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## Norwood joins forces against Operation Dudula invasion

NICOLA MILTZ

On Sunday, 27 November, a cavalcade of military-type vehicles drove through a dead quiet Norwood strip, a scene reminiscent of a military coup. It was, in fact, Community Active Protection (CAP) en route to ensure that members of the menacing anti-immigrant vigilante group, Operation Dudula, didn't harm anyone in their protest on the usually bustling street.

You could hear a pin drop as the street came to a virtual early morning standstill when marked and unmarked CAP special intervention vehicles rolled up in a show of force.

Leading the convoy was a CAP Nyala (an ambush protected 4x4 armoured personnel carrier) with members of CAP's riot unit equipped with armadillo suits, shields, and riot gear, including non-lethal weapons for the disbursement of violent crowds.

Some CAP vehicles were fitted with rapid deployment razor coil barriers to prevent protesters from entering residential areas, all of which rolled in with military precision.

It was the culmination of an ongoing fight against crime and grime in Johannesburg's multicultural, trendy Norwood. The suburb's popular business strip, Grant Avenue, is experiencing spiralling upheaval.

Recent clashes between local car guards and vagrants, with gung-ho, independent street security guards – many of whom are said to be foreign nationals – have provoked the ire of the anti-immigrant vigilante group, Operation Dudula.

Norwood was on tenterhooks last Sunday in anticipation of a planned protest by Operation Dudula, demanding that businesses in the area refrain from employing foreign nationals.

Several businesses closed shop for fear of intimidation by protesters, who had made their presence felt in recent days.

According to a mailer put out by the Norwood Oaklands Residents Association (NORA), business owners established a Grant Avenue security initiative "to protect businesses, their clients, and customers from harassment and ensure a good experience for shoppers.

"Unfortunately, about two weeks ago, violent protests took place against the security initiative, which resulted in two members of Premium Security Services being arrested. As a result, Premium was forced to discontinue operations on Grant Avenue," the letter said.

According to witnesses, there was an incident of assault by "foreign national security guards" on a South African car guard who laid a complaint with police, leading to the arrests.

Soon after this incident, businesses started getting letters of demand from Operation Dudula followed by the announcement of the planned protest.

On Sunday, a few hundred Dudula protesters assembled

at the Pikitup depot, before moving towards the Pick n Pay on Louis Botha Avenue and descending on Grant Avenue and then on to the Houghton Hotel.

Lead by the chairperson of the Orange Grove branch of Operation Dudula, Aupa Ngwato, letters of memorandum were handed out to various business owners.

The letter threatened that this was the first phase of its programme, and stipulated that it wouldn't hesitate to embark on phase two should its demands not be met. "We're more than certain that most of you have taken deliberate actions not to employ South African citizens. This agenda has given rise to dissatisfaction among job seeking South Africans. The time has come to

evoke change."

Accusing businesses of "creating unnecessary chaos", Operation Dudula gave them 10 days to "rectify the situation", or else.

There were no incidents during Sunday's protest, but residents and business owners were left rattled.

One business owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, said he closed his shop during the protest. "There's a lot of fear and uncertainty. Dudula is quite threatening and has made life unpleasant," he said.

On Tuesday, several business owners met to discuss a much-needed security solution for the area and the reinvigoration of the existing business forum to unite stakeholders.

Wayne Preston, the chairperson of the Norwood Community Police Forum, told the *SA Jewish Report* that the forum had met business owners and representatives from the Dudula Operation. "The aim is to find common ground so that there's a fluent not aggravated situation, where business owners can feel comfortable to communicate with Dudula and try to ensure Dudula refrains from using intimidating tactics to get its message across," he said.

Operation Dudula sprang up in and around Soweto a little over a year ago, and has been accused of fuelling xenophobic sentiments. Its members have over the past several months been issuing eviction notices to foreign-owned or run shops in Orange Grove,

Yeoville, and other areas

in Johannesburg. They have staged "clean-up" marches through Johannesburg, including the evictions of immigrants from houses and abandoned or hijacked buildings where they have found refuge. These campaigns have led to sporadic looting of migrant-owned shops, and the eviction of some residents.

In another letter given to some business owners, the organisation appealed for donations of R5 000 to serve lunch to its members on the day of the protests.

Continued on page 6>>



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2 SA JEWISH REPORT

Jewish passengers compensated for booting off Lufthansa

Nearly seven months after they were denied boarding in Frankfurt, a group of more than 100 Hasidic Lufthansa passengers are getting paid for their troubles.

The airline is paying each passenger \$20 000 (R340 420) plus giving them \$1 000 (R17 020) to reimburse them for expenses incurred during the May incident, according to Dan's Deals, the discount travel website that first reported the incident at the time. After legal fees and some other expenses, each passenger will net approximately \$17 400 (R296 165), the site is reporting.

Lufthansa wouldn't confirm the dollar figures, but told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it's seeking to settle with each of the affected passengers, capping a series of conciliatory responses to the incident. In May, airline agents in Frankfurt barred many Jewish travellers coming from New York City from boarding their connecting flight to Budapest, citing the fact that some of the passengers weren't wearing masks, as was required at the time. But that rule was applied inconsistently, passengers said at the time, and a Lufthansa supervisor was caught on video speaking disparagingly about Jewish passengers as a group.

Walmart pulls "scarves" that were actually prayer shawls

"Why wear a tallis to shul when you can wear a very real product from Walmart?" Ilan Kogan, an Orthodox rabbinical student, asked on TikTok on 28 November.

Kogan was talking about "Elegant Sunscreen Scarves Sun Block Shawl Scarf Beach Shawl Towel Clothing Accessories for Women Judaism [Blue]," the search engine-optimised title for a product that looked a lot like a tallit, the shawl worn by Jews during morning prayers.

His post was one of several to call attention to the product listed on Walmart's website, with reactions ranging from curiosity ("I have so many questions," tweeted *Atlantic* columnist Yair Rosenberg) to outrage (from the watchdog group Stop Antisemitism). By Tuesday afternoon, Walmart had removed the item, which had been listed for \$40.99 (R698), as well as a second with a similar name from a different seller



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that had been available for the cut-rate price of \$14.49 (R247).

Leonard Cohen's Yom Kippur War concerts serialised

Leonard Cohen's momentous trip to the Sinai Desert to perform for Israeli soldiers in the wake of the Yom Kippur War is being turned into a TV series.

*Who by Fire: Leonard Cohen in the Sinai* will be written by Yehonatan Indursky, a co-creator of *Shtisel*, the landmark Israeli drama about an Orthodox family in Jerusalem, according to *Variety*.

The limited series, an adaptation of journalist Matti Friedman's 2022 book of the same name, will film in Israel in 2024.

Leonard Cohen  
performs in  
Hamburg,  
Germany,  
4 May 1970



Photo: Gunter Junt 1970 K&K Ulf Kruger OHG Rediferns Getty Images

Cohen's trip to the frontlines of the 1973 war became a turning point in the way he incorporated his Jewishness into his songs. For instance, his 1974 album *New Skin for the Old Ceremony* featured *Who By Fire*, a song inspired by the Yom Kippur *Unataneh Tokef* prayer. In spite of being famous, Cohen slept in an army sleeping bag, ate rations, and performed a series of concerts for on-edge soldiers, who decades later told Friedman they were moved by his support.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

Are we winning the World Cup?

Torah Thought



Rabbi Asher Deren –  
Chabad of the West  
Coast, Cape Town

Neither Israel nor South Africa even sent a team to the World Cup, and I won't bother waving my American patriotism around until soccer becomes an actual sport in the United States.

On the public relations front, Israeli journalists are being harassed and intimidated by Iranian, Saudi, and other antisemitic gangsters, freely flaunting their hatred for us on the streets of a country that proudly does so as well.

So, what exactly are we winning in Qatar?

Well, the Tel Aviv to Doha charter flight wasn't the first foray out of Israel into that reliably dangerous territory.

This week's "text message from heaven" is the parsha of *VaYeitzei* that describes the journey of Yaakov out of the safe confines of his parents sheltered home in Israel into the land of treachery and deceit in Charan, not far from modern-day Qatar.

For 22 years, Yaakov endured the derision and disgust of Lavan, the world's first antisemite, who paved the way for the ugliness we see in Qatar today.

But Yaakov won.

First, he returned home with a more powerful sense of identity, pride, and spiritual connection to G-d; second, a beautiful new Jewish family of 12 children; and third, abundant wealth spiritually and materially, having changed the world forever.

When Qatar's temporary Chabad representative, rabbinic intern Eli Chitrik, the son of my dear colleague, Rabbi Mendy, from Istanbul, stands on the streets of Doha with delicious kosher supervised freshly baked

sandwiches this week, he's not just offering some respite to World Cup fans who happen to be of the chosen people. He's also offering a chance to:

1. Reframe our challenges (whether antisemitism or whatever else you're dealing with) as an opportunity to build a stronger Jewish identity and connection to G-d;
2. Build a Jewish family, whether through a nice person you might meet at a kosher food rendezvous, or actually through any form of Jewish

activity which creates the "offspring" ripple effect that every mitzva spawns; and

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Jacob works for his uncle Laban for seven years to marry his younger daughter Rachel. But on the wedding night, Laban gives him his daughter Leah instead. Jacob marries Rachel a week later, after agreeing to work another seven years. Leah gives birth to six sons and a daughter. Rachel gives Jacob her handmaid and two more sons are born. Leah does the same. Zilpah gives birth to Gad and Asher. Rachel's prayers are finally answered and she gives birth to Joseph.

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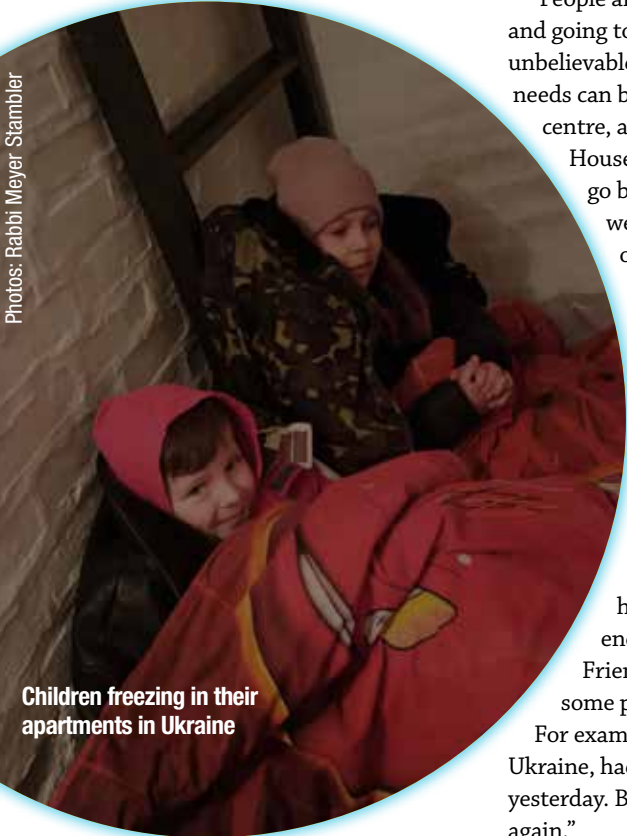




# Winter brings new “front” for Ukraine’s Jews

TALI FEINBERG

As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine stretches to nine months, the country’s people face an even more harrowing challenge: the bitter winter months with a lack of electricity, heating, adequate clothing, water shortages, and dire conditions.



Children freezing in their apartments in Ukraine

“The Jewish community in Ukraine is going through a very difficult time,” says Rabbi Meyer Tzvi Stambler, talking to the *SA Jewish Report* from Dnipro in the east of Ukraine. “These are times that we never thought we would see. To go through such misery, it’s unbelievable! There are hundreds of thousands of Jews still in Ukraine. It is now -2 Celsius, but it can get up to -20 Celsius. The past two weeks, there were days with no water and no electricity.

“On Shabbos, we were in shul and we heard two bombs. We’ve had hours of blackouts, no phones, not enough gas, and no electricity. People are dying. The world doesn’t understand that this is a war against people. This is real terror.”

Stambler is chairperson of the federation council of the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine (FJCU). “At the beginning of the war, the FJCU managed to help more than 30 000 Jews escape the country. We dealt with evacuation; we opened camps for refugees around Europe. We still have a large one open in Hungary. Many Jews

moved to Israel.”

But they continue to help another 33 000 families in 298 locations across Ukraine, providing food and hygiene packages since the invasion began. Now, “we’re fighting against time, trying to get as much funding as we can to bring generators, batteries, heaters, warm clothes, and blankets”, Stambler says.

“People are sitting at home with coats and going to sleep with boots. It’s really unbelievable, but every Jew knows that his needs can be met at the Jewish community centre, at the synagogue, at the Chabad House, and they come. We can’t let them go back without what they need. So we give out 30 000 food packages on a monthly basis, and now we’re struggling to bring them warm clothes, heaters, batteries, and generators.”

Kyiv resident and representative of the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry in Ukraine, Ilya Bezrucho, says “A lot of people are spending 12 hours a day without any electricity. A lot of apartments have no gas or other sources of energy for cooking or heating. Friends around Ukraine report that some power cuts can last up to 20 hours. For example, my mother, in the north of Ukraine, had electricity for only four hours yesterday. But then at night they switch it on again.”

He says the capital city looks like “a nightmare” at night without power. It’s difficult [to see it like that].” Many people live in apartment blocks and struggle to get to their homes without elevators.

“Up to 70% of the Ukrainian electricity network is badly damaged,” he says. “The Russians are striking power plants all over Ukraine. It’s complicated to restore because a lot of the components are difficult to get. In hospitals, many surgeries are done with generators or even without lights. For example in Dnipro, heart surgery was done by flashlight.”

Bezrucho has spent most of the war in Ukraine, but is in Israel to host events encouraging Israelis to support Ukraine. “We have a film about what happened in Mariupol, and a film about the sexual abuses committed by Russian soldiers. Then, we have a film in which viewers wear virtual reality headsets. It shows what’s happening in the occupied regions as coverage in the media is poor. It’s

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important that Israel is 100% on Ukraine’s side. The suffering is on the same level as the Yom Kippur War.”

South African filmmaker Ronnie Apteker who made his home in Kyiv but fled to South Africa when the war began, wrote on his blog, “We’re anticipating being back in Kyiv by the end of the winter in Europe. The winter months are going to be the ultimate test [in Ukraine]. Ukrainians are strong – they will get through this. What’s going on in Ukraine is sickening, and the world just watches. I know this will end at some point and Ukraine will rebuild. Yes, Ukraine is winning this war on the battlefield but Ukrainian citizens are paying an unfathomable price, and it doesn’t seem fair. There’s light on the horizon, and it will shine bright.”



Jewish children in Dnipro are taken to the safest place in their building to take shelter during an air raid warning

In Israel, Dov Lipman of *oleh* support organisation Yad L’Olim says, “We thought the wave of refugees from Ukraine had come to an end, but now with the hard winter coming, we’re expecting a large influx of refugees.”

As for the refugees who arrived in Israel at the beginning of the war, “Some are doing better, some are struggling. Those that are supporting themselves are doing better. Overall, I believe people are doing well,” Lipman says.

The organisation runs a free “shop” where it provides refugees with everything they need from clothing to toiletries and homeware. “We just did a major distribution of heaters and umbrellas for *olim* refugees to be prepared for the winter here. There’s a lot of need out there. We have people coming back to the shop for more supplies. We’re working hard to ensure that people settle and do well.”

Rebbetzin Rochi Levitansky, who grew up in South Africa and was living in Sumy, Ukraine, before the invasion, recently managed to return there for two months. After living as a refugee, it was “incredible” to return.

“There are no words to describe being back in your own home and being there for your community. It was an emotional reunion,” she says. She’s now in Israel on an organised tour along with many other rebbetzins and women from their respective cities. “G-d willing, we’ll go back after it’s over.”

Stambler stayed in Ukraine because “I’m an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and head of the Jewish community of Ukraine and I feel responsible. About two weeks after war broke out, I sent my family to Israel for eight months. After the *chaggim*, they returned. It’s a little bit scary, but it’s not like it was at the beginning of the war when we were afraid of being under occupation, which thank G-d didn’t happen. Now it’s dangerous, it’s uncomfortable, but we don’t fear for our lives as we did in the beginning. We hope and pray that Moshiach comes, and we’ll change the world to a better place with no more war and no more misery.”

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# Perils of populism – why the ANC’s national conference matters

STEVEN GRUZD

As most South Africans head for their holidays, from 16 to 20 December 2022, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) will gather for its 55th national conference. It will elect its 80-member National Executive Committee, choose its “top six” leaders, and bash Israel. Should we care?

The discussion documents prepared for the ANC’s policy conference in July contained familiar refrains. Israel is accused of “ever-growing aggressiveness . . . (with the support of its [United States] ally) manifested through its support of terrorist groups in Syria; its increasingly brazen transgressions of international law, agreements, and [United Nations] resolutions, particularly in relation to the Palestinians and its total disregard for the territorial integrity of Lebanon and Syria”.

A grand conspiracy is suggested, positing that Morocco, Israel, and France act in cahoots to undermine “progressive forces”. Israeli engagement with Africa apparently indicates South Africa’s weakness: “The growing role of Israel in African affairs signals a waning influence of progressive African states including South Africa.”

Analyst and broadcaster Stephen Grootes said, “The resonance of the apartheid experience with Israel is so strong in the minds of the ANC. And it’s a useful rallying point to unite everyone . . . I don’t see much changing, and it’s not helped by Israeli politics shifting to the right.”

Michael Bagraim, the Democratic Alliance’s shadow minister for employment and labour, said, “[South Africa is] almost bankrupt, there’s an enormous amount of civil unrest, threats of strikes, and very little service delivery. The entire structure of our economy has been threatened, and the living conditions of almost 90% of the country are horrific. One would think that Israel . . . wouldn’t be an issue to be debated by the governing party.”

“Unfortunately, it’s still heavily and vigorously debated in ANC ranks whenever the opportunity arises. Certain influential ANC cadres seem to deem Israel to be more important than South Africa’s well-being. In particular, Minister [of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi] Pandor will seize every opportunity to mention Israel in a negative light. My experience is that the

majority of the ANC MPs aren’t really interested in the debate, and certainly don’t think Israel is relevant to us here in South Africa.”

“The Palestinian issue is one with a high degree of symbolic consensus in the ANC,” said Terence Corrigan, project manager at the Institute of Race Relations. “It lets the ANC be what it wants to be – a liberation movement. It’s appealing for the ruling party of a failing state. In this sense, it’s more real than the reality.”

However, might there be a rethink on the 2017 resolution to downgrade the South African embassy in Tel Aviv? The discussion document implies this, while simultaneously swiping at Israel: “Reflecting and reviewing its resolution to downgrade the [sic] diplomatic relations with Israel, given the aggressive expansion of Israel on the African continent and the necessity to engage Israel on the intensification of the brutal occupation of Palestine, and given what we know about the implications of this resolution on our Diplomatic [sic] capital.”

Of course, there’s no guarantee that any such re-examination will take place. Has the downgrade decision backfired? Or am I clutching at straws here?

“Although it’s written in an incredibly negative light, at least it does call for discussion,” Bagraim said of the July discussion document. “I think that it’s carefully worded at least to get influential anti-Zionists within their caucus to consider future discussions.” However, it’s naïve to think the ANC could now be an honest broker or have any leverage.

On the leadership front, Cyril Ramaphosa will probably easily be re-elected ANC president. Eight of the nine provinces back him, with just KwaZulu-Natal behind former Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize. “The most likely outcome by far is that Ramaphosa wins,” Grootes said. “He remains the party’s best chance for the 2024 elections.”

South African Jews should care. “For the Jewish community to thrive,” said Grootes, “South Africa needs to thrive. The Jewish community has a huge amount to offer – resources, lessons, resilience – to the wider society.”

Sara Gon, the head of strategic engagement at the Institute of Race Relations said, “The policy discussions will be dominated by issues that point to the populism

that the ANC thinks is necessary to drum up for voters to continue to support it. The fact that nothing the ANC does will improve the attractiveness of South Africa as a country to live in over the next 18 months means that emigration by members of the community is likely to continue, if not increase. The ANC’s communist policies

significant support for such an agenda.

“We’ll need to rely increasingly on our community and social institutions to step into the void created by a receding state, and get us into the future. The Jewish community, with its long experience of self-reliance, its history of cordial co-operation with others, and its robust



ANC President  
Cyril Ramaphosa

Photo: G. G. G. G.

will add to the sense of hopelessness that investment, local and foreign, will become even more sparse. The greater effect will be the loss for the broader community if its Jewish population keeps shrinking.”

Said Corrigan “Even though the ANC’s decline is now pretty much inevitable, it will play a large role for some years. Until particular issues are addressed and some policies abandoned – think labour-market regulation, empowerment, and expropriation without compensation – South African won’t achieve stable governance, economic growth, and make a proper dent in unemployment. But within the ANC, there’s no

institutions, is well placed for this.”

Sol Cowan, a former ANC councillor and member of the mayoral committee in Johannesburg, said, “Like the country, the ANC is at a tipping point. I worry that complex, critical policy issues will be decided on in a meeting with many lacking even basic knowledge – such as National Health Insurance. Who will the ANC get into bed with after the 2024 elections – the radical populists or more reasonable, mature voices? Jewish South Africans can’t put our heads in the sand. We can’t isolate ourselves. The ANC does listen to the Jewish community, and we must raise the key issues.”

# “Idealistic, selfless, committed” – ANC’s early promoters recall the 90s

STEVEN GRUZD

The African National Congress (ANC) is heading towards a political showdown at its national elective conference in a few weeks. It seems the image of this liberation-movement-cum-political-party has strayed substantially from what it was in the early 1990s.

In February 1990, President FW de Klerk surprised the world by unbanning the ANC and releasing Nelson Mandela from prison. To many, the ANC was nothing more than an organisation of Marxist terrorists, bent on nationalisation, violence, and destroying the country. The ANC desperately needed to get South Africans to know more about it. So, it turned to a couple of young Jewish advertising executives to get its messages across.

Louis Gavin and Julian Ovsowitz ran Applied Marketing Communications (AMC), part of the TBWA Hunt Lascaris group. Gill Marcus called AMC one day, and said the ANC needed an advertising agency to assist it to build knowledge about the organisation.

“We were branding the ANC for a South African public that had been denied knowledge about it for 30 years,” said Pallo Jordan, then head of the ANC’s information and communications department. Meeting the first groups of white South African businessmen and intellectuals in the late 1980s in Lusaka, “I was struck by the depth of sheer ignorance white South Africans were living under,” he said. “The ANC was the bogeyman, *die swart gevaar* [black danger]. They had never gone further. If educated professionals thought this, what about the average South African?”

The first job AMC was briefed on was for an ANC conference titled “From Anti-Apartheid to Pro-Democracy” in 1990, at Nasrec in Soweto. “I was seated next to the Palestinian representatives,” Gavin recalled. He was identifiably Jewish, with a yarmulke and a beard. “Maybe that was Gill’s sense of humour,” he chuckled. Gavin joked that he eventually stopped wearing his yarmulke “as people would confuse me for the accountant”.

“At that stage, the mainstream media story was all

about nationalisation,” said Ovsowitz. “Very little up until that point was known about the ANC outside liberation-movement circles. The aim was to position the ANC and its ideas in the public domain. That first assignment was a test, to see if we could relate to the campaign and form bonds with the ANC hierarchy for the coming election campaign.”

After that, Gavin and Ovsowitz were frequent – almost daily – visitors to the ANC’s headquarters at Shell House (now Luthuli House) in Johannesburg’s CBD. “We took input from the core ANC team under Pallo Jordan, Gill Marcus, Ketso Gordhan, and Joel Netshitenzhe,” Gavin said.

“We had the job of showing that the ANC was a legitimate political party,” Gavin said. “We pushed the 1955 Freedom Charter as a blueprint for a democratic South Africa.” AMC developed a four-phase election campaign for the ANC in the run-up to the 1994 elections, supplemented by tactical responses to political developments. “Remember there was murder and mayhem – the Boipatong massacre, township violence, the assassination of Chris Hani, and the ANC had to respond,” Gavin said. “Gill would call or fax me at 03:00, and we would have to craft a response or a speech to go out that morning.”

The first phase was the “People’s Forum”, eliciting input from the public. They worked with Stan Greenberg, a pollster seconded to the ANC team by United States President Bill Clinton. They did a huge public survey in South Africa of more than 100 000 respondents. “Our first ad said, ‘The ANC’s always been the voice of the people. Let’s keep it that way.’ We got people to tell us their hopes and fears. We got thousands of responses,” Gavin said. They also designed a fundraising campaign, netting millions from foreign governments and other donors.

Phase two was “Our Plan” – the ANC’s policies to create jobs, improve healthcare and education, and develop a free democracy. They developed more than 400 radio spots for the campaign. “We employed people who

represented the demography of South Africa before this was even considered,” said Ovsowitz, to enable AMC to work in vernacular languages.



Photo: Louis Gavin

The third phase was “Reassurance”, emphasising that the ANC wasn’t going to nationalise businesses, appropriate private property, or take away people’s rights. Phase four was “The Call to Vote”.

Gavin and Ovsowitz recalled seeing a huge photograph of Nelson Mandela embracing Yasser Arafat and Muammar Gaddafi hanging behind Mandela’s desk in Shell House. “I thought, ‘My G-d! Am I in the right place? What am I doing?’” Gavin said. “I was out of my depth. I was used to selling cigarettes and cars.” Gavin sent a message to the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in New York for his advice. The Rebbe replied that the work should be done, and gave a special *brocha* for success. He said that helping the nation to be free would be the biggest *mitzvah*. The Rebbe told them to keep their role quiet until after the elections.

“It was heady to the extreme. We were making history. I would sit in strategy sessions with Mandela and think, ‘This isn’t real!’ It also struck me how democratic the ANC was at that time. Everyone’s voice was heard,” said Ovsowitz. He held kosher dinners at his home to accommodate Gavin, as it was difficult for black and white people to meet in public at the time.

“It was the most intense time of my life,” Gavin said. “It was tiring, six days a week. Thank goodness I was *shomer Shabbos* to get Saturdays off. Four-and-a-half years was more than enough. I was burnt out from the 15-hour days. They called me ‘Comrade Louis’, and there was no judgement of me because I was Jewish or *frum*. They were amazing people – idealistic, selfless, committed.”

“What did I learn?” Ovsowitz said. “How not to sleep! Email didn’t exist then, so it was all by phone and fax. We’d get faxes in the middle of the night, and have to produce radio content by the morning. There’s no question that Louis can claim kudos for being the author of a new language for South Africans.”

“They were good-humoured fellows,” Jordan said of the duo. “They had nous, and knew their trade. They caught on very quickly. I was impressed how they were able to grasp the essential elements of what it was all about. They were extremely capable of translating our ideas into the language of commercial communications. They had a certain sensitivity about what we were trying to do. They used every device – humour was one of the best ones – and images. They made a *helluva* difference, especially in Gauteng and the Western Cape.”

Jordan remembers Ovsowitz saying to him after the 1994 elections, “Oy! Now I have to go back to selling chicken soup!”





ALANA BARANOV

# Leaders meet the pope



Photo: Vatican Media

**Professor Karen Milner,  
Mary Kluk, Wendy Kahn,  
and Alana Baranov with  
His Holiness Pope Francis**

**Professor Karen Milner,  
Mary Kluk, Wendy Kahn,  
and Alana Baranov with  
His Holiness Pope Francis**

Photo: Vatican Media

meetings tackled complicated topics with honesty and open-mindedness. The seismic shift in Jewish-Catholic relations as well as the groundbreaking strides in diversity in Jewish communal leadership will long be felt in coming months and years and provide a strong base from which we can continue to strive for a more just, equitable, and peaceful world. As the memory of the Vatican's stained-glass windows and murals fades, the inspiration from the discussions within its walls will remain.

**RON KAMPEAS – JTA**

A number of GOP (Grand Old Party) senators, confronted by reporters in the halls of Congress as they returned from Thanksgiving break, also spoke out. "It's ridiculous that he had that meeting," said Joni Ernst of Iowa. "Just it's ridiculous. And that's all I'm gonna say about it. Just crazy."



Photo: Drew Angerer  
Getty Images

## Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell


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## War and prejudice

Seeing images of black, military-style vehicles driving through a deathly still Norwood on Sunday morning was disconcerting, to say the least. The Norwood strip is a stomping ground for so many of us, day and night. And having all our old familiar – and some not so old – haunts tightly shut on a Sunday morning, and nobody walking the streets, was eery and unnerving.

On hearing the back story, I didn’t feel any better about it, knowing that all of this was based on xenophobia, more correctly described as Afrophobia. A small incident was turned into a major problem.



You see, when the person or people who have angered you just happen to be from another African country, it seems to be a simple fix. Just call on those who already want to rid this country of African foreigners and will stop at nothing to do so. Suddenly, there’s a protest by self-righteous “activists” who push the “they are taking South African jobs” nonsense, and an entire suburb is held to ransom and threatened. It’s sickening!

Afrophobia in our suburbs is also seriously worrying because, as shown in the news, the vigilantes of Operation Dudula make no bones about being violent and intimidating and harming migrants. They want them out of South Africa, and they don’t seem to care how they have to make them do it. This is clear from the very term “*dudula*”, which means to “force out” or “knock down” in isiZulu.

Having these thugs in our midst throwing their weight around is sickening, and threatening our businesses makes it that much worse.

When the Operation Dudula folk left on Sunday, they did so with the threat that this was “phase one”, and they wouldn’t think twice about instigating “phase two” if the demands in their memoranda weren’t met. They demanded that all businesses in Norwood rid themselves of foreign nationals.

It’s frankly unconscionable that they are allowed to get away with clear Afrophobia and hatred of the other. This story about Zimbabweans and Malawians stealing jobs from South Africans is such codswallop. Who can steal someone’s job? When you hire someone, you look for the best person for the job, and would undoubtedly rather hire a South African if they were there and would do the job well.

And for the most part, the Zimbabweans hired are 100% legitimately working and living in South Africa. That is, until their legitimate permits become illegal in June next year. In other words, our government is encouraging the xenophobia.

I cannot help but keep comparing this to what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany before World War II. They lost their jobs because they were Jewish, and were forced to close their businesses for the same reason.

Back then, you weren’t allowed to hire Jews even if they were born in Germany. Had they been employed and were at the top of their game, it didn’t stop them from being fired. Simply put, it was a government decree.

You see, when the Nazi party came into power in 1933, there was an unemployment crisis with six million Germans unemployed. The party’s election campaign involved promising to end unemployment. By 1938, the Nazis claimed not to have an unemployment problem anymore. Any wonder how they did it?

So, there’s a dangerous edge to Operation Dudula and its unacceptable forcing of businesses to rid themselves of foreign African employees.

What will happen next in Norwood? Is this crisis over, or will Operation Dudula be back? Will it spread through our suburbs?

There’s a flip side that’s so much more positive, though. The Norwood business owners, who are made up of Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others, were all put under the same pressure by Operation Dudula.

It wasn’t long ago when Muslim shop owners in this suburb got Jewish customers backs up by putting signs up outside their shops that showed them taking sides against Israel in rocket fire between Israel and Gaza.

So, it’s wonderful to see what appears to be people setting aside their differences and putting their heads together to face another enemy. The truth is, there’s a clearcut Norwood business community, and it’s a mixed group of people who are all doing their best to make a living. So, it’s healthy to work together to deal with it.

Talking about prejudice and animosity, it makes me sad that we must be reminded of the war that continues in Ukraine. Russia first invaded Ukraine nine months ago, and at the time, the world was up in arms about it. We covered it from a Jewish perspective for weeks, but then it went on and apparently people lost interest.

But those in Ukraine haven’t been able to move on like we have. They haven’t been able to get back to normal life like we have. Yes, we have been impacted by the war, but our lives go on.

As the heart of winter descends on Ukraine and the power stations hit by Russia cannot operate properly, people are being exposed to the elements. There are apparently hundreds of thousands of Jewish people still in Ukraine. So many of those are freezing.

Children are freezing! Bombs are going off around them!

Let’s not forget Ukraine!

While we relax into our holiday period, let’s remember that the war isn’t over. People are still suffering. What can we do about this? Any ideas? Let me know.

Shabbat Shalom!  
Peta Krost  
Editor

# Why more Jews should go into politics

OPINION

MICHAEL BAGRAIM



As we go into the political season during the first quarter of 2023, we need to take a careful look at our own community and see whether any individual is interested in serving in a political position in either provincial or national governments.

All the political parties will be going through an intensive recruitment programme, and will be submitting their lists to their internal leadership for ranking. The ranking will determine who goes on to serve as a member of that political party in either the provincial or national legislature.

Our community has been involved politically since its inception 180 years ago. Although political service is often not a career of choice in this modern age, it’s something that should be considered and certainly, our community needs representation.

It’s not important to try and determine what political party our community will support, as we are a diverse group and have diverse interests. However, it’s important for there to be a Jewish voice within the ranks of all the various government structures in South Africa. We are, after all, equal citizens, and the South African Constitution does protect our rights.

such a career path (if it’s a career path). I believe it’s vital to have Jewish representation within political parties to ensure that our voice is heard, and that when antisemitism rears its ugly head, we can speak out. After all, the Jewish community is an integral part of our society.

I attended the service at the Gardens Synagogue in Cape Town on Friday, 18 November, and just before Shabbat, we were addressed by the mayor of Cape Town, Geordin Hill-Lewis.

His speech was carefully crafted to appeal to the Jewish community to hold hands with the rest of society to ensure that Cape Town not only survives but thrives. Our mayor clearly identifies the Jewish community as an important and integral part of his success in the future.

My path into politics started when I first studied political science at Rhodes University and only later in life decided to take up the challenge of serving in Parliament.

Others like my colleague, Darren Bergman, chose to serve early on in his career, thereby allowing him to grow through the system and be able to serve for a longer period of time. It’s an individual choice, but as a community, we

shouldn’t be closed to the future of civic duty.

I encourage active and enthusiastic members of our community to come forward to any political party of their choice if they have an interest in civic duty and political science.



Jewish members of parliament Madeleine Hicklin, Michael Bagraim, Glynnis Breytenbach, and Darren Bergman

This protection enshrined in the Constitution has to be translated from the text into everyday life. I find it necessary to speak up even in national Parliament at the various committee meetings whenever anything is said or done that borders on antisemitism.

Unfortunately, in the current political climate, Jewish involvement in organised politics is diminishing rapidly.

We do still have a few Jewish city councillors across the country, and a few representatives in provincial government. We have only four Jewish MPs, with very few Jewish contenders coming up through the ranks to take up seats in the future.

When speaking to young Jewish graduates, they all tell me that they would never consider

Although civic service of this nature can often become frustrating – and even on occasion nerve-racking – the small successes are incredibly satisfying.

I’m more than happy to engage with anyone interested in such service. Jewish MPs Glynnis Breytenbach, Madeleine Hicklin, and Darren Bergman would more than likely be willing to engage and share some of their war stories. We have more than a dozen members of our community in the provincial parliaments and city councils who would likewise welcome discussions.

• *Michael Bagraim is a member of parliament and deputy shadow minister for employment and labour.*

## Norwood joins forces against Operation Dudula invasion

>>Continued from page 1

A concerned resident who spoke on condition of anonymity said, “I live in a nearby suburb, but I’m in Norwood often and I see the gradual degradation daily. People are harassed by vagrants and car guards. It’s unpleasant. I’m concerned for the area. I’d like to see stakeholders getting together and devising plans for the betterment of the entire area so that people can live safely and have a good time without being harassed.”

Said another, “Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Norwood has lost its sense of community. Now, this Dudula crew has awakened everyone’s need to work together. We need a united front. We saw a bit of this over Halloween, in which there was a great turnout across the board, but we have a long way to go.”

NORA said in a statement, “We don’t support the actions of Operation Dudula, which seek to intimidate legitimate business owners and members of our

community. We cannot have a group which isn’t of the community and for the community disrupting business and threatening the safety of customers and residents in order to pursue a political agenda.”

Sean Jammy of CAP said, “While we understand that people crave a quick-fix solution to safety and an end to the degradation of services in public spaces, we urge them to act responsibly and to adopt a security solution that’s legal, acts within the confines of the law, and is sustainable.”

Taryn Rose, a Norwood resident, said, “Norwood is a diverse, dynamic community. The events of the recent past have brought these people together, united in seeing as little disruption to everyday life, where people can live in peace, safety, and harmony.” She said the business forum would hold further meetings to face these challenges together.



# Pandor’s Grand Star reveals extent of SA’s bias toward Palestinians

TALI FEINBERG

Hopes of South Africa ever playing a role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process may have been dashed this week when the Palestinian Embassy in South Africa announced that it would be bestowing the prestigious Grand Star of the Order of Jerusalem on South Africa’s minister of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), Dr Naledi Pandor.

The Grand Star of the Order of Jerusalem is an honour from the “State of Palestine” and can be awarded by the order of president to heads of governments, ministers, envoys, leaders of parliaments and parties, and those of similar standing.

The SA Jewish Report got hold of a copy of the invitation to the event, which said the award would be given at Freedom Park in Pretoria, and be presented by President Mahmoud Abbas on 2 December.

The invitation includes logos from the United Nations (UN), the Embassy of the State of Palestine in South Africa, Dirco, and Freedom Park.

“South Africa has clearly nailed her colours to the mast in terms of which side she’s on in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” says local political analyst Daniel Silke. “There’s been only animosity towards Israel

and only broad friendship extended to the Palestinian side. So, this is entirely in line with the shift towards a ‘revolutionary’ supporting style of ANC [African National Congress] foreign policy in recent years, and ultimately reflects the continued disdain that the ANC holds for Israel.



“Supporting revolutionary causes is nothing new for the ANC,” Silke said. “We’re seeing a continuation of that, and there’s little sign that South Africa wishes to play any kind of balanced role in the Middle East.

“The diplomatic overtures to Iran also play into that particular

narrative, and this is a continuation of the predictability of the current path of South Africa foreign policy, which now largely excludes South Africa from being any kind of balanced observer in the Middle East.

“From a credibility point of view, by playing on only one side, South Africa has largely written itself out of at least attempting to assist and mediate in the broader Middle Eastern context. It’s something that South Africa probably could have done given her own history, but it looks like ‘revolutionaries’ in the ANC have largely won the day, at least for the moment.”

“The award to Pandor, by the ‘State of Palestine’ is well-deserved in regard to her unflinching support for the Palestinians and opposite but equal disdain for Israel,” says the Institute of Race Relations’ Sara Gon.

“The South African government of the Tripartite Alliance – the ANC, SACP [South African Communist Party], and Cosatu [Congress of South African Trade Unions] – holds an antipathy for Israel that’s probably unmatched anywhere. South Africa, together with 138 other United Nations [members] recognises the ‘State of Palestine’.”

Regarding the UN possibly endorsing the award, Gon says, “It’s a tragedy that the UN has never played any constructive role in resolving

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The UN came into being for the very reason of reducing conflict, but in the case of Israel, its only method of dispute resolution is to sanction Israel to an extraordinary level, year in and year out.

“Pandor’s award will likely bolster her sense of achievement because of her unalloyed support for the Palestinians,” she says.

Glen Segell, visiting professor and research fellow in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State and research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran & Gulf Studies at the University of Haifa, says, “The award makes it clear that South African relations with Israel are on the back-burner while the Palestinians are favoured. This is unfortunate, as post-apartheid South Africa could play an important and valuable role. However it needs to be impartial and assist in negotiating. By taking a side, it has withdrawn itself from this.”

Wendy Kahn, national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “True solidarity with the Palestinians means encouraging the Palestinian leadership to abandon its self-defeating strategy of constant confrontation, and recommitting to

a process of constructive engagement with Israel. Only once both sides have committed to the give and take of negotiations will it be possible to break the deadlock and move forward. Sadly,

Minister Pandor has polarised the situation even further and has made peace-building even more remote.”

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) dismissed the award as something not to be taken seriously.

“We’re bemused by the Palestinian Embassy’s intention to award Naledi Pandor with the bizarrely titled award ‘Grand Star of the Order of Jerusalem,’” says SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin. “We call on Minister Pandor not to accept this ludicrous award, but more importantly, to explain to South Africans, again, why her department misspends millions of taxpayers’ funds on propping up the Palestinian Embassy in South Africa. The South African government’s foreign policy, alongside this award that results from it, is a joke.”

The SA Jewish Report reached out to the Palestinian Embassy, the Israeli Embassy, Israel’s government press office, and Dirco, but had not received any responses by the time of going to print.



Minister of international relations and cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor

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# New competition allows students to “hack” hate speech online

TALI FEINBERG

The rise of hate speech including antisemitism on social media is overwhelming, partly because the platforms seem reluctant to stop it, experts say. On Twitter in particular, since Elon Musk bought the platform at the end of October, hate speech has soared, according to a study by Montclair State University.

“Reducing hate speech online is a long-term project,” says Dr Günther Jikeli, Erna B. Rosenfeld Associate Professor at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University. “We have to approach this in a variety of ways. Empowering students to know about it, to recognise it manually and perhaps automatically, is one important step.”

“It’s only in the past three to four years that the mainstream social media companies have started taking hate speech more seriously,” says Jikeli. “Some have pledged not to accept Holocaust denial, but antisemitism is all too often tolerated, especially if it comes in disguised forms. Some platforms might take messages down that call for the killing of Jews. But they rarely take messages down if they call for the killing of Zionists or the destruction of the Jewish

state, which is often just a codeword for Jews.”

In addition, “social media is a completely new tool of communication, allowing for multidirectional communication on a global scale. Our online and offline societies have to develop new rules for these spaces. It’s increasingly clear that hate speech is a serious problem on these platforms, and that we need to think more creatively about how to address it.”

The Montclair State University study tracked how often homophobic, antisemitic, and racial-hate-driven terms were used immediately after Musk’s takeover. Researchers found that about 398 hate tweets an hour were made in the 12 hours after the acquisition was finalised – a number that nearly quadrupled from the 84 tweets an hour in the week leading up to Musk’s takeover. Hate-driven tweets skyrocketed to 4 778 times over that span compared with the average 1 000 beforehand.

Musk, the billionaire business mogul who is also the chief executive of SpaceX and Tesla, took over Twitter on 27 October, ushering in the promise to loosen the social media platform’s content restrictions.

“The character of what Twitter will

look like with Musk as the head remains speculative, in spite of his stated intentions,” the Montclair State report reads. “What’s not speculative, however, is the extent to which his date of formal acquisition was celebrated by racist and extremist users on the platform.”

Similar research by the National Contagion Research Institute determined that the use of the “N-word” racial slur increased more than 500% on Twitter the day after Musk’s takeover. Another word used to attack transgender people was used 33 926 times in tweets and retweets, which was 53% higher than the 2022 average. Hateful language to describe gay people, Jews, and Hispanics had also increased since Musk took over the company.

“Twitter influences your life and the information you consume, even if you’ve never used it,” wrote journalist Yair Rosenberg in his *Deep Shtetl* newsletter on 10 November. “Twitter allows people who previously couldn’t be heard to be heard. Twitter often intensifies pre-existing human tendencies.”

In light of this, Jikeli’s department has launched a datathon, hackathon, and machine learning competition that will allow students to compete for prizes, learn skills for future careers, meet others from

around the world, and most importantly, play a part in reducing hate speech online.

“The competition is open to all high school and undergraduate students, including from South Africa,” says Jikeli. “Our goal is to sharpen awareness of the threats posed by online hate speech, and to teach participants how to detect and combat it using machine learning.”

“In these workshops, led by Indiana University professors, participants will learn how to recognise, monitor, and track biased messages on social media, specifically Twitter. Participants will be placed into teams and asked to work together on their own scripts and annotations. The three workshops will ask questions like, ‘What’s hate speech online? What are manifestations of bias against Asians, black people, Hispanics, Jews, and Muslims? Why do we need machine learning to observe and combat hate speech?’

“In a datathon, students look at data and classify it,” Jikeli says. “In our case, it’s social media posts that might disseminate hatred against minority groups, such as Asians, Black people, Jews, Muslims, or Latinos. In a hackathon, students develop algorithms that can detect hateful messages, based on earlier classification of data by our research group and by the participating students. We combine both in an educational project so that students learn about different forms of biases, recognise stereotypes and biases in an online environment, and get an idea of how to deal with big data and how to develop automated detection – at least in principle.”

The competition came about because “we noticed that students are interested in looking at live data and working hands-on on research projects that have an impact. We mostly focus on online antisemitism in all its forms, including anti-Zionist forms of antisemitism.



New Twitter CEO Elon Musk

Photo: Patrick PleulPool/AFP via Getty Images

However, other minorities are also targeted, and a common denominator of perpetrators is often a conspiratorial way of thinking, which is the essence of modern antisemitism.”

“Participants will also learn how to signal biased messages to the platforms so that they can be taken down or downgraded and made less visible,” he says. “The algorithms that the participants develop can be used to identify messages that are probably biased. This is important because in most cases, hate speech doesn’t get called out.”

Asked if students could go on to use these skills to combat hate speech and in their professions, he says, “Absolutely. Social media literacy is increasingly important. Much of our social and professional life is already on social media, and it will only increase in the future. We also use data from other social media platforms for our research. For the competition, we keep it simply and concentrate on one platform [Twitter].”

Students taking part will work in international teams. “We’re a global world, and we hope to develop stronger ties with talented students and community members around the world,” says Jikeli. “We need to stand up against antisemitism together.”

To apply or find out more, visit <https://isca.indiana.edu/publication-research/social-media-project/datathon-2023/index.html>

## Online extremism too dangerous to ignore, study shows

TALI FEINBERG

Online extremism including antisemitism in South Africa calls for urgent action, a new study by the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC), and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) has shown.

The study, titled “The dynamics of racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia on social media in South Africa”, was born out of conversations between the Kaplan Centre, Tali Nates at the JHGC and Christoph Plate of KAS Media Africa. They were struck by “the distressing, inflammatory nature of discussions on social media in South Africa”, says Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre, and one of the authors of the study.

The Kaplan Centre wanted to understand how online antisemitism related to other forms of hatred on social media. This was of particular interest because a recent survey by the centre found that South African Jews were far more concerned about antisemitism than they had been in the past. It was concerning, Mendelsohn said, because there had been “no appreciable spike in everyday incidents of antisemitism. We speculated that this sense of unease reflected encounters with online hate.”

The study explores the dynamics of racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism on Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok from 2020 and 2021. “We wanted to understand how pervasive antisemitism is online, who’s involved in propagating antisemitism, and the relationship between those obsessed with Jews and those who propagate other forms of hatred.”

“One of the most striking trends is the way that South African social media users resort readily to invoking the Holocaust, Hitler, and Nazism,” said Mendelsohn. “This provides an indication of the tone of much online discussion – often vitriolic, intemperate, and drawn to extremes – and reveals the

symbolic place of Nazism within the South African imagination.

“Comments and images comparing Julius Malema and the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters] to Hitler and the Brown Shirts were plentiful. While these were used as a means of demonising the EFF and their political ideologies, they also fed into the increasingly prevalent notion of ‘white genocide’. This often drew on broader narratives of white victimhood, degeneration, decay, and of the peril of black majority rule.”

This “coexisted alongside familiar forms of antisemitism, none of it unfamiliar or particularly novel”, Mendelsohn said. “We were, however, struck by evidence that the social media platforms are somewhat better at policing antisemitism than racism and xenophobia. In part, this reflects the way in which antisemites draw on a repertoire that’s global in nature. This ensures that the algorithms used by the social media platforms to identify hate speech work somewhat better when it comes to

Mendelsohn said. “I suspect that in certain circumstances, encounters with hatred on social media can act to normalise forms of rhetoric that are taboo in polite society, introduce pernicious ideas into the public square, and give a megaphone to those with malicious intent.

“We found plenty of evidence of how savvy social media users have worked out how to use the platforms to best advantage, evade content moderation, and drive conversation in ways that are polarising and extreme.”

However, he said he didn’t see any evidence of antisemitism on social media translating into real-life antisemitic actions. But he gave the example of Operation Dudula as a warning of how online mobilisation can lead to real-world action.

“We began to track Operation Dudula before it burst into ‘the real world’. Activists involved proved savvy in mobilising support and building a movement first online and then on the streets. There’s



antisemitism than they do for racism and xenophobia, which typically draws on a more local repertoire of words, phrases, and ideas. It also reflects the efforts of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and others to force social media companies to take antisemitism seriously.”

It wasn’t easy to understand if antisemitic ideas were inspired by social media,

no reason to believe that anything of this kind is afoot when it comes to antisemitism, but it does suggest the ways in which online ideas can seep out. We also know from the United States context that online content can provide inspiration to ‘lone wolves’ who are radicalised by material they encounter online.”

Mendelsohn said the study found

evidence of how social media amplified divisive agendas by exploiting social fissures along racial, national, and economic lines.

“Online discussion quickly became polarised,” he said. “Again and again, the terms of the online conversation were dictated by the white far right and the black radical left; paradoxically, these habitually fed into and off one another. Again and again, racist tropes surfaced, and discussion morphed into fear mongering. Vitriolic and sometimes violent language was normalised.”



Professor Adam Mendelsohn

The study looked at a variety of “flashpoints” in 2020 and 2021. One of these was the protests at Brackenfell High School, when videos were posted online of EFF supporter Jack Markovitz, who is white and Jewish. “During the protests, Markovitz was repeatedly identified as a ‘race traitor’ on social media. This followed a widely distributed interview in which

Markovitz called the DA [Democratic Alliance] a white supremacist party, claimed Mandela had ‘sold us out’, and called for the transfer of ‘generational wealth and land to the disenfranchised people of apartheid’. His comments elicited classic antisemitic responses, which often imputed an affinity between Jews and communism,” Mendelsohn said.

The Israel-Gaza war of May 2021 was another flashpoint examined by the study. “Unsurprisingly, the conflict generated a large amount of online discussion that at times included classic antisemitic tropes: the charge that Jews are a cruel and heartless people, the charge that Jews are guilty of decide, and the accusation that Israel engages in apartheid (if not genocide). The Israel-apartheid analogy was a recurrent feature, as was the use of ‘Zionist’ as a slur.

“Some of the discussion was more complicated,” Mendelsohn said. “There was a lot of debate about whether it was appropriate for South Africans to focus so much time and attention on Israel. One of the more fascinating threads was the view that the South Africa government shouldn’t get involved in the conflict as South Africa has problems enough of its own.”

Mendelsohn said the key message from the study was that social media is too important to ignore, and that “there’s an urgent need for action”.



# Raging back: kids celebrate return of matric festival

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

From being identified as a super-spreader event in 2020 to being cancelled at the 11th hour in 2021, Rage has faced unprecedented challenges since the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now celebrating its 20th year, it's back, and expecting hundreds of Jewish matriculants among the masses of attendees.

"It did kind of worry me that it was cancelled last year, and that there were problems with outbreaks – it was something I had to think about," says Keren Katzew, a King David Victory Park matriculant who has plans to go to Ballito Rage this week. "My parents were ok about it, but said I needed to consider if it was really what I wanted to do."

"This year is a lot safer though because of how much less COVID-19 infection there is. People aren't wearing masks anymore and there's more freedom. From that perspective, I think it's a good thing Rage is going forward."

A group of week-long music and lifestyle festivals held in coastal towns including Umhlanga, Ballito, and Plettenberg Bay, Rage is the ultimate end-of-school celebration. Yet, mired in a storm of negative publicity and positive COVID-19 tests, it was forced to close its doors before they had even inched open last year amidst an outcry from medical and government leaders. This followed the 2020 Ballito Rage festival being marked as a super-spreader event.

"Our brand, which was well known for being a caring, meaningful, safe, and extraordinary festival experience was thrust into becoming the antithesis of all of this," says Rage founder, Greg Walsh, the chief executive of

G&G Productions which owns Rage.

"It's hard to accept things that are completely out of your control and then, to add insult to injury, to be blamed for things you truly aren't responsible for," he says, reflecting on the impact of the events of the past two years. "The emotional and financial suffering was terrible."

"From 23 full-time professional staff down to just six, and now back up to nine and growing, I funded the business personally for 18 months. I did it by not drawing any salary and selling personal assets like rental apartments to pay our costs and cover our losses. I wasn't prepared to give up."

Walsh says that though no-one is more excited about Rage's comeback than himself and the festival teams, the road has been long. "It's been hard work to restore trust, build believability, and meet ticket sale and sponsorship targets. We're finally able to be creative without restriction and do what we do without being judged, ridiculed, borderline criminalised, and criticised for it. It feels great. I know without question that what we're doing this year will make it our best yet."

Parents who sent their kids to the 2020 Rage Festival also faced a massive backlash within and without the community. Dalia\*, a King David mother who prefers to remain anonymous for fear of lingering judgements, says she sent her son to Rage in 2020, and would do so again.

"For him, matric just ended abruptly in March," she says. "These kids then spent the rest of the year in their bedrooms, everything else was cancelled." A healthcare worker in a public hospital, she initially campaigned to have 2020 Rage cancelled, but was unsuccessful.

Dalia ultimately felt she couldn't be the only parent



who didn't let her child go. "Doctors and medical professors allowed their kids to go. We couldn't really say no, and that's where the backlash came from. People asked how you can't just say no to your children, but these parents didn't have matrics in their bedrooms for a year."

But she put strict measures in place, ensuring that her son went straight into two weeks of isolation on his return. "We weren't in any contact with him," she says. "He actually tested negative and said that it was the best time of his life. These children needed it; they needed a little bit of normality."

"I don't know if it was true to say that it was the start of the super-spread [of the disease], I think it would have happened in any case. Rage was well organised; they had put everything in place to make it safe, and kids got sick at a party that was taking place outside of the festival."

Dalia says many of these children are still battling as they've lost out on two and a half years of their lives. "Socially, it's been very difficult for my kids, and then it's just the impact on our family when they knew that their mother was in the thick of it, going to work during lockdown."

Dalia is excited to be sending her daughter to the festival this year following a high school experience also marred by the pandemic. "She missed out on two years of Bnei Akiva camp as well as Hadracha to Israel, which was cancelled when she was in Grade 10 and Grade 11," she says. "We need to get on with our lives."

Katzew feels the same way. "Over the past two and a half years, we haven't been able to go to any proper parties or have any big celebrations," she says. "Events are where I meet people and make friends, so not being able to go out and socialise has been difficult for me, especially because I'm an extroverted person. I'm excited that things are coming back to normal."

Walsh says safety remains one of the core pillars of the business. Rage runs dedicated transport networks with Rage Rides and e-hailing services, ensuring that no-one drives to events – a rule of the festival. It also works with the Red Frogs, a network which supplies up to 100 care volunteers who provide support and counselling. There's also "over-the-top medical provision with a world-class health and safety officer and team", he says.

"Rage is a rite of passage," says Dalia. "These kids have worked hard, matric is extremely difficult, and it's what they look forward to. It has to happen."

*\*Name has been changed*

# Hofman wins gold medal for health interventions

SAUL KAMIONSKY

University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) Professor Karen Hofman was awarded the Science for Society Gold Medal in October for work to improve the health of South Africans.

Hofman was involved in the implementation of the sugar-sweetened beverage tax in South Africa, and in proving that decreasing salt in bread could reduce strokes and deaths.

Hofman, a research professor and the founding director of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) for Health Economics and Decision Science at Wits, said she was honoured and privileged to receive the Science for Society Gold Medal from the foremost academy of sciences on the continent, the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf).

Hofman received the medal for her application of scientific thinking in the service of society. The academy awards a maximum of two Science for Society Gold Medals annually in recognition of outstanding achievement in this area.

"This award showcases the issues around population health," says Hofman, a Waverley Girls High School alumnus. "Receiving it was a thrill for me because I'm a Wits Medical School graduate and this award was made in Wits's centenary year, so it felt particularly relevant."

Fellow Wits professor, Achille Mbembe, was the other beneficiary of the medal at ASSAf's annual awards ceremony in Pretoria on 19 October.

Hofman says the highlight of her career was returning to the Wits School of Public Health in 2009 after a successful 25-year career in America, and establishing the SAMRC in the same year. Since then, Hofman has led policy research to evaluate interventions inside the health system and in other sectors that provide the biggest return on investment for health.

"I think about prevention – preventing illness and disease," she says.

"We have done quite a lot of work to prioritise where the government can get good return on investment, particularly in maternal and child

health, child nutrition, and non-communicable diseases. We document how much money we spend on diabetes and high blood pressure in the public sector. We also do a lot of work related to the return on investment in terms of the sugary beverage tax and salt regulations."

Hofman says she and her team at the SAMRC also think about the impact on the country of the research they undertake.

"We engage with policymakers in South Africa before the research even begins, during the research, and once the research is complete, so that we're not doing this in isolation. My role is important as a knowledge broker between researcher and policymaker."

She says one of the biggest issues South Africa faces

is an epidemic of conditions associated with being overweight and obese alongside simultaneous malnutrition. "Liquid sugar in the form of carbonated beverages and fruit juice has been known for decades to cause major health problems including obesity-related conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes. Looking for ways to combat this at a population level, we began in 2012 by writing a grant to evaluate the potential impact of a possible sugary beverage tax. This had been shown to be useful globally, and was recommended as one of several 'best buys' to combat obesity by the World Health Organization. Our analyses confirmed that, indeed, it would be useful in South Africa."

Hofman spent the next few years presenting their data repeatedly to policymakers, parliamentarians from all parties, and the Davis Tax Committee. She also engaged with the media. "In 2016, Parliament voted to tax carbonated sugary beverages at a rate of 20%," she recalls. "This was delayed because of industry interference. In 2018, the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, now called the health promotion levy, was finally passed at a watered-down rate of 10%."

Professor Karen Hofman

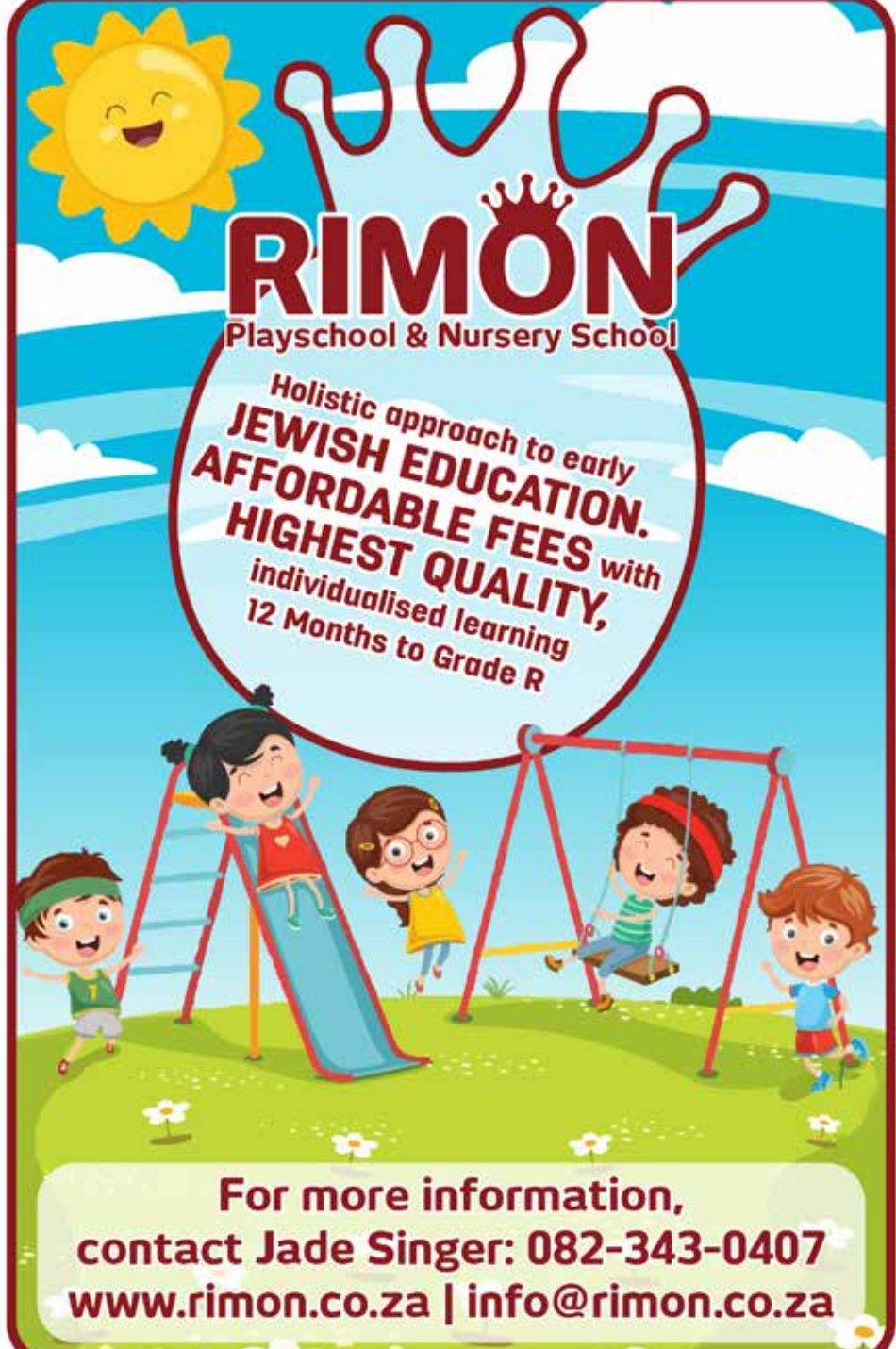


Our subsequent evaluation of the tax showed that it's working, but has not been increased to adjust for inflation."

The concept of *tikkun olam* – making the world

more just, tolerant, and equal – is what drives Hofman's passion for public health. "It has shaped the way I think. It motivates me to provide evidence

Continued on page 12>>



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# Holocaust survivor recalls kindness of Swedes at Wallenberg exhibition

STEVEN GRUZD

“To me, there’s no other choice” said Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg about saving the lives of thousands of Jews in Hungary from 1944 to 1945. Wallenberg provided Jews with protective Swedish documentation, set up safe houses in Budapest’s “International Ghetto”, and physically intervened to stop convoys of Jews being transported to Nazi death camps in Poland.

Wallenberg’s bravery and selflessness is being honoured at a new temporary exhibition at the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre (JHGC) in partnership with the Embassy of Sweden and the Swedish Institute. A new film titled *Courageous Rescuer: Raoul Wallenberg* produced by Gregor Nowinski was shown at the launch on 24 November.

There, JHGC director Tali Nates spoke to Holocaust survivor Irene Fainman, whose story is linked to Sweden. Fainman (nee Krausz) was born in the Netherlands to a Hungarian father and English mother. In 1942, Fainman, her mother, and brother were taken to the Westerbork Nazi transit camp and then to Ravensbrück concentration camp outside Berlin. Her father was murdered at Buchenwald on his 43rd birthday.

She recalled 28 April 1945, the day she was rescued by the Swedish Red Cross, in the dying days of World War II. She was nine years old. Amid chaos, as the Russians were bombing

Berlin, Fainman’s mother was told to head for white buses the Swedish Red Cross had provided. They could accommodate only 20 people each. The kindly Swedish bus driver, Sven, gave little Irene his sheepskin coat to stop her shivering. One of the other buses was bombed.

They travelled across war-torn Germany to Copenhagen in Denmark, and then by ferry to Malmö, Sweden. Many people died from overeating in quarantine, and the survivors were disinfected for vermin. After a hot bath and receiving clean clothes, they were housed in an old castle that operated as a museum (including dinosaur displays) in Malmö, an amazing sight for a nine-year-old.

“The kindness we experienced from the Swedish people was incredible,” Fainman said. “My mother said they were angels from heaven. They were so caring. They gave me dolls – what childhood had I had in the camps? To Sweden, I say a big, big thank you. Without you, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Christian Fogelström, Sweden’s deputy ambassador to South Africa, said, “As a Swedish diplomat, there can be no greater inspiration than Raoul Wallenberg. He showed how one person can make a difference. His actions are a reminder of the

important and dangerous work of human rights defenders, demanding accountability daily.”

The film and exhibition chronicle Wallenberg’s remarkable life. Trained as an architect and operating as a businessman, he was sent to Budapest to spearhead a scheme to save Jews. Hungary’s 800 000 Jews had survived most of the war, but in 1944, about 500 000 were deported to the death camps in Poland in just two months, overseen by the notorious Nazi leader, Adolf Eichmann, himself.

Wallenberg issued many Jews with “protective passports”, documents that placed them under the protection of the Swedish

government. About 7 500 were officially issued, but many thousands of forged copies were also produced.

After Hungary broke its alliance with Germany on 15 October 1944, the Nazis helped the antisemitic Arrow Cross overthrow the new government that same day. Eichmann returned, and the deportations resumed. Wallenberg rented more than 30 properties to house Jews in what came to be called the International Ghetto in Budapest. They were effectively then sovereign Swedish territory. At great personal risk, Wallenberg intervened to stop Jews being shot and dumped into the River Danube. He also managed to stop the Arrow Cross from bombing

Budapest’s two Jewish ghettos.

In late December 1944, the Soviet Red Army occupied Budapest. The last time Wallenberg was seen alive was on 17 January 1945, as he was taken for questioning by the Russians on suspicion of being a spy. There has been much speculation about his disappearance and his fate. In 1957, the Russians claimed he had died in custody in Moscow in 1947, but the truth remains shrouded in mystery. Many swear he was still alive decades later.

In 1963, Wallenberg was recognised by Israel’s Yad Vashem Museum as a “Righteous Among the Nations”, its highest honour for non-Jews who rescued Jews in the Holocaust.

Nates also mentioned that Wallenberg had worked in Cape Town for a few months in 1936. “This must have reinforced how he saw the world and what he did, seeing people being targeted for nothing, just for who they were,” Nates said.

Nates told the *SA Jewish Report*, “It’s so important to give survivors like Irene a platform to speak. They are going to be with us for only a limited time. There are only about 15 survivors left in Johannesburg. We must give them the space to tell us about every aspect of their lives.

“Wallenberg shows us the importance of standing up for ethics, morality, and selflessness,” she said. “This film showed his heroism went beyond just stamping passports.”



Photo: Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre

# From love bombing to shrapnel – surviving a narcissist

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

They want you to love them as much as they love themselves, so they build you up before they tear you down. Narcissists are hard to escape, yet surviving comes with empowering yourself and maintaining a strong support system.

“When you meet a narcissist, they swoop you into an aura of being impressed. Not only are they impressed with themselves, but they’re now impressed with you. They have selected you from the group. They will tell you how gorgeous you are, how they noticed you the moment they walked in the door. You will be love bombed by these people. You will be swept up – it feels like stardom.”

So says Sue Hickey, a psychologist and expert in abusive relationships, who recently delivered a talk on narcissistic abuse hosted by the Chevrah Kadisha to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Also known for her multiple books on abuse including *When Loving Him Hurts*, Hickey explained the often-misunderstood definition of narcissism.

“Narcissism is obsessive self-love,” she says. “Generally, we’re able to love more than one person – we love our children, we love our partners, we love our friends, it isn’t an obsession. Yet an obsessive love – like that which narcissists have for themselves – makes no space for anybody else.”

Self-love, in and of itself, isn’t a bad thing, in fact, it’s part of building healthy self-esteem, of being comfortable in our own skin. “An obsessive, pathological self-love is something altogether different,” Hickey says.

Narcissists also have delusions of grandeur. “They truly believe that they are better than the rest of us mere mortals. They don’t have a rationale that goes with this, it’s just a deep belief that they are better than us.”

The last and perhaps most alarming

aspect of a narcissist is a complete absence of empathy. “Not everybody has the same level of empathy, but we have some empathy,” says Hickey. “An adult personality has the ability to see the same situation from someone else’s point of view and feel for them even if they don’t agree. The narcissist has zero capacity for empathy.” All they can see is how they feel, others’ feelings are simply not a consideration or something they can understand.

Narcissism is an extreme disorder, Hickey says, whose pathology lies in the fact that it’s too much. Not genetic or physiological, it’s categorised as a personality disorder – something that psychiatry terms “intractable”, which Hickey says is a kind way of saying “incurable”.

“It doesn’t change easily. It’s not a behaviour that you’re going to be able to modify, and it won’t respond to medication.” Yet, Hickey cautioned attendees against using the term too broadly. Narcissism, she says, is trending.

“Every other person, every unfortunate personality is now being called a narcissist,” she says. Social media has contributed to this. “It’s made us into a boastful society. We go onto Facebook, onto Instagram, and we

need to show how our house, holiday, car, and so on is better than yours.”

But even though this cultivates certain egotistical personality traits, these traits aren’t intractable, Hickey says. “If we’re talking about your real-deal, personality disorder narcissists, with delusions of grandeur, they will never ever be a nice human being.” Conversely, those who have only some characteristics that fall within the definition of narcissism can be helped.

More prevalent in men than women, actual narcissism can be difficult to identify at the start of a relationship. “Narcissists are very attractive people because they need your applause, they need to have relationships,” said Hickey. “They have to have a fan club. In order to make us like them and therefore give them the very air they breathe, they have to be charming, otherwise, no one is clapping.”

So, in a social setting, they’ll be agreeable and talkative. “They have adventures, they understand how you feel,” she continued. “But understand – they’re exploiting you. They don’t think we’re nice, they think we’re inferior. But we’re clapping. They need us to like them, and we do.”

Yet narcissists have a fatal flaw – they get bored easily. “You’ll go from being able to do nothing wrong until the narcissist gets bored and you’ll be able to do nothing right,” Hickey says. “They’re as verbal in their disdain for you as they were in their compliments. When they’re tired of you, everything you do, including how you breathe will be wrong. They suddenly don’t like anything about you. Yet, narcissists won’t leave you until they have a replacement – it’s not socially convenient for them to be single.”

They will, however,

continually verbally abuse their partners by being hypercritical, says Hickey. “The narcissist will wear you down with constant criticism of you, of your friends, and your family.”

Conflict resolution is a waste of time with a narcissist, she says. “They don’t think you have a point because you now have gone from being very intelligent – a word they often use to describe you in the beginning – to being very stupid. You have no intuition, no creativity. These are the kinds of things they will tell you.”

One should never take a direct hit at a narcissist when it comes to trying to manage their behaviour, Hickey says. “You will never accuse them of being boastful because they will tear you apart. Wait until a social event, and then say, ‘So and so was very boastful, it’s an unattractive quality.’ As the narcissist is seeking applause, they’ll get that boastfulness equals unattractiveness, and stop the behaviour.

“If you’re involved with a personality disorder narcissist, your chances of having a good, intimate, supportive relationship, having someone to co-parent and manage struggles with on an ongoing basis are virtually non-existent,” Hickey says.

Yet, leaving a narcissist can be exceedingly difficult. “Abusers are no better in a divorce than they are in a marriage. These aren’t people who are going to give you a square deal. These are animals of war, so if you don’t have the resources to leave, be very careful before you walk out. Prepare and be strategic, don’t be impulsive. Narcissists feel nothing about whipping a carpet out from under your feet, including when it comes to your kids.”

While you plan your exit, ensure your friendships and family relationships are intact, no matter how your partner may damage these, Hickey advises. “Eat, sleep, and take care of yourself because your partner isn’t going to do any of those things for you.”

Empower yourself, draw strength from your loved ones, and then leave once you’re equipped to do so. “Decide there’s life beyond this person. Whether it’s this year, next year, or the year after, it can take years to leave, so don’t be embarrassed about not being able to do it immediately. Do it when you can.”





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# Jan Smuts a cornerstone of Israel’s establishment, memorial finds

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Gareth Shackleford, the great-grandson of the late Jan Smuts, unveiled the Jewish Guild War Memorial Building Cornerstone at Westpark Cemetery on 27 November, one century after his great-grandfather unveiled it at the Jewish Guild War Memorial Building in Johannesburg on 8 November 1922.

When the latter building was sold in 1957, the Jewish Guild and the cornerstone found a new home on Rivonia Road, Morningside, Johannesburg.

After the Jewish Guild property in Morningside was sold in the 1990s, the Guild and the cornerstone were relocated to the bowling club at the top of Sylvia Pass in Observatory, Johannesburg. The club subsequently closed down, but the stone remained there for many years until it was “rediscovered” by a member of the community in September 2022.

During November of the same year, the cornerstone was moved to the grounds of the South African National Jewish War Memorial at Westpark Jewish Cemetery, where people of all faiths and races, some wearing medals of battles past, came to watch the unveiling last Sunday.

They were there to remember the South African soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the two World Wars of the twentieth century. The acts of bravery by these soldiers contributed to the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in our ancestral homeland in 1948.

The ceremony honoured the memory of Smuts, whose less well-known history, notably his contribution to the state of Israel, is slowly being uncovered thanks to the efforts of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), the Jewish National Fund of South Africa, and the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, particularly its committee member, Selwyn Rogoff, and former chairperson, Peter Bailey.

“The Jewish Guild War Memorial has been dedicated to the memory of the South African Jewish soldiers who fell during the Great War, later known as World War I,” Shackleford said at the ceremony. “General Smuts, or the *oubaas* [old boss] as we all know him in the family, not only unveiled the cornerstone, he was also an active participant in the fundraising programme for the building.”

Shackleford said the Smuts family is forever bound to Israel through Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, named in honour of the *oubaas* – “Yohanan” being the Hebrew translation of “Jan”. “Our grandmother, Louise, the youngest daughter of the *oubaas*, and *Ouma* Smuts and her husband, my grandfather, were hosted by the kibbutz on a visit to Israel in 1975. This was significant in cementing the relationship between the kibbutz and the Smuts family.”

Smuts and Dr Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader and Israel’s first president, met in London during the Great War. This sparked a close, life-long friendship which greatly influenced events in Palestine.

Research reveals that Smuts played a monumental backroom role in the drafting of the Balfour Declaration, providing Weizmann with a direct conduit to the war cabinet.

Hilton Kaplan, the national chairperson of the Ex-Service League, said at the ceremony, “We pay homage to General Jan Christian Smuts, the architect of the Union of South Africa, established in 1910, the self-governing dominion of the United Kingdom. General Smuts was acknowledged as a true friend of Zion at the Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem.”

Kaplan reiterated that Smuts played an integral part in the creation of the Balfour Declaration, although he had done so anonymously. “He was then involved in the diplomatic recognition of the state of Israel in 1948.

Weizmann said, ‘Without Smuts, there would have been no Balfour Declaration, and hence no Israel.’”

The connections between the Jewish people, Israel, and the *oubaas* are numerous and cover many years, Shackleford said. “In June 1917, the *oubaas* met Weizmann, at the time professor of chemistry at the University of Manchester. The two would become life-long friends. They enjoyed one another’s company and were intellectually compatible. They shared the vision of a home for the Jews.

“It was worthy to note that the *oubaas* was a staunch Christian Zionist. Having been raised in conservative Calvinism, he held a strong belief in the historical connection and the right of the Jewish people to their own homeland. He maintained that Palestine, being



Gareth Shackleford, Vasco Da Gama, Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotserkovsky, and Benji Shulman

the biblical home of the Jews, was where such a home should be. Weizmann naturally shared this vision, and found a staunch ally in General Smuts.

“Smuts, in his position as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet, had his advice sought and respected ahead of most and was thus in a unique position to add his voice to the cabinet deliberations. This influence extended to the national home for the Jewish people prior to the insurance of the Balfour Declaration.

“In January 1917, the SAZF asked Nathan Levi, a Zionist known to be a friend of Smuts, to use any personal influence and opportunities to obtain Smuts’s support for the SAZF resolution, which called for the peace conference after the end of the Great War to ensure the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine.

“In a speech delivered by Smuts at the banquet honouring him two years after the publication of the Balfour Declaration, he said, ‘When the resolutions passed by the Zionist Federation were brought to me, I gave my assurance that whenever I would have the choice, I would help Zionism. At the beginning of the movement in favour of the declaration of Palestine being the future home for the Jewish race, Weizmann approached me and pressed me very strongly. I told him of the promise I made on my sick bed in Irene. I did my best to carry it out.’

“In 1949, the *oubaas* was to see Weizmann, his friend of 32 years, for one last time, when, against all advice due to ill health, he travelled to London to make the speech at the dinner celebrating Weizmann’s 75th birthday. Two months later, the *oubaas* passed away.”

During a speech Smuts delivered in London in aid of German Jewish women and children after World War II, he said, “To me, this is the most important movement. This opening up of Palestine once more to the Jews. It’s one of the bright spots of the new world. I can see a vision of a new Palestine, a stream of tens of thousands of Jews going back home to their ancient homeland.”

Benji Shulman of the SAZF, which hosted the rededication ceremony said, “It was a unique opportunity to reconsider the many ways in which South Africa and Israel are connected, and perhaps even reconsider how we build on that connection to support just and sustainable solutions to the current problems in the Middle East.”

# Cape Corps honoured for liberating Palestine, paving way for Jewish state

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government announced its support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel, would have been meaningless were it not for the Commonwealth soldiers, including the Cape Corps comprising members of South Africa’s coloured community, who fought valiantly to relieve Palestine of the Ottoman Turks.

So wrote David Kaplan, co-founder of the multimedia platform *Lay of the Land*, ahead of the commemoration of the victories of the Cape Corps in the battles of Square Hill and Kh Jibeit in Palestine during World War II at the Jewish War Memorial in West Park Cemetery on 27 November.

Both these battles occurred between 17 and 20 September 1918 as part of the Greater Battle of Megiddo fought by the Cape Corps. Their victories enabled the issuing of the Balfour Declaration, beginning a process that eventually resulted in the declaration of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948.

“The Cape Corps members were victorious in the Battle of Square Hill on 19 September 1918,” Hilton Kaplan, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League, said at the ceremony. “They captured

181 prisoners at the cost of one of their members losing his life and another being wounded. After this success, they continued to take Kh Jibeit, a hill 700m north of Square Hill. Not having artillery support at this time, they unfortunately lost 51 men with a further 101 being wounded and one being taken prisoner. These two actions were decisive in allowing General Allenby to break through to Damascus and take the Ottoman Empire out of the war. This battle took place at Megiddo, approximately 29km southeast of Haifa.”

Clearing the region of the occupying Turks paved the way for a British Mandate and ultimately Jewish statehood in 1948, according to David Kaplan.

City of Johannesburg Councillor Vasco Da Gama said, “Before World War I, my grandfather, Joachim Da Gama, was part of the Cape Corps. My father, Moses Da Gama, joined the Cape Corps in 1938.”

Da Gama said the City of Johannesburg appreciated the ceremony being held in remembrance of those who died during World War I and World War II as well as “those who were injured during World War II, with some still alive today, battling with their wounds, and those who need to be taken care of”.

The plaque to the Cape Corps was unveiled by Commander Adeel Carelse MMM (retired), whose grandfather fought bravely at Square Hill and Kh Jibeit.

“The Battle of Square Hill created the groundwork for the establishment of the state of Israel and the right of the people to exist,” Carelse said. “As descendants of those brave men who fought at the Battle of Megiddo, we pay homage to all servicemen. We cannot talk about the Battle of Square Hill without talking about Sergeant Joe Seratzky. It’s been a hard job, but between Peter [Bailey, the former chairperson of the South African Jewish ex-Service League] and me, we managed to uncover the information regarding Sergeant Seratzky who was actually a Jewish member who fought on the side of the first battalion of the South African Cape Corps. Very little has been said about him. This is something that we need to correct. We’re working on it as we speak so that he can take his rightful place within the battle order of the first battalion of the South African Cape Corps.”

Israel’s ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky, unveiled the memorial plaque in honour of the 644 black Southern Africans who went down with 140 Yishuv Jews on the SS Erinpura during World War II.

“The SS Erinpura was bombed off the coast of Libya on 1 May 1943 by the German Luftwaffe,” Hilton Kaplan said.

“On board were 62 crew members, 140 Jewish volunteers, and 644 members of the African Zulu Pioneer Corps, made up mainly of Tswana, Swazi, and Sotho volunteers from South Africa. East African volunteers were involved in the laying of the railway track from Haifa to Rosh HaNikra, and then after that were involved in the construction of the Rosh HaNikra tunnels so that the tracks could continue from Haifa to Beirut to support the war efforts in those days.”

“Today, we commemorate the soldiers who fought in your country in the two World Wars,” Belotsercovsky said. “World War I was, in a way, pushed away from our collective memory by the atrocities of World War II. But we need to remember that also during World War I, more than 16 million people lost their lives. Out of them, 10 million were soldiers. During World War I, about 30 million Jewish soldiers were enlisted and fought, and 170 000 of them lost their lives. More than 250 000 South Africans volunteered in World War I in support of the British Army. More than 7 000, unfortunately, didn’t come back. For the Jewish soldiers in World War I, fighting for an independent Israel was a special duty. They felt they were participating in the huge effort to create the Jewish state. The Balfour Declaration was the result of this effort.”

Belotsercovsky said that 300 000 South Africans, including South African Jews, joined allied forces during World War II, and more than 11 000 didn’t return.

Belotsercovsky, whose father, Yaakov, fought in World War II and always saw 9 May (Victory Day) as the most important day, concluded, “We always try to remember these men who fought for us. We owe our existence to their heroism and bravery.”



War veterans at the South African National Jewish War Memorial at West Park Jewish Cemetery

Photos: South African Zionist Federation

## Hofman wins gold medal for health interventions >>Continued from page 9

for policy that will shift the needle and improve life expectancy for all South Africans.”

Professor Sharon Fonn, who also works in the Wits School of Public Health and facilitated Hofman’s transition at the university in 2009, describes Hofman as tenacious for a good cause.

“You can, obviously, as a clinician, achieve individual change – you can make somebody better. But if you can create change at a societal level, you actually can have an impact on the life and health of millions of people. Karen has done this by looking

at the policies that can change things in society. For example, the work she did proved that by decreasing salt in bread, you could decrease strokes and death from strokes related to high blood pressure. It’s the same with the sugar tax – instead of saying, ‘Don’t eat so much salt, don’t have sugar,’ she looked at ways to make the right choice the easy choice, thus stopping industry from behaving without consideration of health outcome.”

Fonn marvels at the way Hofman works. “It’s not an individual effort, she runs a fantastic team,” she says.



# Curl Up and Dye shifts with the times, but stays forever 1989

Acclaimed artist, director, and actress **Sue Pam-Grant** brings her seminal work, *Curl Up and Dye* back to the theatre in Cape Town from 7 to 24 December. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to her.

**What inspired you to write and perform *Curl Up and Dye*?**

It was 1988, and I had recently moved to Johannesburg after graduating from the University of Cape Town drama school. I realised while struggling to find work that the only way to find it was to make my own. I was visiting a friend who lived in an art deco flat in Joubert Park when I looked out from her balcony, and thought what I was seeing below was a microcosm of society.

The next day, I packed my Walkman into my backpack and walked around the area. I started talking to whoever I could. I gathered a collection of beautiful accounts of people who were all struggling to survive, and they became the characters of *Curl Up and Dye*.



The cast of *Curl Up and Dye* (2022)

**What did you hope to achieve with *Curl Up and Dye* at the Black Sun in the late 1980s?**

Thirty-three years ago, I simply wanted to get as many people as possible to see what I think is an important work.

**Why a hair salon? Why Berea?**

Joubert Park is where the play is set, which

is just down Nugget Hill (a very definitive hill in the inner city of Johannesburg). It's just down from Hillbrow and a little bit up from town. At the time, these inner-city areas were still under the Group Areas Act. This was 1988/1989 and these areas (Joubert Park, Hillbrow, Town, and Berea) became known as "grey areas". Black people were moving into accommodation, but they were being charged an astronomical rent under the most awful conditions. These areas were white, they were high-density with lots of blocks of flats, and this is where I conducted all my interviews. One of the interviews was inside a hair salon, and it became clear to me that it would not only represent a microcosm of what was going on to the outside, but it was

also seemingly a safe women's space and that makes sense because this is a play about five women trying to survive in a turbulent landscape.

**At the time, the characters were enlightening and in your face. Are these the same characters?**

They were based on real experiences, but

crafted into five characters that hold very different views. They are in your face as they are five women surviving and holding onto a shifting landscape. We have the same five characters now, only they have shifted over the past 33 years. In 2013, I revisited the text and realised that the hairdresser, Rolene, needed to be a coloured woman who was holding on to her identity as a white woman.

**How is *Curl Up and Dye* different now?**

The characters are the same, but they are sharper and more pointed, and they hold the essence of what they represent in a more clear and honest depiction. Time and life experience gave me an opportunity to look back and draw from my own experience, and then use that as insight into the human condition. I guess, growing up has matured my interpretation of these five women.

**Describe the process of writing it, and the 2013 version.**

In 2013, we changed the hairdresser, Rolene's, identity, making her coloured but going as a white woman, believing that lie, and representing the "grey area" of the landscape outside the salon. She became a human representation of the socio-political condition of the time. It focused the play on identity politics, and was a dramatic shift.

For this 2022 production, my husband – who I collaborated with on *Curl Up and Dye* from the start – and I looked at the significance of the play written 33 years ago and its relevance right now. We recognised that post-COVID-19 audiences needed to see a fast, acute, sexy, raw, zappy form of dialogue on stage. We did some strict editing to cut any fluff and excess. I threw out a lot, approaching the play with a contemporary

pen, dropping any reflective monologues. The play is shorter now, and is a warfare from beginning to end. By this, I mean the dialogue is so fast, and there is an urgency right now in what we want to do and say, there's an urgency in our art-making form.

**What social commentary are you making?**

*Curl Up and Dye* cuts straight to the bone, especially since matters of race identity and gender-based violence in South Africa remain as urgent and fraught as ever.

***Curl Up and Dye* has been a boomerang in your life. Describe its impact.**

The first rendition of *Curl Up and Dye* in 1988/1989 was unexpected. It took us from every centre and corner right through South Africa from Soweto to Sasolburg, Welkom to Port Elizabeth, East London, Cape Town you-name-it, Durban, Johannesburg, and then to the Edinburgh Festival where it won A First Fringe. We went all over Germany. *Curl Up and Dye* was published in the South African Plays Anthology. It's studied in universities and at schools, and there have been numerous productions of it. Every time I revisit it, I'm opened to a new world and a new way of seeing and being.

**Why did you choose to bring it to a small, intimate theatre like the Olympia Bakery Café?**

I'm at a point in my life where I'm not interested in traditional theatre spaces, I'm interested in pushing boundaries to ensure the audience has an immersive experience.

I opt for the space that will challenge the audience and performers, bringing another dimension to the experience of the work.

**What do you hope people will take home from this show?**

I hope they will ask themselves lots of questions about the issues that the show brings up. I hope they will engage with their experience, what they

laughed at and where they cried. I hope they think about how relevant this play is in 2022. I hope they look at this idea of the human condition and how these deep-seated issues from 1989 are still so present in our daily conditioning.

**Will you bring it to Johannesburg?**

I don't know if this is going to come to Joburg. If somebody would like to help sponsor us that would be wonderful. Right now, we're a self-funded production. The cast we have been working with for the past three months have had no income, and we're completely dependent on the door.

**Is there room for yet another *Curl Up and Dye* in a few years' time?**

*Curl Up and Dye* doesn't feel like it's something that has an ending. It's a play about the human condition and our social landscape, and that's forever changing. I will continue to shift it with the times when it needs to be shifted, but it will never be updated, as in it will always be set in 1989 in a hairdressing salon called *Curl Up and Dye* in Joubert Park.

• [Booking through quicket.co.za](#)



Sue Pam-Grant

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# Trail of fire: CSO runner halted by blaze

SAUL KAMIONSKY

No amount of preparation and training could prevent the fire that brought runners like Steven Berman to a halt in the 100km RMB Ultra Trail Cape Town (UTCT) Race on Sunday, 27 November.

Berman was feeling great and everything was going to plan until the fire stopped him and an unlucky group at the 56km mark.

Berman and his friend, fellow Capetonian Bengi Goldberg, were running to raise funds and awareness for the Community Security Organisation (CSO) Cape Town, an organisation close to their hearts.

Goldberg, the head of the customer success team at Signapps, wasn't affected by the fire as he was running ahead of Berman when it broke out in Hout Bay.

Berman, who works in the motor industry, was disappointed. "We were told that we couldn't run that section because it was too dangerous due to the fire. We were put in a car and driven around the fire in a 15km detour. I still crossed the finish line and received a finisher medal for the 100km race, but instead of running the full 100km, I ran only 85km."

Berman had been training hard, running six times a week, since February in preparation for the 100km race. "When I finished, I still felt really strong but disappointed, even though I know it wasn't anyone's fault."

Goldberg, who has been running since he was 12 years old, says, "The race was one of those few experiences in life which you know you'll never forget. It was a party, celebrating five months of dedicated training, sacrifice, and planning. I loved being out on the trails with the incredible trail running community, and coming into aid stations to see my friends, family, and the CSO team."

He says the crew aiding him supported him from 04:00 on Saturday to 01:00 on Sunday morning.

Goldberg, whose longest race prior to Saturday was 50km, says the runners required a perfect day to finish. "The stats show that of the 260 odd runners who started, 97 didn't finish. I knew pretty early into the race that I



Steven Berman and Bengi Goldberg

Photo: CSO Cape Town Facebook

would miss the 17-hour mark, especially with the 80km/h wind."

The UTCT 100km race starts with a climb out of Cape Town, up to Signal Hill and around Lion's Head, with Devil's Peak marking the home stretch.

In the first half of the 100km, runners climb Table Mountain and the remote trails of Karbonkelberg. The second half is equal in elevation, but consists of more sustained gradients.

Berman, who ran his first trail race, a UTCT 35km in 2018, aimed to complete the 100km within 18 hours, but it wasn't possible as the wind was intense and energy sapping, he says. "If I hadn't been being pulled off course due to the fire and I was able to run the full 100km, I probably would have finished in about 20 or 21 hours."

Although Berman placed ahead of Goldberg in the official results, he benefitted from the 15km detour.

Berman didn't run with Goldberg at any point during the race. "Bengi is a much stronger runner than me, so if I tried to keep up with him, I would have suffered. I ran with another friend, Nathan Bernstein. It's such a long day and night that if you go too fast, you'll suffer towards the end.

We paced it so well, and we were ready to start going faster at Hout Bay and then bang, the fire happened. It was such a weird feeling to be on a trail run and suddenly get into a car before starting to run again at Constantia."

At the time of speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Berman and Goldberg had raised R49 650 for CSO Cape Town.

Berman has been volunteering at CSO Cape Town for 12 years and is one of the department heads. He decided to take on the challenge of this run to raise funds for the organisation because, he said, "Running the 100km is a wonderful, extremely tough challenge, and a great way to raise awareness and a little bit of money for the CSO so we can continue to provide the good service we do for the Cape Town community in terms of security and medical services."

"When I finished my studies around 2010, I was so disconnected from the community. I got a call from one of my friends saying I should come down to the CSO and check it out. I didn't think it would be for me, but I was hooked from the first training session. I still love it.

It's been such an important part of our life in terms of making friends. We're giving back to the community and doing a *mitzvah*."

Goldberg chose to run the UTCT 100km because "running 100km was kind of a progression" and running it to raise funds for the CSO, which he has been a volunteer for since 2017, "seemed like a good way to give back to the organisation".

"We've all been in a situation where we needed the CSO. Just knowing that if I need anything, I have the privilege of picking up the phone, not worrying about whether I can afford it, and knowing that someone will be there who really cares. The organisation has grown on me both in the incredible work it does and the people who make it up."

"Steve and Bengi are both long-time, dedicated volunteers, and instructors at CSO Cape Town," according to the organisation. "We felt a real sense of *nachas* watching them train for this mammoth challenge, and were blown away at their endurance and effort on the day of the race. They are both absolute *mensch*es, champions, and superheroes!"

## A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

### Breaching the Vatican walls

In my previous column, I reflected on the profound significance of the recent World Jewish Congress (WJC) executive meeting being held in the Vatican in Rome, the first time that a Jewish leadership gathering had ever been hosted in the capital and epicentre of the Catholic faith. For all my colleagues at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) and internationally, it was an extraordinary privilege to have been part of this historic moment. However, perhaps no-one is better placed to comment on the meaning of the event than the current head of Italian Jewry, Noemi Di Segni. Her speech, which followed messages from WJC President Ronald Lauder and the Vatican's interfaith affairs representative, Cardinal Koch, was a brilliant balance between building bridges and holding people accountable for the abuses and tragedies of the past. For the Jews of Rome, she said, the walls of the Vatican had always represented repression, separation, and hostility. To be inside those walls, as guests of the Holy See, told its own story of how much had changed. The way forward was now for both faiths to "graft new growth onto the roots of the past".

This striking metaphor reminded me of South Africa's own post-apartheid journey, in which fostering a culture of national unity to take the country forward necessarily goes hand in hand with accepting accountability for what happened in the past. To formalise the commitment of the Jewish world to reciprocating these overtures from the Vatican, the WJC is preparing a document, titled *Kishreinu* (Our Bond). This declaration, which is in the process of being finalised, lays out in powerful, beautifully written terms the mission to strengthen the bond between Jews and Catholics in pursuit of peace.

While overshadowed to some extent by the historically unprecedented setting and audience with

### ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



Pope Francis, the WJC meeting itself dealt with some important issues for world Jewry.

These included the need to confront the rising influence of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions organisation on university campuses (in which area South African Jewry is able to bring its own extensive experience to the table); and promoting Jewish education and nurturing young leadership – an area in which the WJC has been strikingly successful. This was my first opportunity to attend a WJC meeting in person. One of the things that struck me was the enormous across-the-board esteem in which my predecessor, Mary Kluk, is held. Kluk first came onto the WJC executive over a decade ago in her capacity as SAJBD national chairperson. She now sits on the executive in her own right and for a long time, has headed up its important security committee. The status she enjoys on this very important body, combined with the role played by fellow executive member and former SAJBD national vice-chairperson, Marc Pozniak, and Alana Baranov in her capacity of member of the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps, underlines once again how much our relatively small community is punching above its weight on the global Jewish stage. At the same time, the connections we're forging with our international Jewish colleagues continue to enhance our ability to fulfil our own core mandate of representing and safeguarding our community.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM, every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

### ORT Jet Awards a holy ground for business

"We're standing on holy ground tonight because of the kindness of the mentors who give up their time and knowledge, and the courage of business owners," Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said at the Sasfin ORT Jet Awards on 15 November.

Well-known businesspeople inspired those attending with personal accounts of their entrepreneurial adventures.

Sasfin chief executive Michael Sassoon called it a privilege to partner with ORT Jet and support business owners as they expanded their businesses and boosted the economy.

Paul Ballen, the owner of Paul's Homemade Ice Cream, encouraged business owners to pursue their goals, learn from their errors, and face challenges head-on.

Mentor of the year Renato Dequcinis, the owner of Barril Group, mentored four ORT Jet businesses throughout the year,



David Zidel, ORT Jet 2021 mentor of the year, with Renato Dequcinis

and shared his expertise on search engine optimisation in multiple training sessions. Danny Blumberg, the owner of Scent.ology, won business of the year.

Success is the result of a community, according to ORT Jet. This organisation envisions bringing together the passion, innovation, and resources of the community to help build a fruitful foundation that's rich and rewarding for businesses.

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# One parking incident away from a national road rage

We all know the story. Cynthia has asked Geoff at least seven times (no exaggeration) to call the plumber to sort out the leaking geyser in the guest room. He has assured her that he'll get it done on at least three occasions (the other times he was watching the soccer and didn't hear her). But he hasn't called the plumber, really, for no reason at all.

And then, on Wednesday morning, the leak turns into a tsunami. The clean washing on the bed in the guest room gets ruined, the new carpet is now squishy, and it looks like they'll have to replace the ceiling.

Cynthia is livid. And she loses it at poor Geoff, who is a sweet guy but also pretty useless. She does this just as he is about to leave for the office (in Sandton). She says things she probably doesn't mean. He retorts with something about how hard he works. She says something about his mother. And he storms out to work.

He has hardly had the time to calm himself down when he arrives at his destination. Under his breath, he's still muttering something about how she doesn't appreciate how hard he works, when he spots a massive SUV about to park in his bay. It's marked "Jeff", which is irritating enough, but he's certainly not going to tolerate this guy with all the attitude (and who has never met) pushing him around.

No way, Hozay!  
That's when it gets ugly. SUV guy doesn't know what hit him. He's a visitor. The security guard didn't tell him

where to park, and he missed the "Jeff" sign. South Africa is one parking incident away from a national road rage.

## INNER VOICE Howard Feldman



Because 2022 has been that kind of year. Months of load shedding, fear for the future, economic and financial stress, a COVID-19 hangover, and the simple stresses of being human in an imperfect world has depleted us. We're metaphorically at the end of our tether (not that I know what a tether is).

It's likely that we say this at the end of every year, but somehow this year end feels more intense. People seem more stressed, more on edge, and more likely to get into an altercation than I have ever seen before. We're all victims of Geoff's road rage and we're all Geoff. We're the victim and the perpetrator. We're Cynthia, and we're the poor *shmuck* in the SUV simply looking for a place to park.

The frustration at government failure isn't to be understated. The effort of remaining positive is exhausting. And it takes its toll. Some days, it's easier to see the magnificence of what surrounds us, and some days it's more challenging.

At the end of a tiring year, it's not unreasonable to be depleted. Instead of fighting the turmoil and then fighting each other, we need to give ourselves some slack. Acknowledge that we're running on empty, accept that we need a holiday, and know that when 2023 rolls around, we'll be able to see the year ahead filled with infinite possibility, with hope, and with appreciation for everything around us.

# Torah Academy boys experience sweetness of being three

Three-year-old boys gathered with their parents at Torah Academy on 25 November for an Areinfeirish, a Chabad custom of welcoming a boy of three into Jewish schooling. The boys experienced the sweetness of Torah, licking honey off the *aleph* bais letters, and being showered with sweets.



# Jewish Women's Benevolent honoured for community work

The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society (JWBS) has been recognised for its work with two plaques, awarded by the Shoshana Foundation and the Chevrah Kadisha respectively.

The Shoshana Foundation cares for single moms in the Jewish community. The JWBS assists these moms and their children with medical bills when the costs are prohibitive. The JWBS's Chanukah Appeal last year enabled it to raise a substantial amount of money and thus, this year, the organisation has been able to cover the costs



Saul Tomson with Doreen Zurel and Leigh Brouze

of various medical-related issues for some of the most vulnerable members of our community, making a vital and life-changing difference to many.

The plaque from the Chevrah Kadisha was presented by Chev

Chief Executive Saul Tomson recently at a function at the Sandton Convention Centre. The Chev has been the JWBS's predominant beneficiary for 130 years, and together, the two organisations have been able to enhance the lives of elderly and indigent members of our community. Beneficiaries are treated with dignity, respect, care, and compassion by the JWBS's dedicated team of volunteers, who provide them with gently worn clothing through the JWBS clothing depot, and new items of essential clothing throughout the year.

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