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THE Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 11 SHEVAT, 5782 JANUARY 13, 2022 VOL. 100, NO. 19

Memphis Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Memphis Announce Grant Opportunities



Participants in the B'nai Tzedek teen philanthropy program of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis volunteered at Baron Hirsch Congregation's Great Sandwich Make in the Spring of 2021.

Memphis Jewish Federation and the Jewish Foundation of Memphis are excited to announce the opening of several 2022 grant opportunities for nonprofit organizations. Federation Lemsky Endowment Fund and Community grants, and Foundation B'nai Tzedek Co-Op grants are open to all qualified Memphis-based non-profits.

Established through the generosity of the late Abe Lemsky, Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund further enables Federation to strengthen the bonds between Memphis Jews and Israel.

Now in its 30th year, the Lemsky Fund accomplishes this by providing support for a variety of programs and

activities including: financial support for Memphis-based Israel engagement programs across the community; grants for high school teens (Teen Israel Experience) and young adults (Next Stop Israel) to participate in summer and/or study and volunteer programs in Israel; grants to Jewish schools for organized school trips to Israel; needs-based flight subsidies for first-time adult visitors to Israel to participate in organized Memphis trips; and vital funding for special projects in Israel to aid new immigrants, the elderly and Israeli populations at risk sponsored by our overseas partners The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and World ORT.

Over the last three decades, thousands of Memphians and Israelis have been enriched by the broad array of Lemsky Fund programs here and in Israel.

"I am confident that Abe Lemsky, of blessed memory, would be so proud to see the incredible impact his generous bequest to Memphis Jewish Federation continues to have on the Memphis-Israel relationship," said Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, executive vice president of Federation and staff professional

for the Lemsky Fund.

All agencies, synagogues, schools and youth groups in Memphis are eligible to apply for a Lemsky grant to help support a local Israel engagement program. The fund seeks applications for programs that will likely deepen program participants' understanding of Israel-related issues and increase their solidarity with, concern for, and connection to the people and State of Israel. The fund fa-

(See Grants Page 3)



Torah MiTzion's Rabbi Yisrael Wende and Torah MiTzion students bring Israeli culture to Hillels of Memphis graduate students and alumni at a Hanukkah event at the Morris S. Fogelman Jewish Student Center at the University of Memphis. Torah MiTzion is funded in part by a Federation Lemsky Endowment Fund grant.

Developer of Former Anshei Sphard - Beth El Emeth Land Plans 41 New Homes



Former site of Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth Congregation at 120 N. Yates

By Shoshana Cenker

There could be movement this week regarding the four-acre property that once housed Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth Congregation at 120 N. East Yates Road. Gregory Griffin bought the property for \$1.5 million through his business, Worldwide Property Hub (WPH), in August 2020. Commercial

real estate broker Curtis Braden of Braden, Braden & Braden represented Mr. Griffin and WPH in that transaction.

The 50-year-old synagogue, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places, was designed by late Memphis architect Francis Mah with help from architect Keith Kays.

Griffin filed an application with the Land Use Control Board (LUCB) for his development plan. The LUCB is set to review it on Thursday, Jan 13. William Gordy of the engineering firm W. H. Porter Consultants is representing the project for WPH.

The plan involves turning the property into a residential community called Anshei Gardens with 41 houses surrounding a central half-acre green space park. The homes are expected to be between 2,800–3,400 square feet, costing around \$600,000. Griffin plans to begin construction as soon as the application is approved.

Griffin tried leasing the historic building to another congregation, but unfortunately it didn't happen. "We would have loved to lease it to another church. We had the lease up for a year, but no

one came through," Griffin said. "We can't sit on millions of dollars, and people don't want an abandoned space in the neighborhood."

Despite its National Registry listing, the building can be torn down. Griffin is working on hiring an architect who will "bring new design and new ideas" for that space that fits the Memphis style but with a fresh take and "better upside," he noted.

Anshei's congregation has been holding services inside Baron Hirsch and recently signed a new 5-year agreement to continue renting space there. Though it would certainly be sad to see the building demolished, it's important to remember that the facility is not what makes Anshei – rather, it's the people who come together to pray. And thankfully, they're able to continue to do so. **HW**

My Teen Israel Experience



Memphian Michael Hirsch at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. With a grant from Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund offsetting cost for his summer program in Israel, Michael immersed himself in Israeli culture and history.

By Michael Hirsch

Michael Hirsch, son of Marci and Geoffrey Hirsch, is a senior at Lausanne Collegiate School. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of his NFTY program in Israel.

Israel Reflection

Before traveling to Israel, I had ideas of what the place would be like. I knew there was a vast stretch of desert. I knew there were cities thousands of years old. I knew there was a sea so salty that nothing could live in it. But I did not know what it would feel like.

During my adventure in Israel, I found all those things to be true. I visited the Western Wall and swam in the Mediterranean Sea I had seen many times before in pictures. Yet, being in these places provided an alternative perspective I was unable to reach by simply observing pictures. This feeling was not necessarily connection, as I did not feel connected to places in the ways that others might have. I think for me, it was more of a sense of awe. Yes, the

Western Wall was not quite as tall as I had expected, and I did not feel an obvious connection to Judaism there. I was more taken aback just by the history. To know I was standing in a spot where so much had happened thousands of years ago was something special.

It was also an important experience for me to be able to immerse myself in another culture. I became very interested in learning basic Hebrew, and it was satisfying when I was able to order shawarma in Hebrew. Additionally, I was able to compare the life of Israelis to that of my own. I am not sure what I was expecting, but there was a large number of similarities between my life and the lives of other Israelis I met. I appreciated the prevalence of places to play soccer, which are not quite as abundant in the U.S.

Although I do not think my connection to Judaism was majorly heightened by my trip, there were some things I noticed. For instance, there is a comfort in knowing most of the people around are Jewish, which is not something I would feel anywhere else. Going along with culture, I saw more Stars of David and synagogues in Israel than I had seen in my entire life beforehand. The absolute normalcy of Judaism was something I very much appreciated about Israel, and will probably never see anywhere outside of Israel, except for maybe New York.

To finish, my Israel trip provided me with a perspective on Judaism, culture, and history that was incredibly rich. All of those are heavily abundant in Israel, which is what makes it such a neat place to visit. The fact that I could see four countries in one view is extraordinary to me. Being able to walk in the Old City where people have lived for thousands of years before me and hearing the stories about it is an incredibly captivating lesson in history. Israel showed me things I would have never seen otherwise, and I am grateful for that.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NFTY Israel summer experience possible.

All rising high school juniors and seniors in the Memphis Jewish community are eligible for grants up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2022 are now available online. To learn more and apply, please go to: www.jcpmemphis.org/lemsky-endowment-fund. **HW**

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1/13/2022



Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Jan. 14, 2022 / 11 Shevat, 5782.....4:52 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Jan. 15, 2022 / 12 Shevat, 5782 5:52 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Beshalach

CORRECTIONS

In the Dec. 30, 2021, edition, the article, 'Beth Sholom's New Early Childhood Specialists Brings Shabbat to Life for Toddlers,' incorrectly misquoted Ariel Figueroa and referred to the wrong matriarch watering the camels. It should have been Rebecca. Figueroa further adds that the camels were not owned by Isaac but by a servant of patriarch Abraham. **HW**

In the Jan. 6, 2022, edition of The Hebrew Watchman the article titled "18 Noteworthy Jews Who Died in 2021," an earlier version of this article identified Sheldon Adelson as an AIPAC supporter. Adelson cut off support for the group more than a decade ago. **HW**

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Grants...
(Continued From Page 1)

vors programs that have a connection to JAFI, JDC and/or World ORT and are structured with significant collaboration with other agencies.

Applications for local Israel engagement programs will open Thursday, January 13, 2022, and are due by the close of business on Monday, March 21, 2022. Full guidelines and applications can be accessed at jcpmemphis.org/lemsky-endowment-fund.

Funded by the Annual Community Campaign and open to Memphis Jewish Federation Strategic Partners, Community Grants fund the operations and programs of the agencies, schools, youth groups and programs driving Jewish life in Memphis. Local grant funds are used to connect and engage members of the Memphis Jewish community to Jewish life and/or care for the vulnerable and at-risk in our community.

Awarded by a diverse grant committee comprised of lay leaders, Federation community grants support BBYO Memphis, Beth Shalom Religious School, Bornblum Jewish Community School, Facing History & Ourselves, Federation Camp Scholarships, Jewish Children’s Regional Service, Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South, the Memphis Jewish Community Center, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, Plough Towers, Synagogue Youth Groups, Temple Israel Religious School, and the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service at the MJCC, with over \$1 million of local funding. Applications open February 1, 2022, and are due by March 1, 2022.

During the month of January, non-profit Jewish organizations in Memphis can apply for a B’nai Tzedek Co-Op grant. More than 50 students are enrolled in B’nai Tzedek, the teen philanthropy program at the Jew-

ish Foundation of Memphis. These are teens of bar/bat mitzvah age through high school who are given the great task of reviewing grant applications, interviewing the organizations applying and then meeting as a group to decide collectively who should receive funding. The funding totals \$10,000, money generously provided by an anonymous donor who created the Teen Philanthropy Co-Op Endowment Fund.

Applications are open using a new online portal that can be found at jcpmemphis.org/teen-philanthropy, and close on January 28, 2022. Last year B’nai Tzedek grants funded welcome baskets for new residents of Plough Towers, multi-sensory items for preschool students at Temple Israel’s Early Learning Center, a new virtual special needs program at Fogelman Jewish Family Service, and many more. Applicants must be a registered 501(c)3 organization and support Jewish Memphis.

“Being part of a collective grant-making process is a unique opportunity for these students,” said Director of Foundation Programs Sarah VanderWalde, who oversees the B’nai Tzedek program. “They learn about our community needs and work together as a team to provide thoughtful recommendations. I am honored to lead the teens through this process and can’t wait to see what applications come through in 2022.”

The teens will rank each application on a variety of criteria including consistency with Jewish values, creativity and clarity, whether the project is needed in the community and whether it will change the lives of those it serves. Grants will be awarded during a reception scheduled for Monday, March 21, 2022. More information can be found at jcpmemphis.org/teen-philanthropy or by emailing Sarah VanderWalde at svanderwalde@jcpmemphis.org. **HW**

Monthly Senior Luncheon at the MJCC

On January 19, 2022, at noon, the MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club will hold its first Monthly Luncheon of the New Year featuring harpist Barbara Christensen.

Barbara is an accomplished, classically trained harpist with a repertoire that spans centuries of music from classical to folk to Broadway. Since moving to Memphis in 1993, she has been active in the music scene. In addition to performing for Creative Aging, Barbara is a past president of the Memphis

Harp Chapter, a founding member of the Memphis Harp Ensemble and the founding Board Chair of the Memphis Jazz workshop.

This program is made possible with support from Creative Aging.

A kosher luncheon, provided by Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, will be served at the cost of only \$5. Reservations are required. Please call Steve Kaplan, adult services coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or email him at stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org. **HW**

As Israel’s Battle Against the Omicron Variant Continues, Magen David Adom, Israel’s Paramedic Service, Begins Administering a Fourth Dose of the Covid Vaccine to the Elderly



A Magen David Adom EMT administers a fourth Covid booster in a nursing home.

Or Yehuda, Israel – Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel’s paramedic and Red Cross service, began administering

fourth doses of the Covid vaccine last Tuesday to seniors living in eldercare facilities in an attempt to thwart the spread of the Omicron variant and to protect populations most at-risk to become seriously ill from the disease.


The rollout of the fourth dose comes as Israel’s confirmed cases of coronavirus is nearing the country’s all-time record, prompting the Ministry of Health to launch an initiative for the additional vaccine booster.

Israel is the first country to begin administering a fourth round of the vaccine, eligible to everyone at least 60 years old, health workers, and the immunocompromised, provided their last dose was at least four months ago. Nearly 6.6 million people of Israel’s 9.4 million have been vaccinated twice, and 4.3 million have received a third booster shot.

“From the beginning of the outbreak, MDA has stood at the forefront, providing the elderly population and the general Israeli public with a rapid, professional medical response in order to defeat Covid,” said Eli Bin, MDA’s director-general. “We are proud to carry out this national mission, as requested by the Ministry of Health, to protect our grandparents, our parents, and friends.”

Magen David Adom has already vaccinated and tested millions of adults and children, and due to this current wave and rate of infection, has opened more testing sites throughout the country to meet excessive demand.

Magen David Adom is Israel’s national paramedic and Red Cross service. A leader in mass-casualty response and in EMS technology, Magen David Adom treats and transports some 700,000 people to hospitals every year, collects, safety tests, and distributes nearly all the blood to Israel’s hospitals, and, through its affiliation with the Red Cross movement, responds to disasters around the world. www.afmda.org **HW**




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Sandra Jaffe, Who Ran New Orleans’ Celebrated Preservation Hall Jazz Clubs for Decades, Dies at 83



Sandra Jaffe outside Preservation Hall, the revered New Orleans jazz club she co-founded with her husband, Allan. Credit: Danny Clinch

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) – Sandra Jaffe, a Jewish woman who, along with her husband, ran one of the most vaunted jazz clubs in New Orleans for decades and integrated the club before segregation ended, died last month at 83.

Jaffe and her husband, Allan, were considered pioneers and protectors of jazz in the city that gave birth to the genre, despite having landed in the city from Philadelphia as the music style was being threatened by newer forms

like rock and roll. Their club, Preservation Hall, played host to vaunted jazz musicians. The Preservation Hall Jazz Band, the club’s touring band, has recorded with major artists included Pete Seeger, Tom Waits and Louis Armstrong.

“There is no question that Preservation Hall saved New Orleans jazz,” George Wein, an influential jazz promoter who died earlier this year, told Vanity Fair in 2011 of the club.

Jaffe was born Sandra Smolen in Philadelphia in 1938 to Jewish parents who immigrated to the United States from Ukraine. She graduated from Harcum College and married Allan Jaffe in 1960. On their way back from their honeymoon in Mexico, the couple stopped in New Orleans, where they wandered into an art gallery to hear a group playing jazz. The couple was entranced by the music and decided to stay a few more days to hear the group play again.

“On the way back to Philadelphia, they stopped in New Orleans and, like others before and after, found themselves swept away in the beauty, romance, excitement, mystery, freedom, history, unsettled business and charm of the city,” the Jaffes’ sons wrote in an obituary posted to the Preservation Hall website.

When they visited the gallery a few days later, the owner, Larry Borenstein, told the couple he was moving the gallery next door and offered them the space for \$400 per month. Despite having no experience running a club – and despite Sandra’s parents’ expectation that the couple would return to Philadelphia – they decided to rent the space and opened Preservation Hall in 1961.

“We didn’t come to New Orleans to start a business, or have Preservation Hall, or save the music,” Sandra told Vanity Fair in 2011. “We just came to hear it.”

After getting the club off the ground together, the Jaffes had their first son,

Russell, in 1969, after which Sandra stopped working. She wouldn’t return to working at the club until 1987, when Allan died of melanoma at 51. Their second son, Ben, came back to work at the club after graduating from college in 1993.

According to the obituary posted to the Preservation Hall website, the club was the first integrated hall in New Orleans, in defiance of the Jim Crow laws still in effect before the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Speaking to the Crescent City Jewish News, a local Jewish newspaper in New Orleans, about his involvement in a local Jazz Fest Shabbat in 2015, Ben Jaffe said his mother saw music as a way of bringing together communities and his parents, both hailing from observant Jewish communities, valued the continuation of Jewish traditions.

“In very many ways it’s a continuation of my parents’ vision of unifying communities through music,” he said.

Ben recalled his bar mitzvah at one of the local synagogues as “one of the most diverse bar mitzvahs ever attended for services in New Orleans” due to all the jazz musicians in attendance.

“We spent a lot of our time at churches playing for different functions,” Ben told the Baltimore Jewish Times in 2013. “I think in New Orleans, it was just a natural extension of [my parents’] Jewishness [by them] becoming involved in the African-American community.” **HW**

CULTURE

I am Begging You All to Please Shut Up About the Harry Potter Jew-Goblins



Rubber masks of the goblins at Gringotts Wizarding Bank are displayed during a preview of the Warner Bros Harry Potter studio tour.
Credit: Image by CARL COURT/ AFP via Getty

By Eliya Smith

This first appeared in Forward. Reprinted with permission.

I don’t have much to say about most of the J.K. Rowling discourse, because basically my opinion about the Harry Potter series is that it offers some effectively moralizing children’s escapism that is certainly flawed, should never have spawned the weird cult it became

and whose creator has bad opinions that she should stop sharing. I would have been so happy to live and die without ever encountering J.K. Rowling’s reflections on wizard bowel movements or trans rights.

What I do have to say on the matter of J.K. Rowling discourse is this: Please, everyone, for the love of God, shut up about the Jew-goblins.

If I see one more person on the internet arguing the goblins are Jewish caricatures, I will personally combust, and as I do so I will dramatically announce to anyone bearing witness that I have specifically elected to combust because of the Jew-goblin discourse, making clear that said discourse has actually enacted real antisemitism by causing me, a Jewish woman, to combust. Which is way more antisemitic than the goblins and also, rude to me, someone who does not wish to combust, and would be especially embarrassed to have my combustion result from Harry Potter discourse.

The Jew-goblin argument, which has

been made ad nauseam on social media and in various thinkpieces (and has been highlighted in the news cycle recently following a viral Jon Stewart soundbyte), is effectively this: The goblin characters in the Harry Potter series, known mostly for their role in running the wizarding bank Gringotts, are antisemitic, because they look like Jewish caricatures and perpetuate antisemitic stereotypes.

I disagree. The Potter goblins are diminutive, hooknosed, saurian creatures, with creepy long fingers and crafty natures. They have exceptional financial skills and stop at nothing to acquire or protect money and precious objects. What is antisemitic is the fact that anyone would encounter such a character and think: “Aha, a Jew!”

To illustrate my point, I have constructed the following analogy. You and I are walking down the street. The setting is not strictly necessary to the pedagogy of this scenario, but I thought it would be nice to dress up the visuals. You and I are walking down the street, and we see, crumpled on the ground, a shaky child’s drawing of a disgusting, evil rat. I say: “Oh, look, it’s a picture of you. I am offended on your behalf by the choice of this artist to depict you as disgusting and evil.” In fact, the genuine offense here is not the picture, which was in fact simply a drawing of a rat, but in my looking at a drawing of a rat and thinking it reminded me of you.

This analogy is obviously not perfect, because it doesn’t account for the dangerous legacy of caricatured depictions of Jews that some have argued the goblins fall into. Cartoons of Jews in Western media have historically connected stereotypical physical and cultural traits to genetic degeneracy. I do not mean to make light of the potential for these depictions to do real, insidious damage, or

to argue that the contemporary nature of the series exempts it from perpetuating harm. Offensive Jewish caricatures persist today, cropping up in far-right corners of the internet and less fringe news cycles, actively goading hatred toward Jewish people.

But these are deliberate caricatures of Jews. Sometimes, a sinister money-grubbing goblin is simply a sinister money-grubbing goblin.

Jews do not run the economy, do not have a cultural disposition toward prioritizing monetary gain over human emotion, and also — and I would really like to emphasize this point — do not look like goblins. This depiction of goblins is offensive to bankers, not to Jews, and the reason it is offensive to bankers is because the goblins in the Potter world are synonymous with bankers, and Jews in the actual real world are not. Are all fictionalized bankers supposed to be cheerful, generous and definitively Anglo-Saxon in order to avoid potentially dipping into antisemitic caricature? I defend the right of the minor set-dressing fairy-tale characters in this invented world to be gross and good at money. I defend, mostly, my right to peruse the internet without encountering more people complaining that the goblins in a children’s series I cared about a decade ago are antisemitic. Please, complain about something else.

And, frankly, if the goblins do represent Jews, the resemblance is a humbling one. They seem to be doing a much better job of controlling their media than Jews do in our non-magical world, given there is no trace of organized anti-goblin efforts in any Harry Potter novel or movie. I hope to take some of that inspiring energy into my own efforts toward world domination this coming year. **HW**

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Young Israel Helps Restock Memphis FJFS's Kosher Food Pantry



YI's Rabbi Akiva Males presenting collected items to FJFS' Teresa Hughes

By Rabbi Akiva Males

In the weeks between Thanksgiving and January 1, 2022 Young Israel of Memphis proudly ran a very successful campaign to help restock the Kosher Food Pantry at Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (FJFS). It was inspiring to see how generously the Shul responded to this important cause during these challenging times.

Young Israel extends a hearty Yasher Koach to everyone who participated in this great Mitzvah!

Young Israel's Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@yiom.org

An appreciative note from FJFS' Mary Elizabeth Jones follows :

Dear Young Israel of Memphis,
On behalf of Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service I want to thank you for your very generous donation for our Kosher Food Pantry. Young Israel has always been such a vital partner in stocking our food pantry. It is because of this type of generosity that we are able to serve those individuals in need of assistance. Each week we have the privilege of providing pantry bags with shelf stable food for our clients. Thank you for partnering with Fogelman JFS to meet the needs of so many.
Sincerely,
Mary Elizabeth Jones, Fogelman JFS
Director of Social Services [HW](#)

Report: Jerusalem Ranks Last in Quality of Life Among Major Israeli Cities

(JNS) – Israel's capital ranked last in quality of life out of the country's 16 largest cities (defined as those with more than 100,000 residents), according to the country's Central Bureau of Statistics.
“Out of 51 indices available for Jerusalem, in 18 indices its condition is better than the national average, and in 33 indices its condition is poorer than the national average,” according to the report.

Jerusalem fared poorer than the national average in long-term unemployment rate (28.3 percent v. 20.3 percent), satisfaction with living space (75.6 percent vs. 85.7 percent), satisfaction with economic situation (55.9 percent vs. 65.8 percent) and access to computers (77.4 percent vs. 83.8 percent).

Jerusalem fared better in quality of drinking water (0.0 percent coliform bacteria) and in feelings of deep depression (20.3 percent vs. 22.9 percent).

The city that scored the highest overall was Kfar Saba. It led in life expectancy, satisfaction with living space, satisfaction with neighborhood cleanliness and general trust in others, among other indices.

Tel Aviv-Jaffa led in employment rate, matriculation eligibility rate and computer access. [HW](#)

Engagement



Alex Harkavy and Zoë Goldberg

Congratulations to Zoë Goldberg and Alex Harkavy, who recently announced their engagement to be wed. The wedding date has not yet been set.

Zoë is the daughter of Kathy and Stuart Goldberg of Roswell, Georgia. Her grandparents, Sherry and Mitch Goldberg, live in Memphis.

Alex is the son of Neil Harkavy of Memphis and Michelle Harkavy of New Jersey. He is the grandson of Iris and Ronald Harkavy of Memphis and Maggie and Marty Silver of Long Island, New York. [HW](#)

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As a Working Class Jew, I’ve Always Felt Slightly Out of Place

So many aspects of Jewish culture in America come with a hefty price tag.

By Rachel Rosen

This first appeared on Alma. Reprinted with permission.

It was the middle of the summer. My brother and I were in the backseat of my mother’s ’92 Toyota as she drove us to our elementary school. The thought of having the sprawling playground all to myself without the context of recess was exciting to me – I even imagined my kindergarten friends would be jealous. This was a small, tight-knit Jewish private school, an oasis in an overwhelmingly goyish Midwestern town.

My mother parked in the empty lot at the front of the building. We grabbed our gloves and gardening shovels and got to work at the planting beds all over the property. We were there to pull weeds because we couldn’t afford to pay full tuition.

I wasn’t textbook-definition “poor” growing up, but I thought I was for a long time; this was mostly due to the fact I grew up with kids from more stereotypical Jewish homes. I was raised by a single mother who worked as a secretary. My father was a bartender and mostly absent. At my school, this was practically unheard of. Teachers didn’t even know how to handle it. Once, my Hebrew instructor asked me in the middle of class if my father was “in the picture at all.” I was too ashamed to tell the truth, so I lied and said that he was.

I now consider myself working class.

My mother’s income was definitely in line with that, but I had plenty of middle-class experiences growing up – private school, for one. Music lessons, braces, financial support through college: These are some of the myriad ways in which I am privileged. However, growing up, those things were harder for me to appreciate. What I did notice was how my best friends went to Florida every summer and on ski trips every winter. They received expensive electronics for Hanukkah, whereas I got socks or magazines. I harbored intense jealousy and was embarrassed of my background. One day, I was standing in the lunch line with a boy and he asked if my family owned a telephone. My friends noticed the differences in our lives; how could they not?

While I did love my school, I always felt a little out of place. It felt like I was always trying a little too hard to fit in. The older I got, the stronger this feeling became. It wasn’t until I started attending public high school that I learned my life experiences were normal, even common. I didn’t feel like such a freak anymore for not having two parents and not living in a big house in the suburbs.

This is still something I struggle with, especially since there was a period of time when Jews were not permitted to join the upper ranks of society. But most of the Jewish community in postwar

America was white, so they were able to assimilate, unlike other minorities. For example, the affluent neighboring suburb of my hometown (and its country club) had a history of not allowing Jews to live there. Now, this neighborhood is extremely popular for the local Jewish community; it even has a Chabad.

I now know that I am not an anomaly. While we are a particularly well-off minority group, it is an antisemitic assumption that all Jews have a lot of money. That said, I do think my experience is part of a larger problem. So many aspects of Jewish culture in America come with a hefty price tag: synagogue memberships, private day school, sleepaway camp, extravagant bar and bat mitzvahs. I was excluded from almost all these things that are considered part of Jewish life.

I will never forget when a couple of young, energetic counselors came to my Sunday school to give a presentation on the closest Jewish sleepaway camp. They made it sound like the best place on earth (in fact, I’m sure they said those exact words), and played a heartwarming video displaying the beautiful campground and joyful activities. I was so excited to go. I daydreamed for weeks about it. But my mom later told me that I was rejected from a scholarship to attend the camp, so there was no way I could attend. While it wasn’t trau-

matic, that’s hard for a young kid. And in a way, it’s followed me into adulthood. I’ve seen other Jewish people bond over similar memories that I don’t have. Even now, I feel disconnected as a young adult who wants to be a part of the Jewish community but is not sure where I fit in.

Still, the Jewish community has been there for me. When I was in college and needed a job, I taught Sunday school at the temple I grew up going to – even though I hadn’t regularly attended for years, wasn’t a member and couldn’t afford the fees. They gave me a membership at no cost. I was welcomed back into the fold. My father died when I was 20, and many in the community reached out to me, including my rabbi. Through that job, I became close friends with another teacher who had similar less-than-perfect experiences with Jewish institutions, and it was something we bonded over.

While I have once again grown distant from Judaism (mostly due to the fact I no longer teach Sunday school and couldn’t attend services due to COVID), I know it will be there for me when I come back. Some things in the Jewish community may not be accessible to everyone, and that should be addressed. But in my experience, the most important things – support, acceptance, tradition – can always be found there. [HW](#)



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Poway Rabbi Injured in 2019 Shooting Sentenced to 14 Months in Fraud Case

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – A judge sentenced the rabbi who lost a finger in the 2019 antisemitic shooting attack in Poway, California, to 14 months in prison for his role in a fraud scheme.

The sentencing last Tuesday was unusual because the prosecution and the defense agreed that Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein should receive only home confinement.

“You not only committed this offense yourself but you took a lot of people with you,” U.S. District Court Judge Cynthia Bashant told Goldstein, the San



U.S. President Donald Trump (L) listens to Congregation Chabad Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein of Poway, California, speak during a National Day of Prayer service in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, DC on May 02, 2019. Credit: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Diego Times-Union reported. “I think it’s important to send a message to the community, and I think it’s important to send a message to you,” she said.

Goldstein, who pleaded guilty to tax fraud in 2020, and his co-conspirators must also pay \$2.8 million in restitution.

Under the scheme, which federal agents were investigating long before the April 2019 shooting attack that claimed the life of one congregant, donors contributed to Goldstein’s synagogue but then got most of the money back, enabling the donor to claim a tax deduction.

Goldstein retired from the Chabad synagogue in November, seven months after confronting a gunman who entered his synagogue on April 27, 2019, the last day of Passover.

Chabad headquarters in New York had condemned Goldstein and moved to relieve him of his duties after it learned he was under investigation.

Last week, the man who killed a woman and wounded three others in the 2019 attack was sentenced to a second life sentence in federal court. [HW](#)





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How Does Inflation Affect Me?

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Investors

Are you saving for retirement? For your children’s education? For any other long-term goal? If so, you’ll want to know how inflation can impact your savings. Inflation is the increase in the price of products over time. Inflation rates have fluctuated over the years. Sometimes inflation runs high, and other times it is hardly noticeable. The short-term changes aren’t the real issue. The real issue is the effect of long-term inflation.

Over the long term, inflation erodes the purchasing power of your income and wealth. This means that even as you save and invest, your accumulated wealth buys less and less, just with the mere passage of time. And those who put off saving and investing impacted even more.

The effects of inflation can’t be denied – yet there are ways to fight them. You should own at least some investments whose potential return exceeds the inflation rate. A portfolio that earns 2% when inflation is 3% actually loses purchasing power each year. Though past performance is no guarantee of future results, stocks historically have provided higher long-term total returns than cash alternatives or bonds. However, that potential for higher returns comes with, greater risk of volatility and potential for loss. You can lose part or all of the money you invest in a stock. Because of that volatility, stock investments may not be appropriate for money you count on to be available in the short term. You’ll need to think about whether you have the financial and emotional ability to ride out those ups and downs as you pursue higher returns.

Bonds can also help, but since 1926 their inflation-adjusted return has been less than that of stocks. Treasury Inflation Protected Securities (TIPS), which are backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government as to the timely payment of principal and interest, are indexed so that your return should pace with inflation. The principal is automatically adjusted every six months to re-

flect increases or decreases in the Consumer Price Index; as long as you hold a TIPS to maturity, you will receive the greater of the original or inflation-adjusted principal. Unless you own TIPS in a tax-deferred account, you must pay federal income tax on the income plus any increase in principal, even though you won’t receive any accrued principal until the bond matures. When interest rates rise, the value of existing bonds will typically fall on the secondary market. However, changing rates and secondary-market values should not affect the principal of bonds held to maturity.

Diversifying your portfolio – spending your assets across a variety of investments that may respond differently to market conditions – is one way to help manage inflation risk. However, diversification does not guarantee a profit or protect against a loss; it is a method used to help manage investment risk.

All investing involves risk, including the potential loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment will be worth what you paid for it when you sell.

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Utah Tech Boss Quits after Board Asks Him to Leave Over Email Blaming Jews for COVID

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – The board of directors of a Utah-based property management software firm asked its chairman to quit after he sent an email accusing Jews of planning “genocide” through COVID and its vaccine.

“Entrata’s board of directors today [Jan. 4, 2022] asked Dave Bateman to resign from the company’s board of directors, including his position as chairman,” said the statement sent late last Tuesday to reporters. “Dave agreed and is no longer a member of the Entrata board, effective immediately.”

Bateman had sent an email to a coterie of associates, including Utah Gov. Spencer Cox and Utah Jazz owner Ryan Smith, with the subject line “Genocide.” In it, he suggested that COVID-19 and its vaccines are the work of Jews, and that both are “attacking the reproductive systems of women” and eroding natural immunity.

“For 300 years the Jews have been trying to infiltrate the Catholic Church and place a Jew covertly at the top,” Bateman wrote. “It happened in 2013 with Pope Francis. I believe the pan-

demic and systematic extermination of billions of people will lead to an effort to consolidate all the countries in the world under a single flag with totalitarian rule.”

Bateman later told Fox 13, a local TV station, that “some of my closest friends are Jews,” but also that “I do believe Scottish Rite Freemasons are behind the pandemic (overwhelmingly Jewish). And I fear billions of people around the globe right now are being exterminated.”

The remarks sparked outrage in Utah’s tech and political sectors, and in the local Jewish community.

“To be absolutely clear, we at Entrata firmly condemn antisemitism in any and all forms,” said the board’s statement. “For those who have seen and been offended or disturbed by the content of Dave’s email, we understand and share your disappointment. At Entrata, we respect and support all religions, genders, sexual orientations, races, and beliefs. Diversity and inclusivity are critical to the success and future of Entrata.”

Last year Entrata raised \$507 million in funding. [HW](#)

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The Antisemitic History of Early 2000s Fashion Brand Von Dutch

A new Hulu documentary explores the Nazi tendencies of Kenneth Robert Howard, aka Von Dutch himself.



Credit: Edward Wong/South China Morning Post via Getty Images

By Sam Miller

This originally appeared on Alma. Reprinted with permission.

When Hulu announced the release of “The Curse of Von Dutch: A Brand to Die For,” I immediately marked my calendar for the release date. While I am too young to have personally experienced the Von Dutch era of Paris Hilton, Ashton Kutcher and LiLo, I grew up knowing the name and wishing that one day, I could own a bowling bag as cool as the one my babysitter carried around. The docu-series was advertised as a true murder mystery, with all the secrets and money laundering a legendary fashion brand is made of. Ed Boswell, Mike Cassel and Bobby Vaughn are introduced separately as the founders and original designers of the Von Dutch brand, and each tells his story of how the iconic brand came to be.

After watching the three hour-long episodes, my mind was spinning, and two major thoughts kept going through my head.

- One: This was not a murder mystery.
- Two: I will never, ever wear Von Dutch.

Ed, Mike, Bobby and Tonny Sorensen, former CEO of Von Dutch, all spoke about the rise and fall of a fashion brand that impacted celebrity society so hard and so fast that it completely

burned itself out. The murder in the series, though devastating and cruel, was more a part of the personal journey of Bobby Vaughn – it was a bit of a stretch to relate it to the Von Dutch brand. But the real twist was that the downfall of the brand came not only from overexposure in the pop culture universe, but also from the release of a letter written by Von Dutch, or Kenneth Robert Howard, on his deathbed in 1992 declaring himself as racist and a Nazi.

Kenny Howard made a name for himself in the 1930s for his pinstriping, painting, and prejudice. The origins of the nickname “Von Dutch” are up for debate: it was either a self-proclaimed translation to “By German” or a family nickname deeming Howard “as stubborn as a Dutchman.” His pinstriping can be found on hundreds of motorcycles and cars, though he was very selective about who he would paint for. His work popularized flame jobs on cars, and his signature flying eyeball and name can be found on almost everything he created. The flying eyeball, which was later carried on to the Von Dutch trucker hats and bowling bags, is a doodle clearly derived from the Nazi Wehrmacht Adler, with the eyeball replacing the eagle and swastika.

Though Howard was a known alco-

holic who wasn’t afraid to admit his admiration for the Third Reich, he mostly managed to avoid the public eye – until he penned a letter as he lay dying of liver complications in 1992. It stated:

“I am not willing to go through it any more only to emerge in a place full of [N-word], Mexicans and Jews. ... I have always been a Nazi and still believe it was the last time the world had a chance of being operated with logic. What a shame so many Americans died and suffered to make the rich richer and save England & France again, or was that still. I hope you lying wimps get swallowed up with your stupidity.”

The prevalence of antisemitism in fashion is, unfortunately, nothing new. Between Coco Chanel, Hugo Boss, Louis Vuitton and other European designers, there are numerous fashion brands with clear ties to the Nazi party. Chanel was a Nazi spy, Boss literally created his brand by designing SS youth uniforms and using concentration camp labor, and Vuitton was somehow the only store to stay in business throughout the 1940s, when France was occupied and run by a puppet Nazi government.

As a Jewish woman and a student of fashion design, I have always struggled to balance acknowledging both what these designers have done for fashion and their support for the Nazi party. I cannot bring myself to say that I respect these fashion icons, no matter how legendary a little black dress or a piece of luggage is. It took until 2011 for Hugo Boss to publicly apologize for their ties to the Nazi party, and the store records for Louis Vuitton from 1930-1945 were burned in a fire. Chanel is actually owned by the Wertheimers, a French Jewish family that originally bought the brand in the 1920s and was able to keep ownership during the Nazi regime despite Aryan laws and Coco Chanel’s lawsuits. The irony in Chanel, a company named for a blatant antisemite, relying on a Jewish family to run the company for the past 97 years is not lost on me. Since Coco’s passing in 1971, the Chanel brand has publicly stated that they reject her personal beliefs and that their designs are for everybody. Despite these recent developments, I struggle to move past the origins of these brands that I have studied and used as inspiration for my own creative endeavors.

In the Von Dutch documentary, Ed Boswell admits to knowing about Howard’s appreciation of the Third Reich and to leaking it to the public in 2004. Kenny Howard’s antisemitism and racism was completely unknown by Cassel or Vaughn (both men of color), which makes Ed’s leaking of the information seem pointed and cruel. Boswell made Howard’s beliefs public out of spite for not getting his 1% for his master license on the company and, though he apologizes for letting the cat out of the bag, he seems insincere. Tonny Sorensen made this point about Boswell: “If Ed Boswell thinks [Von Dutch is] a Nazi and he sells his t-shirts, who’s the Nazi now? If you deliberately thought that somebody was a Nazi and you’re selling his t-shirts at swap meets, you must be the Nazi because you’re representing that idea.”

When asked about their thoughts on the real man behind the Von Dutch name, each of the creators and original brand representatives reacts differently. Both Mike Cassel and Bobby Vaughn seem almost unconcerned about the racism and antisemitism of the namesake of their company because what they created together was so powerful that it took on meaning beyond Kenny Howard’s original work and words. Tracey Mills, known as the genius behind attracting celebrities to Von Dutch, took Howard’s words and essentially told him to suck it. Mills was everything Von Dutch hated in a person, but without him, the brand would have never had the impact it did. After finding out how Von Dutch felt about people of other races and religions, Mills stated, “See, he [Von Dutch] put it out there in the universe and the universe is like ‘Oh that’s what you don’t want? Here you go.’” As a Black man, he was able to create a name for himself despite the cruelty of the man behind the eyeball.

“The Curse of Von Dutch: A Brand to Die For” underlined what I already knew: Fashion and pop culture brands are always about more than just clothes. What you wear makes a statement, and who you wear can reflect who you are or want to be. I love the resurgence of Y2K fashion and I love that fashion continues to teach me new things about the world every day. But, as a Jewish woman, I’ve added Von Dutch to the list of brands that will never enter my closet. **HW**



After U.S. Pushback, Israel is Reportedly Reviewing its Close Ties with China

By Jordyn Haime

(JTA) – Israel has pledged to keep the Biden administration in the loop on major deals with China and would reconsider those deals if the United States raises opposition, Haaretz reported last Monday.

Both the Biden administration and the Trump administration have raised concerns about growing ties between Israel and China as the latter’s relationships with the United States and European countries have soured.

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan raised the matter in his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid during a visit to Israel in December and at an earlier meeting in Washington, the Haaretz report said.

The United States has not yet made clear demands to Israel on the matter, but Israeli officials have begun discuss-

ing the country’s policy toward China, according to the report.

China and Israel have become closer over the past several years, particularly over tech and innovation. The report cited unnamed sources as saying Israel was taking a “business as usual” approach with China, as it remains caught between two powerful states in the midst of an ongoing trade war.

Yet Israel has continued to align itself diplomatically with China – in November, Israeli President Isaac Herzog made an unprecedented call to Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss Iran’s nuclear program. And in October, Israel refrained from signing a United Nations joint statement raising concern about China’s treatment of Uyghur Muslims, the Turkic minority facing persecution in China’s northwest. **HW**

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Former Dutch Prime Minister Criticized for Accusing Israeli Settlers of Poisoning Palestinians



Former Dutch Prime Minister Dries van Agt welcomes a journalist into his home in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, April 6, 2008. Credit: Cnaan Liphshiz
By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – A former prime minister of the Netherlands, Dries van Agt, said in an interview for a recently aired documentary that Israeli settlers poisoned their Palestinian neighbors in 2015, drawing criticism from Dutch Jews who say he is perpetuating a centuries-old antisemitic blood libel.

B’Tselem, the leading Israeli organization devoted to documenting alleged human rights violations, said it is not aware of the incident described by van Agt.

“The colonizers who conquered the hill a week or two earlier came each

night to pound on their door at night, to achieve maximum intimidation, to tell them to go away and they refused,” Van Agt said in the interview for a documentary on antisemitism that was aired in November by the KRO-NCRV broadcaster. “And then one morning something terrible happened: The olive grove and the vegetable garden below – the colonizers always take to top hills – were strewn with poison. And a three-year-old child became very ill. The only explanation was that she drank the milk of a poisoned goat. She

was poisoned.”

Van Agt, 90, then began crying and apologized for his emotional state. The incident occurred in 2015 near Nablus, he said.

His interviewer, Frans Bromet, asserted: “These things, they’re not unusual.” Van Agt replies: “Oh, no. That’s what the wonderful people from the peace organization say. This happens all the time in the occupied territory.”

B’Tselem spokesperson Dror Sadot told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency his group is aware of one case of alleged poisoning by settlers in 2005, resulting in no human casualties.

CIDI, the Netherlands’ main watchdog on antisemitism, accused van Agt, who served as prime minister from 1977 to 1982, of spreading a blood libel. Chairman Ronnie Eisenmann criticized KRO-NCRV for airing the documentary “without checking the basic accuracy” of van Agt’s claims.

Kees Broer, an author who has written extensively about anti-Israel sentiment in the Netherlands, wrote on his website that van Agt is helping to spread a common conspiracy theory.

Van Agt has fought accusations of antisemitism since the 1970s, saying they have been the result of his support for Palestinians. In 2008, he compared Israel to Nazi Germany and spoke at a rally in Rotterdam that featured a televised

address by a leader of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group considered a terrorist organization by the United States, Israel and others.

Van Agt has also said that the Jews “should have been given a piece of land” in Germany instead of Israel. In 2017, he praised the Dutch Labour party for being “good for the Palestinians despite the strong Jewish lobby” in its ranks, according to the Central Jewish Board of the Netherlands, or CJO. And as justice minister in the 1970s, he cited his “Aryan” roots in explaining his plan to pardon four Nazi war criminals due to health reasons.

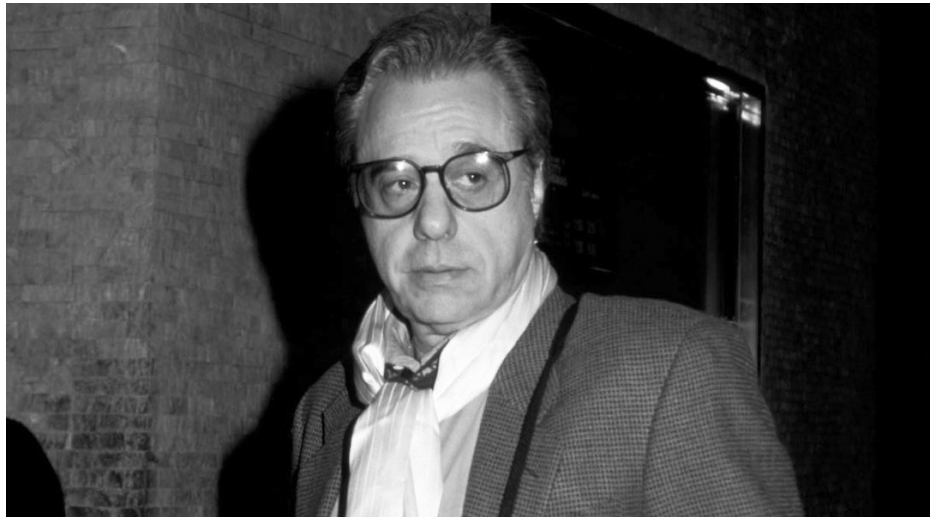
Van Agt said this to a journalist in explaining that his predecessor, who was Jewish, allegedly had also supported giving the pardon but failed to realize it. Van Agt had a slim chance of succeeding where his predecessor, Carel Polak, had failed because he’s “only an Aryan,” he told the journalist. The criminals were not released during van Agt’s term.

The CJO called van Agt an antisemite publicly for the first time in 2017.

KRO-NCRV did not respond to a request for comment sent to their spokesperson.

The Rights Forum, a pro-Palestinian organization founded by van Agt, said it forwarded JTA’s request for comment to van Agt. He did not reply in time for the publication of this article. **HW**

Peter Bogdanovich, Acclaimed Hollywood Filmmaker and Son of an Austrian Jew, Dies At 82



Peter Bogdanovich at the 1999 New York City premiere of “RKO 281.” Credit: Ron Galella/Getty Images
By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – Peter Bogdanovich, the Oscar-nominated movie director and actor whose films, ego and off-camera exploits encapsulated the personality-driven excesses of 1970s Hollywood filmmaking, has died at 82. His death was announced Jan. 6 and first reported by Variety.

Bogdanovich’s mother, Herma Bogdanovich, was an Austrian Jew. His father, Borislav Bogdanovich, was an Orthodox Christian painter from the former Yugoslavia who, according to the family lore, gave up his art career in order to secure visas for Herma and her mother to help them escape antisemitic persecution in Austria, which the Nazis invaded in 1938. The Bogdanoviches arrived in New York in time for the 1939 World’s Fair; Peter was born soon after their arrival.

A voracious moviegoer (he was said to have seen 400 a year), Bogdanovich began his professional career in the 1960s as a film critic for Esquire and programmer for the Museum of Modern Art before making the transition into filmmaking, following in the footsteps of his heroes in the French New Wave. He got his start making low-budget fare

for Jewish shlock pioneer Roger Corman, then broke into the big leagues in 1971 with “The Last Picture Show,” a coming-of-age drama set in small-town Texas starring Jeff Bridges and Cybill Shepherd (who became the director’s partner after he began an affair with her during filming).

“The Last Picture Show” became a critical and commercial smash, scoring Bogdanovich Oscar nominations for best director and best adapted screenplay, and turned its 32-year-old director into a wunderkind whom the press frequently compared to his idol, Orson Welles.

Bogdanovich’s 1972 follow-up “What’s Up, Doc?” was also a hit, and as a bonus, the screwball comedy helped make a Jewish sex symbol out of star Barbra Streisand. The filmmaker subsequently co-founded a first-of-its-kind Director’s Company under Paramount Pictures with fellow “movie brats” Frances Ford Coppola and William Friedkin; the deal promised the three men unprecedented creative freedom, but soon fizzled out.

Although Bogdanovich enjoyed a decades-long career in Hollywood, making

more well-received films including “Paper Moon” and “Mask,” he never again matched the level of his early successes, and a string of flops combined with his lavish lifestyle and lurid tabloid drama – Playboy model Dorothy Stratten, with whom he had an affair on the set of 1981’s “They All Laughed,” was subsequently murdered by her husband – would later put him into financial trouble.

But the director never lost his irascible spirit for the screen and enjoyed a separate career as an actor making full use of his bespectacled, obsessive persona. Bogdanovich’s most well-known onscreen role was a recurring guest spot on HBO’s “The Sopranos,” in which he played Dr. Elliot Kupferberg – a therapist with a very Jewish-sounding name who sits at enough of a remove from the mob family at the show’s center to display an obsessive fascination with them.

Though Bogdanovich rarely discussed his religious background in interviews, he was by all accounts proud of his father’s role in rescuing his Jewish mother from Europe. “He was a really great painter and very highly praised in the former Yugoslavia,” Bogdanovich said of his father, Borislav, in a 2019 interview with New York magazine, “but he gave all that up to save my mother and her family because they were Jewish. He wasn’t, but they were.”

His sister, Anna Thea Bogdanovich, maintains an online archive of their parents’ work, and the two had intended to produce a documentary about Borislav’s rescue of Herma.

In 2018, with the help of Netflix and a group of his former collaborators, Bogdanovich played a large role in completing and releasing “The Other Side of the Wind,” the final unfinished film by his mentor Orson Welles, originally shot during Bogdanovich’s prime in the 1970s. Bogdanovich also has an acting role in the film – as a hotshot young director. **HW**

Israel to Allow U.S. Visitors Back in for the First Time Since November



Travelers at Ben Gurion Airport, Dec. 22, 2021. Credit: Flash90
By Shira Hanau

(JTA) – Israel will lift its COVID-related travel ban on visitors from the United States, United Kingdom and several other countries for the first time since restrictions were put in place in November.

According to Israeli media, the restrictions on countries given a “red” status because of their high rates of COVID cases will be lifted Thursday night.

Visitors will be allowed to enter provided they show a negative COVID test taken within 72 hours of their flight. Visitors would still be required to quarantine upon arrival until receiving a negative COVID test result.

The ban on foreign travelers has been a controversial issue in Israel in recent weeks. American immigrants to Israel have been especially vocal about the bans, which have kept their family members out of the country, even for lifecycle events such as weddings or the birth of a grandchild.

While the travel bans were initially imposed to keep the rapidly spreading Omicron variant out of the country, Israel’s health minister has admitted that “there is no point in stopping [Omicron’s] entry from abroad” in an interview with the country’s public broadcaster, according to The Times of Israel. **HW**

It's Tu B'Shevat Time



*Editor's note:
This story is being
reprinted in memory
of Ted Roberts in
appreciation of his
longtime service
as a newspaper
columnist.*

By Ted Roberts

Tu B'Shevat, Tu B'Shevat,
I like you a lot.
Tu B'Shevat.
No tears, no fasting.
Only wonder at G-d's plot.
Tu B'Shevat – degraded, diminished,
and deluded by Rosh Hashana, Yom
Kippur, and Pesach – as we all know is
the New Year of Trees.

It's one of the holidays that is not in
Torah, but found its origins in the Tal-
mud.
The New Year of Trees, we call it.
Why? Because in Israel the 15th of She-
vat signaled the end of winter.
Trees bloomed with joy. Here in the
USA the trees are black; and Bubbe falls
on the icy front porch stairs and frac-
tures her hip, but in Eretz Yisrael spring
reigns.

Originally, this exotic holiday had to
do with tithing, which is a euphemism
for taxes. It was the modern equivalent
of 15 April, in measuring what percent-
age of the fruit went to government or
maybe charity. Jerusalem 200 BC or
Washington, DC 2018 – government is
government.
Tubee is celebrated over a wide range.
Some send a fruit bowl to friends – oth-
ers have Passover featuring the fruits of
Israel. Others plant a tree. My friend,
Herb, eats an apple and feels he has ful-
filled a mitzvah.
All this is nice, but to this heretic,
it misses the point. To me, Tubee is a
solemn declaration of the power of G-d
and therefore His existence and reign
over what we loosely call nature, which
spans the orbit of Jupiter to the potential
of an acorn.
Someday, when I'm the head Rabbi
of America, I shall issue a presidential
edict that on Tubee every parent must
take his child into the backyard and plant
a tree seed. (Maybe several to ensure
success.) What better way to convince a
child of the power of the Almighty and
to demonstrate the mystic force that en-
livens oak trees, puppies, all the animals
of the zoo, and your loving parents. This

is a feat that makes the Red Sea parting
strictly minor league.
When that acorn, lifted by a power we
still don't understand, clears his home –
the Earth – the heavens welcome him.
There is a magic in seeds we still don't
understand. You might even call it soul
– that invisible, undetectable power in
the human body. It hides from the mi-
croscope and every other human appa-
ratus. It is ethereal yet transcendental to
the physical elements of the body. (By
the way, don't use this seed demo to
the kids if you live next to a yard full of
squirrels – you'll only feed your fellow
creatures, which come to think of it, is
also a mitzvah.)
The ancient pagans had it all wrong,
but given their level of knowledge, you
must give them a smidgen of credit.
They barely missed the mark. They knew
there was a magic that fueled the world.
But they worshipped the tricks, not the
Master Magician. They worshipped
the grove of trees on the hill – not He
who turned a half-ounce seed into a 10-
ton oak tree. The Egyptians bowed and
said prayers to the mother cat that fed,
cleaned, and instructed the litter. They
ignored the Master Creator, who hard-
wired this behavior into her essence.

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They above may be of slight interest
to some. But in all seriousness, there's
nothing more important to your child –
most of whom are growing up in a secu-
lar world – than to demonstrate the pres-
ence of a Master of the Universe. Keep
it simple. Together, plant a seed on Tu
B'Shevat. Ten years later, you can say,
“I told you so.”
The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scrib-
bler on the roof, has appeared in newspa-
pers around the U.S., on National Public
Radio, and numerous websites. **HW**

Insights From Israel The U.S. – Israel Relationship: “What, Me Worry?”

By Howard Weisband

Growing up as a teen and a young
adult, Mad Magazine, which unfortu-
nately ceased publication in 2018, made
the “What, Me Worry?” statement in-
famous, albeit with a question mark,
through its one-of-a-kind character, Al-
fred E. Neuman.
My last column, two weeks ago, fo-
cused on Israel Diaspora Relations, a
personal and professional passion. Si-
multaneously, I am an intense observer
of all aspects of the United States – Is-
rael relationship within multiple realms:
climate, diplomacy, economy, educa-
tion, foreign affairs, the military, poli-
tics, security and even tax issues.
On January 4, 2022, Avi Benayahu, a
brigadier general in the IDF (reserves),
and a former IDF spokesperson, opined
in The Jerusalem Post, opening his col-
umn with: “... the State of Israel and the
Middle East are no longer the main focus
in U.S. foreign affairs. The American ad-
ministration is currently focused on do-
mestic affairs, ... China, ... Iran, and...
Ukraine and Russia.... countries in the
Middle East... are terrified and extremely
fearful about the U.S. withdrawal from the
region. They include Saudi Arabia, the Emi-
rates, Jordan and Egypt, ... Israel and the Pal-

estinians.”
That sounds pretty worrisome. Even
somewhat “terrifying” to use the writ-
er's term.
However, perhaps General Benayahu
was merely using hyperbole to drama-
tize his case, as opinion writers often do.
He concludes: “... it's likely that the
strategic and special ties Israel has had
with each American administration will
remain strong and close. This depends on...
the U.S. Congress, the media, research
institutes and universities, courts and
financial institutions, and on Christian
evangelists... both sides need to continue
working in tandem, carrying out joint
research studies, maintaining close ties
and sharing common values and language.”
Spot on! And I certainly must add the
support of the American Jewish commu-
nity.
No doubt there are different priori-
ties historically between the two great
allies. But allies we remain. For those in
the Jewish community who have an
“Ahavat Yisrael,” a Love of Israel, and
especially for those of us who are dual
citizens, the bonds between our two de-
mocracies override both historical and
current differences.

Differences should not, cannot, be
whitewashed or swept under the carpet.
Tensions must be dealt with creatively,
constructively. That's how friends and
allies must act, in order to achieve a
win-win situation in the best interests of
both parties.
With the major current difference
being the approach to the negotiations
with Iran regarding their nuclear ambi-
tions, there is a major variable in how
each ally views the state of negotiations.
For Israel, it is literally an existential
factor given the venom coming from
Tehran, their proven militancy and sup-
port of terrorism, and of course Iran's
geographic proximity to Israel and the
entire Middle East.
For the U.S., the priority seems to be
world calm, hopefully without Iran
having a nuclear bomb, while limiting
direct U.S. involvement in the region,
albeit “all options remain on the table.”
To better understand the depth of
the Iranian nuclear issue, it is worth-
while to read a lengthy, detailed article
published online in The New Yorker
magazine on December 27, 2021, “The
Looming Threat of a Nuclear Crisis
with Iran,” by Robin Wright (in print,
January 3 and 10).

Whether it's differences over Iran
or China, or a Consulate in Jerusalem,
my “What Me, Worry?” statement is
based on a bedrock of positive factors
in the U.S. – Israel relationship. First
and foremost are our mutual democratic
systems. Second is a history of current
interests and ongoing cooperative reali-
ties: in the economic field, for instance,
free trade and tax treaties are binding;
in the realm of security, there exists re-
search and development coordination,
and joint military planning and exer-
cises; there are educational exchanges,
medical initiatives and research, climate
control cooperatives; and the list goes
on.
I remain confident that friendship,
mutual interests and wise diplomacy
will prevail.
Howard Weisband served as Assistant
Executive Director (1975-77) and Ex-
ecutive Director (1977-84) of the Mem-
phis Jewish Federation. Following Ali-
yah with his family in 1986, he served as
Secretary General of the Jewish Agency
for Israel through 1997, and then in
other senior professional positions in
Israel. Now retired, he and Kayla live in
Jerusalem. He can be reached at hweis-
band@gmail.com **HW**

Jon Stewart Backtracks, Says He Was Joking When He Called “Harry Potter” Goblins Antisemitic

(JTA) – Jon Stewart thinks we all
missed the joke.
Following a recent podcast in which
he suggested that goblin characters in
the “Harry Potter” series resembled an-
tisemitic caricatures, the Jewish come-
dian posted a follow-up video to Twitter
last Wednesday, saying that he did not
mean to accuse the series' author J.K.
Rowling of antisemitism.
“Let me just say this, super clearly,
as clearly as I can... I do not think J.K.
Rowling is antisemitic,” Stewart, re-
sponding to articles in Newsweek and
elsewhere, said about the conversation
he had on a late 2021 episode of the

podcast tied to his Apple+ show, “The
Problem With Jon Stewart.” “I did not
accuse her of being antisemitic. I do
not think that the ‘Harry Potter’ movies
are antisemitic. I really love the ‘Harry
Potter’ movies, probably too much for a
gentleman of my considerable age.”
In his earlier podcast episode, Stew-
art talked about the series' goblin char-
acters, who run the wizarding world's
bank and covet gold. Stewart compared
the movie version of the characters to
stereotypes found in the infamous an-
tisemitic tract “The Protocols of the El-
ders of Zion.”
“It was one of those things where I

saw it on the screen and I was expecting
the crowd to be like ‘holy shit, she did
not in a wizarding world just throw Jews
in there to run the *ing underground
bank,’” he said.
The Jewish Telegraphic Agency's
sister site Alma published an article on
Stewart's comments last Monday, and
several other outlets have covered the
podcast episode since.
In his video last Wednesday, Stewart
insisted that he was only describing his
experience watching the first film in the
series “as a Jewish guy,” and how “some
tropes are so embedded in society that
they're basically invisible even in a con-

sidered process like moviemaking.”
“There is no reasonable person that
could've watched it [the podcast] and
not seen it as a lighthearted conversa-
tion,” he said.
Stewart was far from the first com-
mentator to point out perceived antise-
mitic stereotypes in the goblin charac-
ters, especially as criticism of Rowling's
social media posts has snowballed in re-
cent years.
An English high school dropped Row-
ling's name from one of its houses this
week in response to demands from stu-
dents critical of some of the author's past
comments about transgender people. **HW**

Google Acquires Israeli Cybersecurity Firm Siemplify for a Reported \$500 Million



The Google logo on one of the buildings of Googleplex, the company's main campus in Silicon Valley. Credit: Sundry Photography/Shutterstock

(JNS) – Alphabet Inc.’s Google announced last Tuesday that it had acquired Israeli cyber security firm Siemplify. Although financial details were not released, Reuters reported that Google paid \$500 million in cash for the firm.

The deal marks Google’s first major acquisition of an Israeli company since it bought navigation app Waze in 2013 for \$1.1 billion, according to Globes.

Siemplify offers a security platform, which streamlines operations and frees up security teams to focus on “more strategic priorities,” according to the company’s website.

It will join Google’s cloud division and will be integrated with the division’s own security offering, Chronicle.

“We’re excited to join Google Cloud and build on the success we’ve had in the market helping companies address growing security threats,” said Amos Stern, Siemplify CEO, in a Google press release announcing the deal.

Noting the “rapidly growing” threat of cyberattacks, Google said, “We both share the belief that security analysts need to be able to solve more incidents with greater complexity while requiring less effort and less specialized knowledge.”

Siemplify, founded in Tel Aviv in 2015, was ranked No. 212 in November on the Deloitte Technology Fast 500™, a ranking of the 500 fastest-growing tech companies, according to a company press release. Its revenue grew 645 percent between 2017 to 2020. **HW**

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Rabbi Resigns after 30 Years at BBC Over ‘Inexcusable’ Anti-Semitism

(JNS) – A rabbi who has worked for the BBC for decades has tendered his resignation with the British Broadcasting Corporation in response to their handling of a story about a Hanukkah night attack on a group of Jewish teens.

In a letter, Rabbi YY Rubinstein, who has worked for both BBC radio and television, said, “This is a very sad moment for me as I have been a BBC broadcaster for some 30 years. ... The current crisis over anti-Semitism at the corporation and its attempts to turn the victims of the recent anti-Semitic attack on Jewish children in London and claim that the victims were actually the perpetrators, was and is inexcusable. The obfuscation, denial that followed, was and is utterly damning.

“... I simply don’t see how I or in fact any Jew who has any pride in that name can be associated with the corporation anymore,” he continued.

His decision to leave follows a plethora of criticism stemming from a broadcast in which BBC staff attempted to paint the teenage victims of a Nov. 30 anti-Semitic attack on a busy London street during Hanukkah as the offenders.

Video clips of the incident show men attacking the bus carrying the teens to an event. In its on-air reporting, BBC stated that the Jewish teens made racial slurs against Muslims, despite there being no evidence to support the claim.

The broadcast led to a protest rally outside the BBC, organized by the Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA), with people demanding the BBC stop blaming the Jews and tell the truth.

A spokesperson for CAA responded to news of the resignation saying, “Rabbi Rubinstein’s courageous and principled decision to resign as a broadcaster at the BBC is just the latest sign of the collapse in the Jewish community’s confidence in the corporation. No self-respecting Jewish person wants to be publicly associated with the BBC after it yet again demonstrated its bias against Jews in its recent reportage of an anti-Semitic incident on Oxford Street in Central London.

“We have written to the BBC and held a rally But the BBC has only doubled down and refused to accept its error or apologize, adopt the international definition of anti-Semitism or accept anti-Semitism training,” the spokesman continued. The BBC “is once more attempting to bludgeon the Jewish community into silence by hiding behind layers of unaccountable bureaucracy. With the support of a furious Jewish community, we will continue to pressure the Corporation to change its ways and live up to its legal obligations.”

Just last week, the Simon Wiesenthal Center named the British Broadcasting Company in its “Global Anti-Semitism Top 10.” **HW**

OBITUARY



Jesse (Jess) D. Feldman

We regret that Jesse (Jess) D. Feldman left this world on December 31, 2021.

He was born and raised in New York City. He moved to Memphis to attend Memphis State University, where he earned his undergraduate, graduate and doctorate degrees. He was a dedicated and eminent educator for the Memphis City Schools for 43 years.

He was a devoted husband, father, and brother. He is survived by his wife, Vera Feldman; daughter, Julie Feldman Algieri (Steve); son, Will Feldman; and sister, Seena Aisner (Joe).

Jess was an avid golfer, fisherman, arts enthusiast, poker player and world-wide traveler.

Jess is predeceased by his parents, Leon and Hattie Feldman, as well as his beloved pets, BB and Quincy.

His last years were difficult. We want to thank his doctors, our family, friends, neighbors and community for their incredible care, concern and support.

We are forever indebted to Jess’s primary caregivers: Jackie Times and Melanie Lowe. They selflessly gave Jess professional, compassionate and loving care in his final months.

If you desire, a donation can be made to The Mid-South Food Bank or Beth Shalom Synagogue in Jess’s memory. **HW**

Spain and Portugal Have Naturalized More Than 90,000 Descendants of Sephardic Jews Since 2015



Two Israeli women arriving in Lisbon, Portugal, Feb. 15, 2020. Credit: Cnaan Liphshiz

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – At least 90,000 descendants of Sephardic Jews have become citizens of Portugal or Spain since 2015, when those countries passed laws offering a naturalization process for such applicants, according to the most updated information data from the two countries.

The laws were meant to atone for the Inquisition, a campaign of religious persecution unleashed at the end of the 15th century on the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had inhabited the Iberian Peninsula and flourished there.

Spain has received at least 153,000 applications for citizenship, while Portugal has received at least 86,000 applications, according to data published in Spanish and Portuguese media recently as part of annual reports on immigration trends.

Spain has granted citizenship to 36,000 applicants, or about 23% of the total who applied. Portugal has granted citizenship to 63% of applicants, or more than 54,000 people. Many thousands of applications are still pending review in both countries.

More than two-thirds of the applicants in Portugal are Israeli, according to a report last Sunday in Lisbon’s Observador newspaper. In Spain, the share of Israelis was lower than 5%, according to data from late 2019.

The latest data do not include figures from 2021 in Portugal. In Spain, there is data available only from the first three quarters of that year, when the country for the first time rejected a large number of citizenship-seekers under the reparations law.

Spain has rejected at least 3,019 applications, all but one of them in 2021, when the procedure for naturalization was toughened following fears of criminal activity by applicants. The country has also declined to decide on many cases, eliciting protests from applicants abroad. Portugal has rejected only a few hundred individuals.

The window for descendants of Jews expelled from Spain to complete their citizenship applications is closing. Spain’s citizenship law initially allowed applications for only three years, but the government extended the deadline twice, including last September to account for bureaucratic issues connected to COVID-19. Applicants who applied before September 2021 have until February 2022 to complete the notarization of their application.

Meanwhile, Portugal’s law is open-ended. But the revelation last month that Roman Abramovich, a Russian-Jewish billionaire, was naturalized in Portugal in April has reignited debate there over the 2015 legislation. Some Portuguese lawmakers proposed limiting the law’s scope last year but withdrew their proposed changes amid an outcry from Jewish groups.

In Spain, the 2015 law has also prompted debate about whether the descendants of Muslims who were also driven out during the Inquisition should be given a path to citizenship.

In both countries, the official Jewish community vets applications and pass on for the government’s approval only the ones that it deems credible. **HW**

In Brooklyn, a Jewish Group Tries a Face-To-Face Approach to Fighting Antisemitism

By Julia Gergely

(New York Jewish Week via JTA) – On Sunday, Dec. 26, in the Bay Ridge neighborhood of Brooklyn, Blake Zavadsky, 21, was walking down the street with his friend, Ilan Kaganovich, when he was punched, ostensibly for wearing an Israeli army sweatshirt. “He called us ‘dirty Jews’ and that’s all I remember,” Zavadsky said of his attacker, in an interview with CBSNewYork.

In the aftermath of the incident, dozens participated the following Sunday in a solidarity march through the nearby Bensonhurst neighborhood, led by the newly elected Republican city councilwoman Inna Vernikov. (The rally was moved out of Bay Ridge “out of respect for the neighborhood’s large Palestinian and Muslim population,” Vernikov spokesperson Tova Chatzinoff-Rosenfeld told the Brooklyn Paper, although it still drew counterprotestors from pro-Palestinian groups.)

Local and state politicians, including New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, denounced the crime in tweets and statements, and the New York State Police opened an investigation. The Anti-Defamation League of New York/New Jersey offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual responsible for the attack.

It’s a familiar pattern following the antisemitic incidents that occur in double-digit numbers every month in New York: An act of hate occurs, which is followed by a call for Jewish communities to rally for solidarity and protection. Politicians join the cause, either marching with their feet or denouncing antisemitism on social media.

But one group, the progressive Jews for Racial & Economic Justice, is trying a different approach. Last Sunday in Bay Ridge, while other Jews marched in

protest, JFREJ canvassers spread out in the neighborhood, offering bystanders tips on intervening when they see a hate crime and engaging in conversations in an effort to diffuse any future racist or antisemitic incidents.

“The organizers of the march were cynically exploiting a recent attack,” said Sophie Ellman-Golan, director of strategic communications at JFREJ, about last Sunday’s rally. “For us, we’re taking the action that we regularly take because we take hate crimes seriously.”

(Vernikov’s office did not respond to the New York Jewish Week’s request for comment.)

Last Tuesday, following yet another antisemitic attack – a Hasidic man was beaten with sticks last Sunday evening in the Broadway Triangle area in Williamsburg – JFREJ canvassers were at it again.

From a central meeting point outside of a community fridge on Broadway and Whipple St. in Williamsburg, groups of two and three broke off in every direction to interact with community members.

Newly elected city council members Chi Ossé and Lincoln Restler joined the effort. Their two districts include the neighborhoods of Bed-Stuy and northern Crown Heights, and neighborhoods along the Brooklyn waterfront, such as Greenpoint, South Williamsburg, Brooklyn Navy Yard and Brooklyn Heights.

“I’m looking forward to getting the word out about how we can be better people and citizens,” said Ossé, 23, a native of Brooklyn. “Spread love, it’s the Brooklyn way.”

“This type of response – where we come together, where we educate our neighbors so we all are looking out for one another and we all stop this violence together – this is how we can transform our community,” said Restler.

Marches and rallies like the one held

last Sunday, said Ellman-Golan, can be inflammatory or divisive. “They fuel division and fear among Jewish, Arab and Muslim New Yorkers,” she said. By contrast, JFREJ’s aim is to bring diverse stakeholders from every New York community together to promote safety, neighborly intervention and mutual respect.

“We’re never going to arrest our way out of antisemitism – that’s a failed approach,” said Ellman-Golan. “We fundamentally believe in the idea that our communities are the most effective way that we can address hate violence and issues like antisemitism.”

Facing last Tuesday’s bitter cold, about a dozen JFREJ members led the community safety canvassing in Williamsburg, in partnership with community groups Los Sures and Wick Against Violence, Latino-led organizations advocating for affordable housing and anti-violence efforts.

After a brief explanation of what bystander intervention means to the community, participants were given stacks of flyers with tips and graphics on how to intervene.

The tips include a direct response approach, which involves confronting the attacker before or during the attack and delegating other bystanders to call emergency personnel or assist in confrontation. Other tips include distracting the attacker by asking for directions. The flyers also encourage checking in with the victims after the attack even if one is unable to intervene.

The same tips are also endorsed by the city’s Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, which was launched in 2019. Similar trainings are offered by the Center for Anti-Violence Education, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit.

Combatting antisemitism – and anti-violence work, in general – requires

a range of tactics, Restler, the city councilman, said. Social media campaigns and solidarity marches are important work, he said, but they don’t reach every group in a community. What’s more, he added, rallies and social posts are reactive. Educating community members with tangible, practical tips on bystander intervention, by contrast, can help defuse potential future violent situations.

“There is a profound sense of isolation [within communities] after an attack,” Restler told the New York Jewish Week. “Being here in the neighborhood, talking to people on the street and offering support and guidance is one of the most potent signals to show that they are not alone.”

The mood was light and friendly as JFREJ members handed out flyers at the Lorimer St. entrance to the J train, on street corners, and in front of the Food Bazaar Supermarket on Broadway. Many pedestrians steamed right past, but dozens were seen walking down the street holding the yellow flyers, reading them and stuffing them into their bags.

Community work, Ellman-Golan explained, is like “being on the subway and catching someone’s eye and you know you’re both thinking the same thing. They’re a stranger, but there are little moments of knowing that you’re in it together, you’re experiencing something together and it is that warm feeling of community.”

“Strangers are also neighbors in New York,” she continued. “If people find that meaningful, we can actually translate that into genuinely caring for one another and making our communities places where people aren’t being hurt and ignored. I just think there’s a better way. It takes funding and support, certainly political support, but it’s really meaningful.” **HW**

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