

The United Jewish People's Order invites you to our annual

THIRD SEYDER

100 YEARS OF RESISTANCE: CHOOSING COURAGE

Saturday, April 4, 2026

אונדזער גבורה
אונדזער מוט



Music :

Marching Disorder
Marilyn Lerner
David Wall & More

Doors: 4:00
Seyder: 5:00
Dinner: 7:00

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 **100 Years of Resistance: Choosing Courage**. David, our Director of Culture & Development, Shayle, our Operations Manager, and I, have worked to curate our Third Seyder with extensive contributions from UJPO elders members, insiders, allied comrades, community leaders, organizers, and friends. But just before we introduce everyone, Shayle has some housekeeping notes to share:

Housekeeping

- You can find the bathrooms located in the adjoining room. There is one wheelchair accessible bathroom at the far end of the room. If you need to access the venue's elevator, we have a volunteer assigned. Just let us know if you need help. The seyder program will be followed by dinner and an afikomen hunt for the kids.
- Speaking of kids - there's kids programming going on in the adjacent room supervised by our childminders. Kiddos are welcome to go between the main room and the kids room.
- Check out the QR codes on your table if you want to follow along with the Haggadah or access the song sheets on your device. There's also print-outs of all the songs you will be hearing tonight.
- 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 the generous volunteers helping us with set-up, food service, and tear down, and our awesome childminders.
- Thank you to all our musical contributors this evening, David Wall, Sarena Sairan, Marilyn Lerner, Maryem Tollar and Naghmeh Farahmand, 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:
 - **Maxine Hermolin** - Maxine is a critical and central pillar to our UJPO community. She was raised in UJPO and was our ED for more than 20 years!
 - **Rachel Epstein** - Rachel is a multi-talented facilitator and program designer. Rachel was our ED for 5 years right before Sarena.

- o **Nigel Barriffe**- Nigel is an elected VP for his union's local. He's an MWS parent, core member of Marching Disorder, and UJPO champion.
- o **Kyo Maclear**- Kyo is a governor-general award winning author, activist and has been a MWS parent and long time UJPO member.
- o **Corey Balsam** - IJV's National Coordinator, Corey is a tireless advocate as a voice of Jewish solidarity with Palestine. Corey and UJPO have partnered on many initiatives.
- o **Evalina Martinez Larsen**: Evalina is a recent graduate of our Adult Secular B'Mitzvah class, a Camp Naivelt resident, and brings us the vision of the future.
- Now Evan Light and Joanne Penhale, two MWS parents, will share a land acknowledgement:

Land Acknowledgement

We like to open our Third Seyders with Yiddish songs of welcome. This year we have a new one: *Gris Bagris Zey Mit Gezang*, or Greet Them With Singing, a catchy little Shabbes song that works perfectly for tonight too.

Song: *Gris Bagris Zey Mit Gezang*

Framing

Good evening, beloved community.

This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the United Jewish People's Order; an entire century of building cultural Jewish life rooted in justice, Yiddishkayt, and solidarity. For one hundred years, UJPO has insisted that Jewish safety and dignity are inseparable from the safety and dignity of all people. Tonight's Third Seyder stands in that living tradition.

And so in this spirit, tonight, approximately 325 of us have gathered not just to retell an ancient story, but to locate ourselves within it.

At Passover, we speak of narrow places, of Mitzrayim, of constriction, of the long journey from oppression to liberation. The Haggadah reminds us that in every generation, each of us is called to see ourselves as if we personally went out from Egypt. Liberation is not memory alone. It is mandate.

We are here tonight because each of us, at one point or another, has chosen courage over fear.

Courage to go against the grain of institutional Judaism when conscience demanded more. Courage to stand in solidarity with our Palestinian kin who continue to be

oppressed. Courage to unite with queer and trans communities, with Indigenous peoples, with mixed-faith families, with those resisting capitalism's cruelty and fascism's rise.

We see that commitment reflected at our head table tonight, bringing together elders who carry decades of organizing wisdom, youth who are shaping the movements of this moment, leaders from partner organizations, cultural workers, union leaders, and those on the front lines of struggle. Our head table represents the proudly diasporist fabric of this community. It is a reminder that no single voice carries liberation alone; it is built in relationship, across difference, with shared purpose.

The story of Passover is not a story of polite deliverance. It is a story of disruption, and of refusing to accept brutality as inevitable. Liberation that required risk.

So courage, in our tradition, is not the absence of fear. It is choosing to act anyway.

Tonight, as we recline and retell and sing, let us remember that this table stretches far beyond these walls. It stretches to Gaza and the West Bank and Iran. It stretches to detention centers, prison cells, and border crossings. It stretches to reservations, to encampments, to every place where people are struggling toward liberation. Our liberation is bound up with theirs.

May this Seyder nourish us, not only with food and ritual, but with resolve. May it root us in ancestral wisdom and propel us toward collective action. And may we leave here strengthened in our promise: to choose courage, again and again and again.

Gut Pesach. Chag sameach.

First Glass of Wine

The courage to name the narrow place.

Friends,

Passover begins in a narrow place.

Mitzrayim. Constriction. Tightness.

The place where breath shortens.

In union organizing, we have a word for that place too.

We call it exploitation.

We call it isolation.

We call it the lie that your suffering is your fault.

The first act of courage is not marching.

It's not striking.

It's not singing.

It's seeing clearly.

It's when a worker says:

“Wait. This isn't about me being weak.

This is about a system designed this way.”

That moment — when someone realizes

“My exhaustion is not personal failure” —

that is an Exodus moment.

UJPO's founders knew this.

Garment workers. Immigrants. Radicals.

Facing antisemitism, precarity, surveillance.

They refused the story that they were alone.

Emma Goldman once said,

“The history of progress is written in the blood of men and women who have dared to espouse an unpopular cause.”

To see clearly is to dare.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel reminded us that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.

The first glass of wine blesses the courage to see clearly —

We must see it.

And then we must bend it.

Tonight, we bless the courage to name the narrow place.

Let us raise our first glass of wine or grape juice. L'chaim.

Often the world is difficult to break down into simple binaries like good and evil. On the other hand, sometimes it's obvious exactly who the villains are. Let's listen to David, Sarena and Marilyn perform Carsie Blanton's swinging take down called "Rich People". Whenever you see the words "**Rich People**" in your handouts, please yell/sing along!

Song: *Rich People*

Grassy Narrows

We'd like to introduce George Radner, here to represent Grassy Narrow's River Run. George is a young Jewish organizer working for many years in Climate Justice and currently volunteering as part of Grassy Narrow's solidarity team. UJPO has participated, promoted and amplified Grassy Narrow's efforts over the years.

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

On April 19th, 1943, on the first night of passover, the people forced into the Warsaw Ghetto launched an armed uprising against the Nazi forces degrading them. Forced against terrifying odds and certain loss, these fighters rallied courage among their people and took up arms, proclaiming on the walls of their Ghetto: "Honorable Death!" When we look back and honour this show of courage, we are called upon to ask: How can we harness the resistant energy we have today? We are inspired to strike back against oppressive forces and be agents of our own destiny.

Tonight, we celebrate 100yrs of UJPO, of peaceful resistance and pacifist support. But tonight, as we also honour the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, this courageous act of armed resistance, we must consider the circumstances that brought our people to this point. What circumstances might bring others to this point? Under what conditions do we see armed struggle as justified, even necessary? UJPO doesn't support war, but let us consider these things, especially in the wake of imperialist violence all over the world.

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 sing *Zog Nit Keyn Mol*.

Song: *Zog Nit Keyn Mol*

Seyder Plate

Thank you David and Marilyn for that beautiful song. Over the last two years, we have collected the contributions of Seyder Plate interpretations from our community, and we have kept these contributions as part of tonight's ritual.

Alex Mlynek from Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) wrote this about **Kharoses**. Kharoses is made from dried fruit and nuts, symbolizing the mortar the slaves were forced to make for the bricks for the Pharaoh in Egypt. Like systems of oppression, bricks seem unbreakable, but they are not. Similarly, people can change. Hearts can be softened. We must not give up on each other. Another world is possible!

Chris Ramsaroop from Justicia for Migrant Workers wrote this about **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, in the cruel ways we criminalize immigrant communities and in the threats of mass deportation. As we remember the bitterness we also honour how collective resistance guides us towards the path of freedom and liberation.

Sarit Cantor, Kohenet and community organizer, said this about **Karpes** – Parsley and other fresh green vegetables remind us that Passover is also a holiday of spring, and the renewal of life. A reminder that our liberation is tied to our relationship with land and place, and that healing always begins with the land.

The Egg's roundness suggests a world without hierarchy- there is no top or bottom. As a metaphor for ending supremacy, roundness shifts us from a vertical way of thinking, to a circular one, where dominance has no place.

Karine Silverwoman from Jews for Tikkun Olam Toronto shared this about **Salt Water**. The salt water represents the many tears we have cried over the past few 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 are sacred and can be filled with both rage and longing for a better world.

Jacob Wynperle, from the Toronto Association of Peace and Solidarity offered this about 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. The lesson of Passover rings true to this day: no one will be freed alone. Today, our liberation from exploitation requires: Solidarity in the workplace; an alliance against monopoly capitalism; and militant working class resistance to the far right.

Sarit Cantor offered this about **Matzah**. Matzah is a hard, rough, and fragile bread. Consider your own rough edges, the places where you feel you could break at any moment. These are the places that need our love.

Daniel Roth from the Centre for Jewish Non-Violence & Maddy Wintermute from UJPO offer their perspectives regarding the **Olives** on our plate. 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 a material and symbolic act of resistance to land theft, and settler-state violence.

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. The orange both disrupts the traditional seyder plate, and sits together with the other symbols in harmony. This reminds us that our queer and trans elders knew they belonged in Jewish community, but they also knew the importance of coalition building and community care toward a liberated world for all.

freygl gertsovski added a **Spoon**. We place a spoon on the seder plate to represent valuing elder, sick, disabled and fat people's lives. The spoon honours the need for everyone to tend to their energy and the fight for disability justice.

Lia Tarachansky, MWS's previous Education Director offers a **shoe** on our seyder plate. As we've been involved in refugee sponsorships these past few years, we have chosen to add a **shoe** to the Seder plate to represent the tens of millions who continue their journeys to safety.

Lastly, we place three special cups beside our Seyder plate. The **Cup of Miriam** celebrates her leadership and the life-sustaining water she provided in the desert. The **Cup of Ruth** honors those who are Jewish by choice. And the **Cup of Eliyahu** honors the prophet who brings peace and visits every Seder.

For those of us sharing this seyder in-person, help yourself to some karpes/parsley dipped in salt water, and remember that amidst our tears, life is renewed.

Yachatz

Traditionally, around the mid-point of the Seyder, the middle matzah on the table is broken, this is called Yachatz. Let's all take a moment to find the middle matzah, hold it in our hands and consider what meaning we derive from this action. Over the last few years many of us have experienced a breaking, or a feeling of brokenness. This has no doubt been exacerbated by how charged it seems our identity has become.

But what if this brokenness was a process to be cherished? What if it's a necessity to find a better version of ourselves? By cracking and breaking, we expose parts of ourselves that would otherwise be hidden, with the chance to turn inward and contemplate these new-found edges of our being.

On the count of three, let's break the matzah together - 1,2,3...

Now, there is the Afikomen: hiding the bigger piece of the matzah for children to find and bring back to the table at the end of the dinner. When our youth finds these broken pieces, they find within it potential formations and connections that we could not see. They see new ways of being whole that could only be found after a break with the old. Again and again as we continue this tradition, every new generation will find another piece, another crack in ourselves to be considered and reinterpreted.

We are a transient people. We are constantly changing, moving with and around others, adjusting, bending, breaking. This is not a weakness. Rather, a path forward for growth.

We now invite you to eat some maror and charoset on your matzah. There is gluten-free matzah available next to the doors to the adjoining room..

Please now welcome the great Maryem Tollar and Naghmeh Farahmand to the stage, to sing a song of revolution, *The Beautiful One*, written by Sayyid Darwish.

Song: *Il Helwa Di (The Beautiful One)*

Maggid

Sarena: It's our 100th anniversary. This year our Maggid is the story of UJPO. But 100 years is a long time and our history is so complex - how do we retell the story of the United Jewish People's Order?

Shayle: Well... to start off. I don't think 2026 really is our *100th* anniversary.

Rachel: It's not?

Shayle: Well in 1923, a bunch of women, with the encouragement of the newly formed Community Party, left the *Arbeter Ring* (the Workers Circle) and formed the more radical *Yiddisher Arbeiter Froyen Fareyn*, an organization they could be proud to be part of. The men continued fighting for a voice in the Arbeter Ring, but by 1926 realized it was a losing battle and left to form the Labour League in Toronto. In 1945, groups around the country united to become the United Jewish People's Order.

Branches in other parts of the country like Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver joined at different times.

Maxine: UJPO does have a long history of women activists, and we have always supported women's struggles for equality. Although for much of our history, our leaders were men not women.

Rachel: But interestingly, most of the Executive Directors have been women...

Sarena: Yes and two queer EDs.

Shayle: We have so many queer people involved in this community, so obviously queer people are drawn to UJPO. I wonder what the evolution of that was?

Maxine: We have always been an open and welcoming organization to everyone including the LGBTQ+ community.

Rachel: Of course, but it's not perfect. Throughout our history women didn't always have access to leadership positions. There has always been sexism too, at UJPO, and there still is. And being queer in UJPO hasn't always been straightforward either. I do recall one Passover Seyder at the Winchevsky Centre, must have been the early 90s we were singing that Holly Near song, "We are a gentle angry people," and you know there's a verse that goes "we are gay and lesbian people" and somehow that verse got left out. I was sitting at a table with a bunch of UJPO queers and we kind of looked at each other and next thing we knew we spontaneously stood up and started singing that verse.

Song: *We are Gentle Angry People*

Shayle: We've been able to shift and change over the years, always trying to remain true to the leftist politics of the day, whatever that means we have to confront.

Sarena: When I got connected to this organization in the 90s I taught at the Shule. This was when Maxine was ED and she taught me that we can adapt our Jewishness to make sense in our lives. That we can look at our Jewishness without an authoritarian lens! That was huge for me personally. When I first got here I was asked: What feels meaningful to you? I quickly learned that at UJPO, we find our own paths into Jewish life, through culture, justice, memory, community, argument, laughter, music. Some of us find our way in through ritual. Some through politics. Some through family stories or language. All of it counts. Joining the UJPO community meant I could finally make sense of what being Jewish means to me.

Maxine: At UJPO our Jewishness was about community, *menshlekhhkayt* (being good people) and *veltechkayt* (worldliness). In my memory, I can think of a huge range of annual events and community-building opportunities. Some might remember our annual fundraising Bazaars for the Shule, or our annual commemorations to mark the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with the participation of the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir. I have memories of UJPO's NATIONAL conventions which were attended by hundreds of members from across the country including from Montreal, Winnipeg & Vancouver.

And back even further, before my living memory, I know that in the early days of UJPO this community spirit was a lifeline. Most of our members were working class immigrants. Many were fleeing from pogroms in Eastern Europe, coming to North America, with very little in their pockets, but with exemplary ideals in their hearts. They arrived to a very antisemitic society, and were further excluded, even from many Jewish spaces, for their leftist politics and secularism – they needed each other.

Sarena: Exactly! We got our start not just from political ideals, but from a real need to take care of each other. Mutual aid wasn't just ideological... It was practical, everyday survival. At its core, mutual aid is about recognizing our shared responsibility to one another and that our well-being is bound together.

Maxine: Our courageous founders came together and created camps, shules, cultural and political groups. Back in the days before the social safety net, as a Mutual Benefit Society, they put in place membership benefits including sick benefits, unemployment benefits and death benefits and they even established a Credit Union!

In its foundational years, Yiddish was the language of operation – Minutes, programs, etc. were all conducted in Yiddish. Yiddish remained an important part of the Shule curriculum ... through songs and stories.

Rachel: The mutual aid and the culture and the activism were completely tied up together. The political element has always, always been there.

Shayle: Our progressive pro-Communist roots!

Maxine: But you know, UJPO actually was never affiliated with the Communist Party.

Shayle: But wasn't the whole reason for UJPO's founding that the more radical members of the Workers Circle staunchly supported the Russian Revolution?

Maxine: Yes. But while they were pro-Bolshevik and some members, particularly in the early years, were Communists, many did not have Party ties. It was more a sense of progressiveness, a worldview that meant equality, social justice and socialism.

Rachel: We have always faced repression for our radically left politics. Like when our Montreal headquarters were padlocked, or when we were kicked out of the Canadian Jewish Congress. And of course, we know how upset we were to learn about Stalin's murder of our beloved Yiddish artists and poets in the 1950s.

Shayle: I think the lesson I take from our founders is simply that they were willing to take a radical political stance. They were willing to be at the forefront of leftist politics and not just imagine a better world, but actually fight for one, and stand behind what they believed in. You know, there's that interview with Lil Robinson, one of the first campers in 1925, who says "we really believed that Capitalism was gonna crumble any day now, all we had to do was push it and it would fall over". That level of belief in your ideals is so powerful to me. And I hope we can hold onto that as we enter the next 100 years of UJPO.

Maxine: Throughout our history, UJPO has been the Jewish voice in the progressive community and the Progressive voice in the Jewish community. An internationalist ideal that none of us are free until we are all free. That's why UJPO was involved in the Peace movement, the Civil Rights movement, the Anti-Apartheid movement, the Women's movement and was opposed to the War in Vietnam and other struggles against injustice. We organized; we marched; we spoke out.

A favourite memory of mine is when Nelson Mandela was released from prison and came to Toronto where a rally was held at Queen's Park. Organizations active in the Anti-Apartheid movement were invited to present him with gifts and I got to present UJPO's gift and to hug Nelson & Winnie Mandela!

Rachel: When I became ED in 2017, one exciting initiative was through the Indigenous solidarity committee who built relationships at Camp Naivelt with people from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, exploring ways to share the land we have access to on the Credit River. Of course we haven't always perfectly implemented our social justice priorities, but at least we have them to guide us and aspire to!

Sarena: When we're talking about anti-war movements.. and colonialism... and solidarity... we have to talk about Palestine.

Maxine: Of course we do. And over the years, much has changed, there hasn't been one single narrative. In the wake of the Holocaust we were supportive of an Israel that would be a home for both Jews & Palestinians.

Sarena: It's true. There was certainly a time when many in our organization believed in the promise of Israel. Many celebrated the establishment of the state.

Maxine: Yes, much of the time we didn't have much of a focus on it one way or another. As the reality in Israel/Palestine became more clear, UJPO was involved in supporting many peace initiatives there. We continued to organize events and invited speakers who were fighting for a just Israel.

Sarena: My understanding of our organization is that it has always seen itself as something living. We are capable of change. At key points in our history, we have listened deeply to our members, reflected on our values, and allowed ourselves to evolve. This capacity for change is one of our greatest strengths.

In recent years, that process led us to develop a clear commitment to standing with Palestinians in their struggle for rights, safety, and self-determination. We co-founded coalitions such as Jews Say No To Genocide, and we actively support the global movement to end occupation and apartheid in Palestine.

Rachel: You know my parents were involved as Jews in solidarity work with Palestine since the creation of Israel. I inherited that legacy and continued that work since the 1980s. And now I am so, so grateful to the next generation who have taken up this work. Here's to you, the next generation, who will carry this work forward for the next 100 years!

Maxine: I am so proud to have had the privilege of growing up in the UJPO community where the progressive values continue to resonate. UJPO offers a lasting legacy and we have a responsibility to carry it forward. *Fun dor tsu dor ... from generation to generation.*

Sarena: I always learn so much from talking to you guys! To carry the past and the vision forward is to become part of the story ourselves. Oral history is about transforming memory into action, ensuring that the voices of the past continue to influence the future path. Let's not take our eyes off Palestine or Iran. Or Venezuela. Or Cuba. Or Grassy Narrows. Or the fading rights of queer and trans communities. Or, or, or...

Earlier this year, multi-talented community member Karine Silverwoman invited our resident musical group the Shandes to compose a piece for her second documentary film about her family's legacy of activism. Let us listen to a brand new song; **Against the Grain**, featuring soloist Ari Silverwoman, age 8.

Song: *Against the Grain*

Second Glass of Wine

The leap from private pain to public solidarity.

Liberation does not happen because we feel deeply.

It happens because we organize collectively.

The second act of courage

is turning to the person next to you and saying:

“Are you experiencing this too?”

That whisper is sacred.

That whisper is how unions begin.

It’s how mutual aid begins.

It’s how Third Seyders were born.

The Bundists spoke of Doikayt - hereness.

Not waiting for redemption somewhere else.

Dr. King said,

“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

That garment is solidarity.

Workers do not win contracts alone.

They win them together.

And here, I want to teach us something.

Sam Cooke wrote a song in the heart of the civil rights movement.

He wrote it after being turned away from a whites-only motel.

The song is called “A Change Is Gonna Come.”

I want us to learn just two lines —

so that we can return to them throughout the night.

The lines are simple:

It's been a long, a long time coming...

But I know a change gonna' come.

I'm going to sing the first line.

And I'd love you to sing it back.

It's been a long, a long time coming...

But I know a change gonna' come...

Yes.

That was solidarity put to melody.

Tonight, with this second glass,

we bless the courage to stand together.

The kind where you sign the card.

The kind where you show up when it costs you something.

Please raise your second glass of wine, or grape juice! L'chaim.

Song: *A Change is Gonna Come*

The Four Questions & Our Children

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 with the kids tonight. We invite anyone else to join in as well.

Song: *Ma Nishtana*

Tonight we have Kyo to say something about Our Children:

The tradition gives us four children: the wise one, the rebellious one, the simple one, the one who doesn't yet know how to ask. But let us imagine that these are not four different children, but, rather, four moods that move through every child--sometimes even in the same afternoon.

One of my favorite books from childhood, *Where the Wild Things Are*, reminds me that all children deserve the same thing: to be free to express their inner life, the

feelings, fears and needs of being young--even the restless anger that comes with feeling powerless.

It is a story that says: “we need the woods.” We need sometimes to howl and disobey and proclaim our radical moods. We need to keep our imaginations un-tame. We need to remember there are no small questions, small feelings, small people, or small creatures.

So, this is what we are really doing at this table tonight-- what every seder has always been doing. We are keeping the woods alive. We are handing our children stories where someone was afraid and went anyway. Where people moved toward justice and freedom, even when the path was not clear or guaranteed. This is the inheritance we pass down: not certainty, but willingness.

The world is full of beauty but also full of injustices and rules that make us heartsick, and, admittedly, adults sometimes speak in a language that sounds empty and flat and hollow. But tonight, we sit with you, children, in honest company, every kind of you, the bold asker and the quiet watcher and the one who pushes back and the one not yet ready to speak: you are today's wild things. And so are we. We have not outgrown the woods. We will howl alongside you, and push back alongside you, and we will make the rumpus together, with your fresh questions sharpening our convictions.

This year, MWS launched a brand new offering- a virtual b'mitzvah class. Please welcome Isaac McGinty-Rosenberg, one of our virtual b'mitzvah students, who came from the States to be with us tonight. Isaac is a third generation family member of the Rosenberg-Lee legacy. Richard and Harriet, Isaac's grandparents, are very important elders in our UJPO/MWS community.

The Four New Questions

Chosen Family, an inspiring song of acceptance and inclusivity comes from an unlikely source: pop stars Sawayama and Elton John! Let us listen and sing along with our wonderful extended Marching Disorder chosen family...

Song: *Chosen Family*

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 Ilana Gutman, UJPO Member and MWS parent.

Refugee Sponsorship

Third Glass of Wine

Third Glass – The Courage to Build:

Making freedom material.

Seeing clearly and standing side-by-side is not enough.

We must build.

With contracts.

Strike funds.

Schools.

Archives.

Choirs.

Summer camps.

Structures that make freedom real.

Freedom is not a feeling.

It is infrastructure.

UJPO, MWS & Naivelt are infrastructure.

They are proof that diaspora Jewish life does not require supremacy.

To build institutions rooted in justice

is to redeem history.

Slower than protest, less glamorous than speeches.

It requires budgets, meetings, minutes, accountability.

But Heschel said,

“When I marched in Selma, my legs were praying.”

Building is prayer with paperwork.

Sometimes we are pushed back.

Sometimes we are told no.

But we keep building.

Tonight, we bless the courage to build structures
that outlives us.

I now invite you to raise our third glass of wine or grape juice. L'chaim.

In 1919, the Sephardic branch of the Socialist Party of America published a Ladino songbook, which included this song arguing for workers' solidarity. Let us listen to Socialist Hymn.

Song: *Socialist Ladino Hymn*

Thank you for the music, musicians! Now to take us through the 10 Plagues, is Rachel Epstein.

The Ten Plagues

When we put together readings for the seder about the “contemporary 10 plagues,” we often list the terrible things confronting us — racism, capitalism, misogyny, transphobia, etc. However, when we do this, we are actually identifying with Phara'oh, because, in the Pesach story, we are on the side of the plagues. The plagues are the things necessary to break the stubborn will of evil tyrants and their defenders. The plagues are what we wish upon our oppressors.

If we're looking to understand today's struggles in light of the Pesach story, we should not see racism, capitalism, misogyny, transphobia etc. as contemporary manifestations of the plagues, but as contemporary manifestations of Phara'oh, of authoritarian power. And we must manifest our own plagues to break the regimes of the billionaire class who uphold authoritarianism, capitalism and white supremacy.

What are the plagues that will stand up to contemporary power and bring our collective liberation?

In the spirit of being for something, rather than against something, here are the “plagues” we wish upon our oppressors. I invite you to use your pinkies and create a drop of wine on your plates for each plague, but don't lick...

- An end to national borders
- Fair tax on wealth
- The end of capitalism
- Free universal health care for all
- Housing for all

- Food security for all
- Gender and sexual liberation
- Abolish jails and the police
- Meaningful protection of the planet
- Public ownership of corporations

In these challenging times, we must also ask ourselves: in what ways are we complicit with Pharaoh's contemporary forms: white supremacy, genocide, xenophobia, the funding of war, the destruction of the environment. For example, how have we been conscripted into the role of complicity with those oppressing, murdering, and destroying a people and their history?

We face the difficult task of bringing plagues upon the systems that many of us actively benefit from. We must have the courage to call for the destruction of the systems that do not serve our planet and the people of the world, even when that may disrupt our comfort, convenience, and our status quo. We are called to embrace change and the unknown.

Please welcome Maryem and Naghmeh back to the stage, to perform Issalam, a beautiful song invoking **peace**, with words by Ehab Lotayef and music by Maryem and Ernie Tollar.

Song: *Peace*

Thank you guys. For our final and fourth glass of wine, we welcome Nigel back.

Fourth Glass of Wine

Choosing courage again and again.

The fourth glass is about inheritance.

What does it mean

to inherit a labour-based Jewish organization

in a time of rising authoritarianism?

It means we do not inherit nostalgia.

We inherit responsibility.

We inherit elders who confronted fascists in Toronto streets.

Workers who formed labour leagues.

Parents who built schools from scratch.

And we are asked:

Will you steward this with courage?

Courage is not one dramatic act.

It is daily recommitment.

The Exodus did not end at the sea.

It continued in the wilderness.

Freedom requires maintenance.

Because here is the truth:

Change is not something coming to us.

Change is something coming through us.

To liberation — for all.

You are invited to raise your fourth and final glass of wine or grape juice. L'chaim.

Lo Dayenu

Dayenu means “it would have been enough for us”. And, indeed, that’s what some of you may be thinking at this point in the evening. Hang in there - there’s just a *bissel* left. And it’s important.

The traditional dayenu text, like much of the traditional seder, is rather vindictive: “If He had destroyed their idols, and had not smitten their first-born, it would have been enough for us! If He had smitten their first-born, and had not given us their wealth, it would have been enough for us!” Many of us no longer recite these passages. We understand Dayenu as an ancient way of expressing gratitude, in this case for the liberation of the Israelites from slavery, and each step taken along the way to their freedom.

Today, we can choose to see Dayenu as a reminder to count our blessings and to celebrate each win, no matter how far we may feel from our ultimate goal. As activists and people dedicated to liberation of all kinds, taking stock of these advances and celebrating them is crucial.

Scotiabank's divestment from Elbit Systems, a Nakba exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights, the JNF and other pro-occupation groups losing their charitable status, 100 years of UJPO and the massive growth in public support for Palestine, including among Jews – these are all advances toward both Palestinian and Jewish liberation in the 21st century for which we must be grateful.

And yet, these wins, as important as they are, are not enough for us - *Lo dayenu*. How can they be? They are not the end goals, but stepping stones on the long path from *Mitzrayim*, that metaphorical narrow place.

In other words, gratitude is crucial but the work of Tikkun Olam, of repairing the world, must persist along with it. As it is written in Pirkeh Avot "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it".

Lo Dayenu Responsive Reading

If we are free while others are not.

Lo Dayenu: "It would not be enough for us"

If there is peace without justice.

Lo Dayenu: "It would not be enough for us"

If antisemitism is stopped while other forms of racism persist.

Lo Dayenu: "It would not be enough for us"

If the guns fall silent but oppression remains.

Lo Dayenu: "It would not be enough for us"

If "never again" only applies to us.

Lo Dayenu: "It would not be enough for us"

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

Song: *Lo Dayenu*

V'ahavta by Aurora Levins Morales

Nirtzah

Nirtzah marks the end of the seder ritual. In religious hagaddahs, it ends with the words: “Next Year in Jerusalem.”

For the last century and more, this phrase has been used as a rallying call for Jews to make *aliyah*, or move to Israel. But its origins date to well before the Zionist movement. Much more than a call to simply pick up and move, it is an expression of a longing for redemption, for *ha'olam haba*, the world to come.

Jerusalem actually translates to “city or foundation of peace”. Yet the Jerusalem we know today is neither of those things. Quite the contrary. It is a place marked by profound injustice and oppression.

The Jerusalem of today is not the redemption that our ancestors dreamed of, that our tradition calls us toward.

As Jews of conscience, grounded in a rich tradition of justice, it is our collective task to help turn our people away from visions of a Jerusalem of Jewish dominance and towards a Jerusalem – both literal and figurative – of true peace and justice for all.

And so we say together:

Next year in a city of peace with justice.

Next year in a world of liberation for all.

Next year in a free Palestine.

Closing Remarks

As we close UJPO's Third Seyder, *100 Years of Resistance: Choosing Courage*, we honour the extraordinary vision of UJPO's founders. They imagined and built something bold and enduring. A community rooted in justice, culture, and collective responsibility, even when doing so required tremendous bravery. Tonight is about recognizing that what they began is not finished, and that it now lives in us, and in the choices we make and the values we uphold. The takeaway we carry forward is simple, but not easy: **courage is a choice**. And it's a choice we get to make again and again, in our relationships, in our communities, and within ourselves. Whether it's showing kindness when it's inconvenient, challenging injustice when it's uncomfortable, or believing in a better future when it's unclear, each act of courage shapes the world around us.

For our closing song, please welcome **Marching Disorder, our B'mitzvah students, and David, Sarena & Marilyn**, performing our very own *The Future's Here*. If you are comfortable and able, consider standing. But definitely please sing along!

Song: *The Future's Here*.

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.