 1983, at the height of Canada's abortion debate, this powerful, nuanced YA novel follows a young girl as she grapples with an unplanned pregnancy.

FROM VANCOUVER

By Carl Rosenberg

In Memoriam: Gallia Chud (1923-2025)

The Peretz Centre for Secular Jewish Culture has always been a vital centre for secular and progressive Jewish life in Vancouver. On June 29, we said goodbye to one of its founders and greatest activists.

Gallia was born in 1923 in Staraya, Russia (just outside St. Petersburg) and with her parents and sister Bebi (Betty) immigrated to Winnipeg in 1929. She graduated from St. John's Technical High School with a scholarship to the University of Manitoba. She met Ben Chud at Camp Naivelt, and they married in 1943. In 1945, they moved to Vancouver to help found the Peretz School (as it was first

called) where Ben was the first principal and taught Yiddish.

Gallia always played a leading role in the Peretz Centre, from her years leading the Muters Farein (PTA) to her five years as president of the Peretz Board in the early nineties. She was also one of the main organizers of the Peretz Centre's Fraytik tsu Nakht secular shabbes dinners, a role continued by her daughter Gyda.

Gallia made many other contributions to the Jewish and broader community. An avid reader, she belonged to several book clubs, and worked at the Continuing Legal Education Society of BC, and the Jewish Western Bulletin under the editorship of Abraham J. Arnold. She was active in Outlook Magazine, the United Jewish People's Order, and the National Council of Jewish Women.

The moving June 29 Celebration of Life featured Gallia's daughters Gyda Chud and Rita Chudnovsky, her grandsons Julius Bishop and Daniel Rosen, her nephew David Chudnovsky, and family friends Judith Snider and Maria Nalangan. It also included musical performances by Lisa Osipov and Wendy Bross Stuart, concluding with the stirring song "Tumbalalaika." Everyone testified to Gallia's major contributions in fostering Jewish culture and upholding the values of equality, diversity, social justice and world peace, and to her outstanding personal qualities—her graciousness, warmth, humour and compassion.

I worked with Gallia for many years on Outlook magazine, where she was on the Vancouver Collective, and always appreciated her many contributions—proofreading, book reviews, writing news items, working at our annual Supper. She was always gentle and encouraging in all aspects of our work.

Gallia will always live in the hearts of all of us who knew her—family, friends, colleagues, community members. We treasure the communal and cultural heritage which Gallia and Ben created, and intend to build on and continue this legacy for many years to come.

FROM TORONTO

by David Wall

### **The Etty Project**

On March 26, 2025, UJPO Toronto presented Etty, a powerful one-woman play, based on the diaries of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish Dutch woman writing diaries in Amsterdam during the Second World War.

Etty is a one-woman play, adapted and acted by Susan Stein and directed by Austin Pendleton. It is told in Hillesum's own words, bringing the audience into her world as she faces the horrors of her circumstances and finds an unshakeable force within herself, able to stand up to those out to destroy her. The second act asks the audience to join the conversation, fostering dialogue on human rights, resistance, and personal responsibility.

In addition to touring this amazing work around the world, Susan Stein has developed popular programs for schools, universities and prisons, in which she presents excerpts from the show and leads probing discussions with participants generated by the play's important historical, ethical and moral content. During her visit to Toronto in March, UJPO also facilitated a 2-day residency at Lawrence Park Collegiate, enabling her to engage with hundreds of high school students.

At a time when we are seeing a rise in racism and fascism, and witnessing genocide, many of us look to the words of people like Etty Hillesum, who managed to carve a space of compassion and humanity from her horrific reality.

### **UJPO Toronto Third Seyder**

On April 19, 2025, UJPO Toronto presented its annual Third Seyder at Lithuanian House. This year's Haggadah theme was "United Against Fascism," and it was written and presented by a coalition of local anti-fascist activists, from multiple organizations. As always, there were powerful words, beautiful music, delicious food and a chance for communities to come together in glorious solidarity.

Each morning, the world we wake up in seems more and more frightening. Leaders here and across oceans are enacting illegal anti-immigrant raids,

trading weapons to be used on children, enshrining racism, transphobia, and misogyny into law, drumming up hatred, and attempting to destroy solidarity networks and suppressing dissent through violent policing and surveillance. We have real reason to feel afraid. Yet, as the threat to our humanity grows, so does our ability to speak truth to power. We have seen the global mass movement for a free Palestine over the past year and a half unite us the world over, and we know, as that fight persists, that we can continue to harness our collective power to create a unified movement against rising fascism.

Attended by more than 350 participants, the Third Seyder was a powerful opportunity for communities to unite, to talk of liberation, of freedom from long-accepted oppressive structures, of collective action. We came together to contextualize the story of Exodus within today's struggle for justice, to feed our collective desire for change, our longing for real justice, our unshakable vision of liberation for our comrades, ourselves, and the world.

FROM HAMILTON

## HAMILTON REPORT: THE BUBBLE ZONE CONTROVERSY

By Paul Weinberg

In Hamilton a proposed protest ban may not get off the ground if a charter legal challenge succeeds elsewhere

Some background before we get started:

Bubble zones are very much in the news these days. They are spaces near buildings such as places of worship, schools, and day care centres that belong to vulnerable groups. They may be so designated after an application to a council by members of the vulnerable group. Within such a space (e.g. 20, 50 or 100 metres from the building in question) demonstrators must refrain from actions that discourage, block or violently impede access to the

facility. They must also refrain from hateful behavior directed against the group's religion, ethnicity or identity. The penalty for so doing may be a fine. In theory bubble zones do not prevent peaceful, legal demonstrations. In practice, the police may determine what is and is not peaceful and legal.

Activists are making the rounds during the hot and sweaty summer months at Hamilton City Hall, knocking on the office doors of local elected politicians and assistants. They are raising concerns about a proposed, city-wide "bubble zone" bylaw coming down the pipe at city council which "prohibits protests at places of worship and their facilities." No date has yet been set for the imposition of these proposed restrictions.

Ostensibly, the bylaw appears to solely target pro-Palestinian activists as part of a national and international trend of repression by western governments and police. At the same time, it also carries broader implications for all nonviolent public rallies and marches on a range of political issues in Hamilton, a fact noted by Alex Ballagh, co-chair of the downtown Hamilton chapter of Acorn, the major tenants' rights organization in this city:

"Bubble zone bylaws essentially only exist to silence free speech, prevent freedom of assembly and give the government a tool to essentially suppress protests."

Balagh's organization is participating in the lobbying against the bylaw, details of which are not yet available.

A central figure in the local opposition to a protest ban is David Mivasair, a retired and politically engaged rabbi living in Hamilton, who is well known and highly regarded by many UJPO members. He is a high-profile member of Independent Jewish Voices and spends much time

raising funds and other forms of support for besieged people in Gaza. Mivasair is asking everybody involved in the issue to stop using the term “bubble zone,” since the “cuteness” of the term minimizes the seriousness of what it entails.

As a veteran activist he goes by the philosophy that it is the politically marginalized who are forced by necessity to protest against what has gone wrong in society at home or abroad. “People protest when they do not have other means; people who have inside influence do not go to the street,” stated Mivasair.

On the Palestine issue, he cites the example of pro-Israel organizations such as the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, which has the ear of those in power and does not need to stage rallies with placards on a continuous basis to get its point across to the public.

He says there is a real possibility that a majority of Hamilton city councillors will support the proposed measure which explains the sense of urgency among the opponents.

On March 26 this year the majority on Hamilton City Council decided by a vote of 14 to 2 to support a planning committee motion to have city hall lawyers write a draft of a protest ban

bylaw for consideration by the councillors The two dissenters were Ward 2 councillor Cameron Kroetsch and Ward 13 councillor Alex Wilson, both members of what purportedly constitutes a large progressive left bloc on council.

Their political colleague, Ward 3 councillor Nrinder Nann, emailed to me that she supported the instructions to the city lawyers to write a bylaw, but maintains she will vote against legislation that violates the constitutional Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Her primary concern is the protection of places of worship for vulnerable religious minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims living in Hamilton:

“This draft bylaw will need to have a legal vetting and considerations of the Charter of Rights. Until I have reviewed the draft by-law, I don’t have much to comment on further.”

Nann added: “Hamilton has a history of needing to address [the] hate based attacks and targeting of mosques, gurdwaras, and temples.”

Councillor Nann is probably referring to the 2001 attack on a Hindu temple as well as other troubling events in her city that raise both policing and legal issues.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/headlines/hindu-temple-arson-inclusive-hamilton-1.3744925>.

In more recent years there have been some violent incidents of a homophobic and racist nature. In 2019 there was a violent attack involving people carrying anti- LBGQ signs at a Hamilton Pride event in Gage Park in southeast Hamilton where local police failed in their duties to protect celebrants, an independent report revealed afterward. The incident at Pride in 2019 was followed by a confrontation in front of Hamilton City Hall between a weekly, Saturday far right “yellow vester” rally and a larger anti-hate counter demonstration.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/no-more-hate-in-the-hammer-anti-hate-demonstration-meets-yellow-vest-protest-outside-city-hall-1.5186461> and <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/pride-1.5602856>

Councillor Nann does have legitimate concerns about violent hate groups. However, there is no comparison between largely peaceful, nonviolent rallies in defence of Palestinian rights and incidents of thuggery motivated by hate, some of which have involved attacks on places of worship. Accordingly, David Mivasair has persuasively argued that the primary purpose of the new bylaw is to repress a Palestinian rights movement during a period of starvation and genocide by Israel in Gaza:

“All of this [in Hamilton] is being instigated by Zionist pressure groups. It has nothing to do with people worshipping.”

I should note that Councillors Kroetsch and Nann emailed separately that they could not comment further until the bylaw's wording becomes available.

What is noticeable is that a few of the elected Hamilton politicians with a progressive reputation voted to have city lawyers prepare a protest ban. This included Mayor Andrea Horwath (who in a letter recently welcomed a controversial Jewish National Fund fundraising event in Hamilton). Mayor Horwath's office did not respond when I requested more information about her stance on the impending new bylaw.

Another progressive, except on the subject of Palestine, is Ward 1 councillor Maureen Wilson (the catalyst for kickstarting the process to have a bylaw devised). Her office did not respond to my email.

On April 4th, Wilson met for one hour with a number of opponents of the bylaw, including Mivasair, another representative of Acorn Hamilton, retired United Church minister Diane Blanchard, and James Quinn, Professor of Biology at McMaster University.

Blanchard remarked that Wilson failed to explain what motivated her to proceed with a desire to protect places of worship.

If Wilson was concerned about picketing in front of a synagogue here in Hamilton, that has never happened here.

Quinn, a locally prominent environmental activist, says the main impetus for the Hamilton bylaw stems from pro-Palestinian rights protests outside J-Hamilton, the new home of the Hamilton Jewish Federation on Main Street West which is close to McMaster Children's Hospital and the McMaster University campus.

J-Hamilton is not strictly a place of worship, but an argument could be made that as a community centre it is a related facility. Quinn had participated in a protest outside J-Hamilton, and witnessed the angry insults hurled at the demonstrators by someone who emerged from the building.

Incidentally, I contacted the National Council of Canadian Muslims which has campaigned against Islamophobia in Canada and is urging Canada to take a stronger stance on the matter of Palestinian human rights and humanity in Gaza. A spokesperson for the organization told me that the NCCM will be issuing a public statement on bubble zone protest bans.

At this stage, it would be useful to remind readers of pertinent facts concerning the provincial and national attempt to impose bubble zone legislation and the legal opposition that has been mounted against it.

Specifically, current legal action by the CCLA against the City of Vaughan is the probable reason why Hamilton City Council has set no date for the imposition of its bylaw. If the action succeeds, it will presumably nullify council's action.

I should note that Ninder Nann is my Ward 3 councillor in Hamilton, and I have worked on her past election campaigns.

*This article is continued under the Canada section on page 17.*



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## HONOURABLE MENTSHN

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**New World** by Motor Machine Orchestra

By Sarena Sairan

On August 1, 2025, Jude Felstead released an entire album of electronic music in celebration of Camp Naivelt's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, titled **New World**.

Jude Felstead has grown up spending his summers at Camp. Motor Machine Orchestra, Jude's music-making alias, already has an extensive repertoire which can be found on Bandcamp. Support Jude by listening to his work and donating if you can.

The album **New World** has 9 songs, each titled after a Naivelt landmark or experience, such as The Ritz or The River. Mazel Tov Jude on this remarkable offering. Check it out here:

<https://motormachineorchestra.bandcamp.com/album/new-world>

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## CONDOLENCES

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On May 30, Honey Ross, (wife of Oscar, mother of Erica, Howard and Lisa, bubie of Caya and Maiyan, and greatbubie of Dylan), passed away at home surrounded by the love of her family.

Her parents Mary and Izzie Winer, were long-time, active members of UJPO and Naivelt, and so Honey (and her sister Rita) grew up in the community. She was particularly involved in UJPO's dance group, New Dance Theatre, which became Toronto's first modern dance company. It was also in the UJPO/Naivelt community where she met the love of her life, Oscar.

In addition to being a dancer, mother, activist, life-long volunteer, Honey was an accomplished artist and craftsperson. Almost until the very last days she

continued to make art, tell stories, dance, and rage about Trump and fascism! She loved unconditionally and maintained a positive outlook until the day she died. Her imparting message to all who visited her in the final days, was to live with PASSIONATE JOY.



We are sharing the sad news that Verna Calista Van Sickle (March 7, 1932 - July 2, 2025), passed away peacefully in the presence of family at the age of 93.

She is survived by her children: Eric, Shane, Erin (Kim), and Shauna (Richard); and her grandchildren: Aurora (William) and Caden.

Verna's childhood home in Vancouver, BC, was just steps from the ocean and the entrance to Stanley Park. Her formative years were shaped by a profound connection to the natural world in which

she was immersed. Although Verna, an innate extrovert, was an avid conversationalist with a sharp intellect, her most quietly remarkable gift was an intuitive, naturalistic intelligence: an ingrained ability to love and nurture all living creatures, and, more abstractly, a lifelong devotion to the arts.

Verna migrated to Toronto in her teenage years, working alongside her father in the Toronto Film Society. In the 1960s, she owned a record store (Towne Records in the Yorkville district), founded a model's union that successfully organized for a living wage, and studied the cello. The folk music of that era—including the voices of Joan Baez and Pete Seeger—resonated deeply with her poetic soul and echoed her values of justice, compassion, and peace.

Verna's joyful and serene connection to nature continued throughout her life, enriched by regular walks in Toronto's High Park and by decades spent as a cottage owner in the beauty and community spirit of Camp Naivelt—a place that brought her peace, friendship, and renewal.

On behalf of the UJPO, Naivelt, and MWS community, our sincere condolences are extended to the family.

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## POETRY & SONG

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Submitted by Harriet Lyons

A recently published volume *On the Waves of Destiny: The Selected Writings of Lili Berger*, edited by Frieda Johles Forman, Sam Blatt, Vivian Felsen and Judy Nissenholt, honours the memory of Lili Berger, an essayist, novelist, biographer, folklorist, historian, lecturer, and advocate for the Yiddish language, and makes a sample of her work available to the English-speaking world. In addition to the editors, beloved UJPO members Ronnee



Jaeger and Sylvia Lustgarten made significant contributions to the preparation of this volume.

In this rich and varied collection, there is a chapter, originally published in 1988, dedicated to poetry written during the Holocaust by ordinary, mostly unnamed people, entitled "The Hidden Source of a People's Survival: Writings from the Ghettos and Camps", translated for this volume by Judy Nisenholt. The poems' authors were suffering internment, awaiting their own deaths, and witnessing the murder of their fellow Jews. Berger notes three themes in these writings: a call for resistance, a longing for revenge, and an assertion of the power of language to outlive individual speakers. Berger gives us only a taste of the large number of poems produced by folk writers during those years; she mentions over a thousand poems, by 121 authors, in the Warsaw Historical Institute alone. A known poet, Lerka Rosenblum, commented on the upswell of amateur poets in the ghetto:

A tumult, a commotion  
Ghetto writing in full motion  
From dawn till after day is done  
They think they're poets, every one.  
Some poems called for endurance, and even joy. A few lines from a long poem from the Kovno ghetto:  
Sing us, sing us ghetto songs  
Join our ghetto dance-along  
Brothers let's lock horns and dance.  
A signed poem from an otherwise unknown folk poet from Vilnius, Kasriel Broydo:  
Moyse, hold on  
Don't break down  
Hold fast hold fast Moyse  
Moyse hold out,  
Don't slip up  
Know this – we must get out.

The theme of vengeance is central to the largest number of poems Berger quotes, and it is this theme

that she seems to feel needs further explanation. From an unknown folk poet:

I see you, eyes, mournful and wet  
Expressing only sorrow, suffering, pain  
I see you, pale tormented faces,  
That long for joyful sunshine.  
Yes, unfortunate sisters, brothers,  
You lie there mute, you speak no more.  
Your limbs no longer tremble, your tears no longer flow.  
But two eyes are gazing out  
From every single soul  
Fixed in an immensity of woe  
They call demanding vengeance.

The theme of vengeance may be troubling to some. We see the weaponization of a longing for revenge for past and recent injury in Israel/Palestine today, and we may be more inclined to wonder how to put a stop to such desires than to glorify them. Berger herself appears to think that the desire for vengeance must be explained. On the one hand, she sees (approvingly) the call for vengeance as a mark of resistance, a counter to the argument that the victims of the Holocaust went like sheep to their deaths. The discomfort with Jews being characterized as weak is, of course, part of the underlying mythos of Zionism, a discomfort which causes a contradictory unease in those who have come to see what the need to counter that stereotype can do.

Another explanation Berger offers is a suggestion that vengeance in these poems is synonymous with justice, a way to cling to faith in a just God (Berger 2025:40). However, it is vengeance that the poems call for, and it is the call for revenge which we must understand. Berger's explanation for why so many people who were not normally authors felt the need to write poetry perhaps is also the most useful explanation for why so many of those poems called for vengeance. Ironically, she sees it as a "simple"

explanation, which needs further, deeper scrutiny. "...the troubled," she says, "had to unburden their hearts, to cry, to lament on a scrap of paper. It is easier to carry on, maybe easier to die (Ibid.)" It is here, I think, that we can find a way to appreciate poems that express sentiments that have caused untold suffering when put into action. Writing (and reading) give us a means to experience desires we cannot fulfill or perhaps should not fulfill. It would have been odd in the extreme if people in the ghettos and the camps had not felt such a desire. We can honour them and remember them by empathizing with that desire without acting on it. Perhaps, empathizing with it can be a step toward empathizing with similar desires in Gaza and the West Bank. That is, one might suggest, some of the magic of poetry.

The final theme that Berger discusses in her essay is the power of language, in this case Yiddish, to survive the deaths of its speakers. She quotes a partisan poet Hirsh Glik:

And if the dawn fails to break

The song will go from one generation to the next  
Like a watchword.

After the war, Berger had returned to her native Poland from France, where she had been in the Resistance, motivated in part by Communist ideals. In 1953 she published a Yiddish translation of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's prison letters with a Warsaw press. Because of increasing antisemitism in the late 1960s, she returned to France in 1968. She was particularly troubled by the attempt, in postwar Poland, to erase the memory of Polish Jewish history. Much of the work assembled in this volume, including the 1988 essay containing these poems, was an attempt to counter that erasure. It is hoped that this sample will encourage readers to dip further into the treasure that the editors and translators have provided.

On the Waves of Destiny: the Selected Writings of Lili Berger, published in 2025 by the University of Toronto Press, is available online at

<https://utppublishing.com/doi/10.3138/9781487557164> or at <https://www.amazon.ca/Waves-Destiny-Selected-Writings/dp/1487557167>

A book launch for the volume will be held on September 7th, place and time to be announced.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### FASCISMS, SETTLER COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISMS:

#### **Myths, Erasures and *Gleichschaltung***

Review of "Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future" by Jason Stanley. (NY: Atria/One Signal, 256 pp. 2024)

By **Andrew Lyons**

.....do we want to have here, in our country, in Russia, parent number one, number two, number three instead of mom and dad -- have they gone mad out there? Do we really want perversions that lead to degradation and. extinction to be imposed on children in our schools from the primary grades? To be drummed into them that there are various supposed genders besides women and men, and to be offered a sex change operation? Do we want this for our country and our children? For us, all this is unacceptable, we have a different future, our own future.

**Vladimir Putin**, September 30, 2022, as quoted in Stanley 2024: 14 (Kindle Edition).

Vladimir Putin has on occasion expressly identified himself with the movement that now calls itself National Conservatism (not National *Socialism*). For the last few years National Conservatives have held an annual conference. The group sponsoring it calls itself "The Edmund Burke Foundation," but, in fairness to Burke, its politics might make that very dead white male turn over in his grave. The Chairman of the Foundation is Yoram Hazony, an Israeli scholar, and most of the speakers and delegates have been pro-Trump Republicans, such as Steve Bannon, J. D. Vance, Stephen Miller, Patrick Dineen, Kevin Roberts, British reactionaries

such as Tories Suella Braverman, Liz Truss and Jacob Rees-Mogg, and members of Farage's Reform Party, the British/Canadian/Hungarian ex-Trotskyist Frank Furedi and his sponsors, the government of Victor Orban in Hungary. Viktor Orban himself, Giorgia Meloni, Likud, the National Rally and Éric Zemmour's followers from France. Parties such as Reform, Fidesz, the Republicans, Vox in Spain, the AFD in Germany and United Russia espouse varieties of National Conservatism, otherwise known as the New Fascism.

One of the scholars who has studied the new fascism is Jason Stanley, the philosopher who has just moved from Yale to University of Toronto. His most recent book is discussed here. Although it's a year old now, it can be used to understand events since the return of Trump as well as the ongoing genocide in Palestine. That's because Stanley accurately predicted what a Trump victory would bring. He is in a good position to understand racism, colonialism and fascism, because his father's family were prominent citizens of Germany before the Shoah, his father was an anthropologist who studied colonialism in Kenya, and his mother and survivors of her family came to Britain as refugees from Poland after the war.

In the preface to *Erasing History* Stanley draws attention to the tactics characteristic of fascist movements in his 2018 book, *How Fascism Works*. Fascists construct mythological accounts of their nation's history. In doing so, they employ propaganda that erases the past and distorts the present. Their myths justify and affirm notions (and realities) of racial, cultural, religious or linguistic hierarchy, based on ascribed or historically inevitable characteristics. Fascists affirm the necessity of a society based on law and order, and the repression of threats made by hostile elements. These threats can come from both external and internal enemies.

Intellectuals may pollute the body politic by infiltrating and controlling the educational system. The purity of the state may be threatened by sexual deviance, a characteristic ascribed to groups that are said to present an internal threat. Urban environments may be particularly susceptible to forms of pollution; the rural heartland is a purer space. Modernity and secularism are mistrusted.

Finally, one criterion of hierarchy that is usually deployed in fascist hierarchies is the ability to work and be productive. Those who are at the bottom of the scale are viewed as less capable and less disciplined, as innately lazy and stupid. It may be noted that this typology of fascism leaves out charismatic leadership, which is usually present. However, Stanley notes that certain forms of fascist governance can occur in the absence of a charismatic leader. He mentions the Jim Crow South.

The ideology and practice of the new fascism is very much focussed on education as a process inherently linked both to the system, the ideas and the people it wishes to dominate or destroy, and to the mythology of supremacy it wishes to enshrine. Alternative accounts of history that may suggest flaws and inaccuracies in the supremacist narrative must be erased, and they are particularly threatening if they have a basis in fact. Accordingly, people like Bannon, DeSantis and Ted Cruz have pointed to "cultural Marxism" as the source of Critical Race Theory, which appears to them to encompass anything from the writings of the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw about intersectionality to holding events like Black History Month. The history of slavery is sanitized by them, and the role of whites in ending it is emphasized. Stanley observes that the link between "cultural Marxism" and Critical Race Theory is somewhat tenuous. He rightly observes that the invocation of "cultural Marxism" provides an animus, a motivating force for a vitriolic re-enforcement of supremacist ideology and an erasure of the uglier parts of its history. Most members of the Frankfurt School were Jewish (e.g. Benjamin, Horkheimer, Lowenthal, Marcuse and Fromm), and Adorno, who was raised Protestant, was half-Jewish by birth. In other words, "cultural Marxist" is a dog-whistle. It is indeed true that many advocates of African American liberation and some critical race theorists acknowledge a debt to Angela Davis, who was taught by Herbert Marcuse, quite possibly the only member of the Frankfurt School who was sympathetic to the New Left. The Frankfurt School's famous critique of mass culture was elitist in tone, despite radical pretensions. Horkheimer and Adorno disdained the New Left students – ill attired

demonstrators with bad manners reminded them of the Nazis.

Fascism did not emerge ex nihilo, and Stanley persuasively explores its roots in settler colonies and nationalist movements. Settler colonial regimes in North America, Hawaii, Africa and indeed Israel anticipated many of the characteristics of fascism, even in cases where fascist regimes in the true sense never emerged. The land is perceived as empty (*terra nullius*), because it is not fully and meaningfully settled, and farmed; it is ready for settlement, because the people who claim it are supposedly lazy and degenerate and have neglected it, and perhaps were not really or barely there in the first place. The history and culture of the indigenous people is regarded as worthless. In the United States, residential schools aimed at erasing indigenous culture and language and changing "savages" into agricultural workers, educated, inasmuch as it was deemed possible, in the Christian tradition. Cultural genocide was the aim. Stanley's own father, Manfred Stanley, described the education of Kikuyu children in Kenya, who were taught British history but none of their own. Cultural erasure and the imposition of a foreign culture may involve symbolic more than actual violence. However, in case of rebellion, something worse awaits. The treatment of the Mau Mau rebels in internment camps has, as Stanley notes, been graphically described by Caroline Elkins in her book on British imperialism, *Legacy of Violence* [2022]. In those camps prisoners were treated as nonpersons, people with no rights at all, existing beyond society in what the Nazi jurist, Carl Schmitt, called "a state of exception." The term "concentration camp" is indeed a colonial invention, and it was used by the British in the Boer War to describe the places where they placed their Afrikaner prisoners. Stanley might have said more about Namibia, then Südwestafrika, where the Germans carried out a genocide in the early years of the century. Some of the very same people later became Nazis co-operating with the Final Solution, including the raciologist Eugen Fischer. Right now, a state of exception exists throughout Gaza, and Stanley describes the first months of its imposition.

Fascism always involves some form of extreme nationalism. Nationalism can occur among

conquistadors and the people they conquer; it can flourish among the dominant ethnic group of a continental empire and among its various subject peoples. While colonizers often tried to stamp out traditional culture, indigenous and revivalist nationalisms often emphasized it. Modern nationalism is closely linked to two phenomena, the role of print capitalism in circulating vernacular texts to the masses (as described in Benedict Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities* [1983]), and secondly the Romantic era notion that each nation had its own unique traditions, folklore, epics, music and character. Research in folklore and comparative philology closely associated with the movement known as romanticism supported these notions. There is a paradox that Stanley doesn't observe. The relativistic anthropological notion of culture shares with extreme nationalism the notion that each society may have a unique essence. Nationalisms, Stanley rightly observes, may emphasize different criteria of hierarchy and distinction. American exceptionalism is founded on both "race" and "religion." It was the manifest destiny of free, Christian Anglo-Saxons to expand the frontier. Nazi ideas of hierarchy were sustained primarily by notions of racial difference. Indian nationalism today is grounded in the Hindu and anti-Muslim program of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. Israeli nationalism today is primarily religious in basis (Stanley does not address the claim that it was once secular.) Language is a key factor in contemporary Russian nationalism. Putin denies that there is a Ukrainian nation. There is only one Russian people and only one Russian language. Most Ukrainians can speak Russian, and Ukrainian is no more than a regional dialect. This argument is persuasive, but Stanley ought to address the effects of the 1930s famine and the incorporation of Polish-speaking areas after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. As already noted, all nationalist ideologies are based on myths that sustain hierarchical claims and attempt to erase the history of subject peoples.

Conspiracy theories are integral to the myth-making process of many varieties of racism. Stanley has much to say about the Great Replacement Theory concerning white racial decline which has been utilized by the new fascists in Europe, and has been embraced by many supporters of Trump. He traces its salience in the USA to Madison Grant's book,

"The Passing of the Great Race," published in 1916, and wildly popular for 20 years thereafter.

There are, regrettably some subsidiary arguments in the concluding chapters that we have no space to discuss. Rather we draw the reader's attention to Stanley's chilling and accurate forecast regarding the destruction of democratic institutions in the USA, and his revelation as to the source of the model they used. First, Stanley analyses Project 2025, the policy document that was assembled by the Heritage Foundation in 2023. It called for the demolition of the administrative state, the support of family values, the assertion of American interests and the defence of "freedom." Four of its writers, including the Christian nationalist, Russell Vought, who played a central role, are now in Trump's cabinet. In Florida Governor de Santis had already begun to implement his agenda in defence of "freedom" and family values. It has accelerated between 2022 and the present day. Abortion in Florida has been made virtually impossible to obtain. Sex education which includes reference to homosexuality and transgender phenomena is banned in Florida schools. There can be no mention of critical race theory. Books by Ta Nehisi Coates, Kurt Vonnegut, Ayn Rand (sexual content apparently), Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" have been cast out of the curriculum. Many rejected books have been consigned to the garbage, but there have been no actual book burnings yet. DeSantis has appointed political hacks who support him as Presidents of several state universities in Florida and made similar appointments to the board of governors. New hiring policies are in place, a form of affirmative action in favour of conservatives. Course offerings in the humanities and social sciences, and most particularly in gender studies, have been gutted. DeSantis has accomplished this assault on academic freedom in short measure, and resistance so far has not been effective.

Inasmuch as Stanley's father's family experienced the rise of the Nazis at first hand, he is well aware of the precedent for the proposals of the 2025 Project and for DeSantis's educational blitzkrieg. Between March 1933 and early 1935, the Nazis introduced legislation which suspended habeas corpus (after the Reichstag fire), enabled the party

to govern without consulting the legislature, took over the civil service, abolished other political parties, fused the organs and symbols of the party with those of the state, and deprived Jews of citizenship. This process was described as *Gleichschaltung*, a term used by electricians, apparently to refer to an arrangement where several functions can be synchronized quite effectively by pulling a single switch. And so now we have a simultaneous assault on the civil service (DOGE and the attempt to abolish the Department of Education), a secret police force (ICE) engaged in the arrest and brutal imprisonment and expulsion of illegal immigrants and even Green Card holders without habeas corpus, the suspension of the AID program on which many poor countries depend, a full scale attack on academic freedom and a dramatic reduction of funding to universities such as Harvard and Columbia which are viewed as sources of dissidence and "antisemitism", and the establishment of concentration camps in Florida (DeSantis's "Alligator Alcatraz") and in El Salvador, where policing and torture have been outsourced to a compliant foreign dictator. There is no need to worry about the legislature thus far, because narrow majorities have been sustained by both fear and loyalty and the 2026 elections may be fixed if enough voters can be disqualified. The Supreme Court was packed by dubious means during Trump's first term. It has caused few problems so far.

Stanley's analysis purposely elides distinctions many make between the context and nature of fascism from the 1920s to the 1940s and today's far right. The era of the Great War and the Great Depression may be distinguished from our times which are marked by the End of History, the Great Recession, the collapse of neoliberalism and the pandemic. Instead of the radio, the press and Nuremberg, we have the propagation of fake news by individuals on social media ("disinfotainment"). But in our view Stanley is correct to stress the disturbing continuities rather than the discontinuities between the old and new fascisms. Each day we witness more *Gleichschaltung*.



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# YIDDISH

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## ADVENTURES IN YIDDISHLAND

By freygl gertsovski

Note: colonial names have been intentionally de-capitalized

Between June 27 and July 7, I road tripped around the northeast united states encountering Yiddish cultural moments (one even initially completely unexpected) that circled back to UJPO and camp naivelt. Here are some tales from my adventures in yiddishland.

The weekend of June 27 to June 29, I camped at Old Songs Festival with my partner and her family. They've been going to this family-friendly folk, fiddle, bluegrass, country, blues, americana, and other traditional music, song, and dance festival for 35 years and this was only my second time. As a casual enjoyer of these genres but not a regular attendee, I knew I had to take time to research which bands I liked. Lo and behold, as I scanned the online program the day before the festival, the Klezmatics were on the bill! I already had tickets to see them the following week and had no idea the first time I'd be seeing them live would be at this festival.

Over the course of the festival, the Klezmatics played the main stage twice, a smaller stage together with a Quebecois band in a session aptly named "Poutine with a side of Borscht", and even led a klezmer instrumental workshop, which my partner attended, while I went to a West-African hand drum workshop. Therefore, this festival's commitment to diversity extended beyond Ashkenazi folk music. Incredibly talented Black musicians with messages about the Black history and roots of the 'American' music we were hearing all weekend really set the tone. By the end of the festival, every audience member could tell you the banjo was a Black instrument for 200 years before white folks tried to claim it.

Last month, when I shared that my Old Songs-attending in-laws would be right at home at Camp Naivelt, that's because folk music has always been political. It's no surprise then that in a community of activists and artists that Camp Naivelt was once an important stop on the folk revival circuit where Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson came to play.



Klezmatics and Lavender Light Gospel Choir at City Winery, nyc

The Klezmatics, for their part, have always been known to cross genres and collaborate outside of traditional klezmer with musicians from other backgrounds. Their new york city show that I attended towards the end of my two-week trip, on the night of July 8, was performed with the Lavender Light Gospel Choir, a mostly queer and mostly Black powerful and uplifting chorus, and Joshua Nelson, delivering "kosher gospel" in the form of traditional Black spirituals and Jewish prayers as well as hard-hitting honkytonk piano playing.

Immediately from Old Songs my road trip took me to the Yiddish Book Center, where in my role as the Director of Rad Yiddish, I was selected to be one of 18 organizations for the 2025-56 of the Center's Yiddish Arts and Culture Initiative. This entails bringing Yiddish cultural programming to our local communities. Between workshops on Yiddish

history, culture, literature, music, and dance, I got to meet fellow cohort participants - Jewish artists and professionals from synagogues, community centres, galleries, archives, theatres, and more and tell them about our project.

Together with UJPO, Rad Yiddish will present a 2-part event in September called "Yiddish Art and Activism" led by artist and educator Shaorni Sibony.

The first event on the afternoon of Sunday, September 7 will be a Radical Yiddish History Tour of Kensington Market. We will revisit the radical heart of Yiddish-speaking communities in Toronto around Kensington Market and beyond. Featuring stories connected to the season, from Labour Day Parades to Yom Kippur Balls, we'll explore the hidden histories and diverse lineages of Toronto's Yiddish activists. We will hear tales of the 1933 anti-fascist march up Spadina, the music of the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir, and the life and death of Emma Goldman, the "most dangerous woman in the world." Guided by tour-leader Sharoni Sibony, we'll hear from current UJPO members about the sites that shaped the Jewish Left locally as we uncover an energizing legacy of resistance, resilience, and creativity that can inspire us in confronting fascism today.

This outdoor event will be followed by an art-making event on the afternoon of Sunday, September 14, a Radical Archival Collage Workshop. Using copies of historic pamphlets and protest signs, broadsides and bulletins, musical scores and more, from the archives, we'll build new art out of the remnants of our radical Yiddish past. Layering on our own relationships to Toronto's Jewish community and activism, and putting the present and past in conversation, we will ask, "what possible futures emerge?" No art skills or Yiddish knowledge is required - just a willingness to play with paper and glue! All materials will be provided and there will be a chance to share the art with the UJPO community at a later event.



2025-26 cohort of the Yiddish Arts and Culture Initiative

outside the Yiddish Book Center, Amherst, Massachusetts

I stayed in western Massachusetts for the rest of the first week of July after the Yiddish Book Centre program ended to attend another weekend folk music festival. KlezCumington is a Yiddish cultural festival in its fifth year organized by queer Northampton Yiddishists on a farm. It's very *hey mish*, political, and joyous. This year's theme was *landmenshaftn*, Yiddish for mutual aid societies - a *landsmann* being a person from the same hometown or neighbourhood as you from back in the old country.

Festival workshops covered the full gamut of global and local histories of these mutual aid societies with a particular focus on the International Workers Orders and its largest section, the Jewish People's Fraternal Order. This is where my ears perked up in Jennifer Young's workshop because I already knew a little bit about UJPO's history, but this workshop unpacked so much more. She talked about how IWO brought together the Communist-affiliated *landmenshaftn* of various ethnic groups under one umbrella organization. Internationalism meant international internally within their organization more so than globally. They were committed to anti-racist political education across the various

lodges and chapters, so that a Black person could go to a Hungarian lodge and feel just as welcome as in their own Black chapter. Therefore, the Jewish chapters were unique in being landmenshaftn with most but never exclusively Jewish membership, something that holds true for UJPO today.

There used to be hundreds of these landmenshaftn, many not all that political, but they existed to fill basic social services like health insurance, banking, and burials that the working class could not afford on their own. By throwing fundraising balls and social events and pooling their money, they were able to provide for the most under-resourced and for each other. Now these mutual aid societies overwhelmingly no longer exist. People at the festival were talking about them as a source of inspiration for possible mutual aid organizing today but also as a historic relic, and this is where I got fired up.

I started telling these activist festival goers about UJPO, how it's still thriving after a century with robust social and political programming, a shule, intergenerational membership, a summer camp that is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and much more. In that moment, I realized even more than ever before what a legacy UJPO truly is given that we still exist when other equivalent organizations folded. I hope I inspired some folks to come visit us to see a living landmenshaft.

Ironically, but perhaps not surprisingly, UJPO only recently changed its organizational designation from an insurance company to a not-for-profit. Saying that we used to be an insurance company is confusing, but it makes a lot of sense in the context of these radical mutual aid movements and what they were doing materially for community members. For example, UJPO is no longer a credit union nor does it retain a community doctor, but it still offers affordable burial.

Jennifer, who gave the KlezCummington workshop on the IWO, ran the Yiddish Arts and Culture

program I had just attended earlier in the week (the Yiddishist world can be really small sometimes; in fact more than half the workshops at this year's KlezCummington were delivered by some of YBC staff members who lean more progressive than the organization as a whole), but it was not until the festival that I learned Jennfier's own research and interests lie in leftist Yiddish movements, in particular the IWO. Therefore, I learned she's been in touch with Prof. Elissa Sampson who manages the IWO archival holdings at Cornell. It turns out our very own Ester Reiter is also connected to these archives with her own personal and academic connections to research on the IWO and the UJFO to which UJPO is the Canadian counterpart.



Jonathan Boyarin, Patricia Voorhies-Schneider, Kathie Hodge, Sarah Schneider, Deborah Berman, Edith McCrea, David Forman, Elissa Sampson, freygl gertsovski at Yiddish-speakers potluck in ithaca, ny

And who would I be in conversation with less than a week after the KlezCummington festival? Elissa Sampson! She was one of a dozen attendees of the latest Yiddish Shmues that I occasionally organize with other Yiddish-speakers in ithaca, ny in which we bring over a potluck dish to someone's house and chat fully in Yiddish for a couple hours. This shmues was the very last night of my two-week adventures in Yiddishland.

I didn't expect to be leaving canada only to discover so many links to back home. Folk arts and activist



networks then and now are truly part of international movements.

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## CANADA

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### The Current Bubble Ban Controversy in Canada

By Paul Weinberg

*Please note that this is a continuation of Hamilton's Report on page 4.*

Cities in Canada such as Vaughan, Calgary and Toronto all have bubble zone protest ban municipal bylaws in place.

The city of Vaughan (north of Toronto) was the first to pass such a bylaw in response to a rally on March 7, 2024, by pro-Palestinian rights activists against the marketing of occupied Palestinian real estate, including land on illegal West Bank settlements, at a local synagogue, Beth Avraham Yoseph, in nearby Thornhill.

Lately, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has announced its own Charter Rights legal challenge of the June 2024 Vaughan bubble zone bylaw.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ccla-charter-challenge-vaughan-bubble-zone-protest-bylaw-1.7569358>

A separate bubble zone protest ban in Toronto will have some bearing on what happens in Hamilton, says Anthony Marco, president of the Hamilton & District Labour Council who is part of the coalition opposed to a protest ban.

The Toronto Star reported that Toronto city council, with the support of Mayor Olivia Chow, another progressive politician, passed a protest ban despite warnings of its questionable legality by Toronto city

legal staff. Newspaper columnist Ed Keenan says the Toronto city councillors are going through a political exercise despite this warning to please a vocal pro-Israel constituency within the city, about one year before the next municipal election.

[.https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/here-s-what-s-really-behind-toronto-s-new-bubble-zones-that-limit-protests-it/article\\_0a901970-e7f2-44a1-bccb-69295f5bd4fa.html](https://www.thestar.com/opinion/star-columnists/here-s-what-s-really-behind-toronto-s-new-bubble-zones-that-limit-protests-it/article_0a901970-e7f2-44a1-bccb-69295f5bd4fa.html).

In fact, as Anthony Marco has noted, the decision by Toronto city council during its deliberations to extend the ban in front of a place of worship and other prohibited spaces, such as schools and daycares, from 25 metres to 50 metres (Chow did not support this) will in practice prevent protesters from standing in places where they can effectively and respectfully protest.

In theory, the bylaw permits legal, peaceful demonstrations. In practice, its vague words about actions that may be said to insult members of a vulnerable group may constitute a denial of free speech.

### Back in Hamilton

Marco suggests that it is possible that Hamilton is delaying any decision on proceeding with a protest ban bylaw until after Toronto grapples with its own charter challenge which has not yet been announced and likely to be a time-consuming process.

This may explain a possible delay in the introduction of a Hamilton bubble zone.

“One of the reasons the city sends staff to go and research [a possible bylaw], is that everything the city of Hamilton does is based on liability. What they are afraid of is that they are going to get hit with a charter lawsuit. And they will be hit with a

charter lawsuit. You can be sure of that,” stated Marco.

The labour leader says if Hamilton city council applies the basic ingredients of the Toronto protest ban which includes places of worship, childcare and schools, it will make staging a protest, a march or even a Labour Day parade more difficult to do within Hamilton without drawing the negative attention of a local bylaw enforcement officer.

Marco used a computing mapping app. to pinpoint 600 different locations across Hamilton where a ban might apply if the proposed bylaw is passed:

“The city has open data files where you go onto the web site and get a map layer of all of the educational institutions in Hamilton and all of the places of worship in Hamilton.”

Using Google technology, he has created his own map to pinpoint the likely no-go areas for protests in Hamilton.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1t0nbK8GNRTFldqw2NyFu4bmAdb3uioA&usp=sharing>

Marco agrees that the large plaza fronting Hamilton City Hall on Main Street West and a popular spot for local political rallies would possibly be covered by the ban. The plaza is situated across the street from the New Vision Anglican Church.

There are many “gray areas,” when it comes to describing a building as a place of worship, which Hamilton city lawyers will have to nail down, argued Marco. “Almost every hospital has a prayer room.

Does that mean that a hospital is a place of worship?”

One final wrinkle is the promise by newly elected prime minister Mark Carney to introduce a bubble zone law on a national level. No details have been announced. The intention of the Liberal party is to “make it a criminal offence to intentionally and willfully obstruct access to any places of worship,

schools, and community centres; and a criminal offence to willfully intimidate or threaten those attending services at these locations.”

<https://liberal.ca/mark-carneys-liberals-release-plan-to-fight-crime-protect-canadians-and-build-safer-communities/>

An Addendum by the Editors of UJPO News.

Several critics of bubble zone legislation (e.g. Desmond Cole in *The Breach*) have observed that existing laws already deal with some of the issues bubble zone by-laws clumsily address. For example, Section 176 of the Criminal Code deals with obstructing or inflicting violence on a priest or the congregation at a religious service. Section 319, we might note, is the so-called "Hate Law." And finally, we should note that Section 318 prohibits the wilful advocacy of genocide. Perhaps, some of the more zealous defenders of the Israeli genocide, who advocate the introduction of bubble zones, should be made aware that they could risk prosecution under Section 318!

We note also that bubble zone legislation is not a new phenomenon. It was used in British Columbia against truly violent anti-abortion activists. It has also been used apparently against lesbian and gay activists.

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## A LITTLE NOSH

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Beet and Nectarine Salad with Toasted Nuts

By Harriet Zaidman

Summer salads are easy to make and are so appealing to look at. This light dish can be made in different ways - substitute peaches or oranges instead of nectarines, use walnuts instead of almonds, sprinkle with another favourite cheese (or leave it out to make it a vegan meal) or add a bottom layer of chickpeas, farro, quinoa or other grain to make it more substantial. The flavourful



dressing unites the fruit and the beets for a pleasing seasonal repast. Don't be shy to experiment.

These and nearly 400 other delicious recipes can be found at [northendnosh.weebly.com](http://northendnosh.weebly.com).



#### Ingredients

3 medium fresh beets (about 1 pound)  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 teaspoon grated orange zest  
2 tablespoons orange juice  
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar  
2 teaspoons honey  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
Fresh baby spinach or torn mixed salad greens  
2 medium nectarines or peaches, sliced (peeled or not)  
Crumbled goat cheese, feta, blue cheese or other cheese  
1/2 cup chopped almonds, walnuts or other nuts, toasted

#### Method

Preheat an oven to 425°. Scrub the beets and cut the tops off. Wrap the beets in foil. Place the on a baking sheet.

Bake 50-60 minutes or until tender when pierced with a fork. Remove the foil and let them cool

completely. Peel the beets and cut them into slices or wedges.

Cut the nectarine into slices. Set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk the oil, orange zest, orange juice, vinegar, honey, mustard, salt and pepper until blended thoroughly. Line a platter with the arugula, spinach or salad greens.

Arrange the beets on top of the greens, Arrange the nectarines on top of the beets.

Crumble the goat cheese or feta on top of the nectarines.

Drizzle with vinaigrette over the cheese, nectarines and beets.

Sprinkle the salad with the toasted nuts.

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## MIDDLE EAST

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### AN EVENING WITH PETER BEINART

Henry Lowi with Kate Azure

On May 12, UJPO co-sponsored an evening with Peter Beinart, author of *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza: A Reckoning* (published by Alfred A. Knopf and reviewed by Andrew Lyons in the spring issue of UJPO News, 46:1:12). This is the fourth book by Beinart, professor of journalism and political science at City University of New York, who is also the editor-at-large of *Jewish Currents*, a New York Times opinion columnist, an MSNBC political commentator, and a fellow at the Foundation for Middle East Peace.

Billed as a "powerful night of conversation on Jewish identity, liberation, and resistance," the event at Parkdale Hall on May12th in Toronto was well attended, with standing room only. The UJPO Executive intended that the event go beyond UJPO's usual circle of members and draw in a wider range of concerned citizens to create a unifying discussion with communities to face, by implication, the consequences of Zionist oppression and genocide.

Kate Azure made notes, and the following is a summary of those notes. All errors are mine.

UJPO Executive Director Sarena Sairan introduced Beinart, with onstage discussants Ben Murane from the New Israel Fund, and Sheryl Nestel of Independent Jewish Voices. Later, there would be a short Q&A with representatives of community organizations, including Standing Together, Jewish Faculty Network, Congregation Shir Libeynu, IfNotNow, and Faculty for Palestine. That format worked well and was well received by the audience. IJV's Nestel began the conversation by stating that her family has followed Beinart's political evolution as a "spectator sport" over the years and warmly welcomed Beinart. She suggested that, in his book, Beinart stopped short by not offering solutions to the moral damage inflicted on all Jews by Israeli actions. Despite the title of the book, he doesn't tell us how a specifically Jewish recovery might take place after Gaza's destruction.

Beinart responded that he has an American perspective and that that perspective has shifted -- from the 1970s when Jewish communities valued equality under the law and supported racial diversity to now -- where the most powerful Jewish organizations are de facto threats to liberal democracies because they support Israel and Trump.

Organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) are morally corrupt, leading to Jewish students who protest against the destruction of Gaza, are being accused of antisemitism, even being expelled from their campuses and beaten by pro-Israeli students. Beinart suggested that this type of complicity with Trump and his party will backfire on the ADL and incite more antisemitism against Jewish communities.

NIF's Murane expressed disappointment in the political Left organizations' positions on Gaza. He is disappointed in the Jewish community organizations' response as well as that of the pro-Palestinian camp, as they witness the decimation of Gaza. He opined that the choice appears to be for the Left to de-humanize pro-Zionists and for their opponents to de-humanize pro-Palestinians. Both sides have "bad actors" who go against peaceful protest. He asked Beinart, why then bother with trying to unite the left? And who is responsible for fixing the dilemma?

Beinart reminded the audience of how the anti-Apartheid and the anti-war movements in the United States brought groups of people with widely different views together. People united despite the fact that some protesters were disrespectful of U.S. soldiers and supported violent guerrilla movements. Beinart recognized that moments of extreme disruption and brutality don't bring out the best in people, but that big moments will also lead to a certain discipline. Groups must keep "moral hygiene"—i.e., focus on the "core demand" which can unite disparate groups. He suggested that the current core demand is for the U.S. not to give Israel military and diplomatic impunity—and for Israel not to destroy Palestine.

Nestel noted that Beinart's observation about the shift in Jewish political movements to the Right coincides with the decline in Jewish intellectuals who once had influence. Now Jewish influence is largely exercised by donors to universities and other cultural centres.

Beinart agreed that the Jewish influence in the U.S. is becoming more dependent on a small number of millionaires and billionaires. A rabbi had explained to him that one person can fund an entire Jewish community and so can claim to speak for the entire community. For instance, AIPAC raises money to influence Congressional elections, creating intellectual and cultural shifts everywhere, and

claiming to be liberal while collapsing intellectual capacity. Some people in New York say they oppose the Democratic Party because it's anti-Israel.

Murane agreed. Many children of the most influential U.S. Jews. are going “against their parents” and lobbying in support of the NIF. They recognize AIPAC as Republican.

Beinart said that he cannot give advice to those in the audience who have a healthy society and life in Canada. What gives him hope is the talent, energy and anger among young Jewish leaders in the USA, even though they are alienated and have no moral leaders to model now. He suggested that more American young people are interested in religious renewal as well as moral protest. They will respond by looking for a deeper, richer Jewish commitment and connection, and that will start a renewal. For instance, ten new prayer groups began in New York last year to campaign for ending unconditional support and impunity for Israel, and that will create more and deeper options for the Jewish Left than in the past.

In the Q&A, a representative from Congregation Shir Libeynu asked Beinart: How can Zionists and non-Zionists pray together? Some see Zionism as just aspirational, but that contradicts the current Jewish political state and creates dissonance. How does one sustain such sentiments with holy prayer and text?

Beinart responded that aspirational texts about “Israel” were written when there was no Jewish state. The view was that Jews cannot create sovereignty until the Messiah comes. If Jews were to do so, it would not end well. There are three different meanings of “Israel” — people, land, and recently added, a state or nation.

He emphasized that land is not the same as a state. Israelites have an obligation to behave in any land.

Holiness is universal and requires respect for human dignity. If anyone, not just Jews, denies human dignity on land, religious texts say that ‘the land will vomit you out.’ Beinart then referred to religious texts: When Jews create a state or nation, akin to a “kingdom on earth”, it is said that God is displeased.

The representative from Faculty for Palestine referred to Chapter 5 in the book, in which Beinart invited readers on a journey, and asked about 19th century European Jews who, as settlers in colonies, contributed to success and stability in the places they colonized.

Beinart called this a difficult question. Even though most Jews attained “whiteness” in Europe, American Jews still see themselves as marginalized. Jewish security used to be sought by aligning with the marginalized. In Mandela’s trial, both the South African prosecutor and defence lawyer were Jews.

But now, in the U.S., it is Jewish organizations who give current authorities the names of their own members who are pro-Palestinian activists, turning them in for retribution. Beinart fears that Americans have identified with Israel because their story of European settlers is similar to the U.S. Americans identify with Israelis in their treatment of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. Both portray the marginalized and indigenous peoples as barbarians or savages. As the U.S. state becomes more autocratic, anyone who challenges that story will be brutally repressed.

The representative from Standing Together asked Beinart how a one-state solution could be possible.

In his book, Beinart noted, he is not asking Jews to forget the trauma of October 7th. However, as a result of that now terrible history, many believe that Jews need a state more than ever, where they rule, not where everyone has an equal voice in

government. He calls this “Israeli exceptionalism”, and said that Israelis need to “de-exceptionalize” their narrative as victim, as did countries in the recent past: Protestants in Northern Ireland were terrified of Catholic political equality; white South Africans were convinced that they would be slaughtered if Blacks came into power; White Americans thought if Black people weren’t kept as slaves, then whites would be enslaved instead. In Northern Ireland and South Africa, violent uprisings by the IRA and ANC were prolonged by the dominant powers’ refusal to accept political equality. Violent oppression requires violent responses as a last resort. Once non-violence was negotiated and the marginalized are given the vote, Beinart says a peaceful solution was possible.

Beinart went on to say that Israel is currently the most dangerous place for a Jew to live. It’s a divided apartheid society. If everyone were treated equally under the law, everyone would be safer. It’s possible even now. Within Israel, Palestinian Israeli health care workers are the majority in Israeli hospitals and clinics.

The representative from IfNotNow asked about the cautious liberal language in Beinart’s book, where he seems to withhold or downplay controversial concepts and positions. In response, Beinart described his approach when talking with many different groups. He tries to avoid drowning out the Palestinian voice. However, he is aware his audiences are generally white, so he tries to highlight the moral dilemma. He uses moderate language, since his environment is mostly liberal and he recognizes that he is himself a privileged white male.

Beinart wants to allow people to speak regardless of their stand, because he’s suspicious of those on the Left or Right who are willing to override human rights. He is careful not to alienate with language. He says Israel deserves to be described as an apartheid state, and the killings are indeed genocide,

but he feels he can be more effective and discuss the same reality by using terms that accord with some of his listeners’ values. For instance, instead of using the word “genocide” he would ask “Wouldn’t you agree that this is not the way humans should be treated?”

Finally, Beinart answered UJPO’s Shayle Kilroy’s question whether he is “anti-Zionist” and, “if not, why not?”. Beinart spoke favourably of the “cultural Zionist” tradition. Reviving Hebrew as a language could be an expression of powerful Jewish cultural values, rather than worshipping a national Zionist state.

Beinart followed up with a book signing for those who brought their books or bought their books after the event. Refreshments and further discussions continued among audience members. This event was co-sponsored by Ben McNally Books, and it raised \$12,000 to be sent the Masafer Yatta community.

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## UNITED JEWISH PEOPLE'S ORDER

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.

Opinions expressed in signed articles are the authors' and not necessarily those of UJPO.

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