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TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023

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[See more on page 20](#)

Crowds fill the streets in Israel in anti-judicial reform protests



Saturday night 18 February — crowds fill the streets of Bet Shemesh.

Since early January, Israelis across the political spectrum have come out in droves. They are protesting the government's proposed judicial

overhaul that would limit the Supreme Court's powers to rule against the legislature and the executive, and give lawmakers decisive powers in

appointing judges. This proposed change to the law threatens to compromise civil liberties, and jeopardise the economy.

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Des says...

By Desrae Saacks, Editor Cape Jewish Chronicle



Lithuania on my mind

In April I will be visiting Lithuania as a guest of the Lithuanian government.

I've been invited for a week-long trip in my capacity as editor of a South African Jewish publication, and in acknowledgement of the majority of South African Jewry's Lithuanian roots. It's no secret that the Lithuanians are reaching out to our community, in a gesture of friendship and relationship-building. I have been wrestling with the question of whether it is appropriate that I accept this invitation.

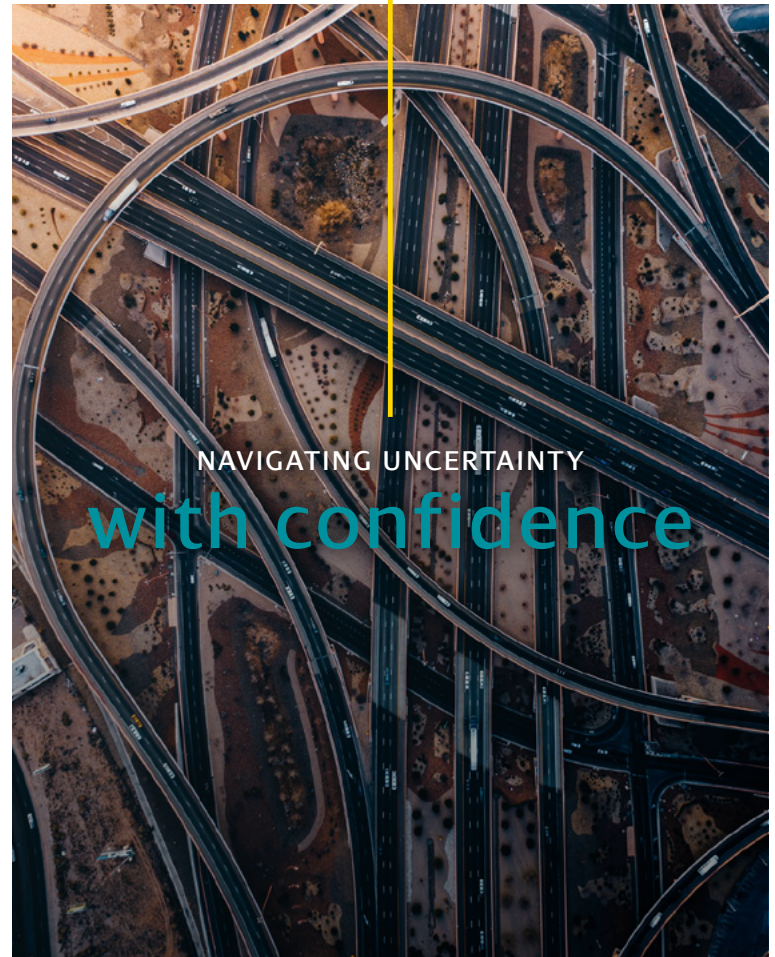
The CJC regularly carries adverts from different agencies offering to facilitate access to Lithuanian citizenship, and many have been successful in achieving this. Recently, the film *J'accuse* was screened — at the Labia Theatre and again online. The film documents the exceptionally cruel fate of the Jewish community that was still living in Lithuania in 1941, and the complicity of the local Lithuanian population. It highlights the failure of the current Lithuanian government to acknowledge the role of its people, even to the point of elevating one particularly brutal mass murderer to hero status.

Another glimpse into Jewish Lithuanian life-as-it-was can be seen

at the *Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre's* current exhibition (see page 16). Through the lens of posters recovered from the Vilna Ghetto, we see a community rich in culture, education and faith. As a predominantly Litvak community, we are painfully aware that many of us might have had family members among them. The scale of the loss is brought into focus as we get a glimpse into these people's humanity, aware of the unspeakably horrific fate that awaited them, and the richness that they and their descendants would have added to our lives and our communities had they survived.

Also on page 16, read an excerpt of the address by the Lithuanian ambassador at the opening of the exhibition. Clearly, attempts are being made to redress the terrible crime perpetrated against the Jews of Lithuania, often at the hands of Lithuanian nationals. In preparation for my trip I've been reading various sources (courtesy of the *Gittlin Library*) on the history of Lithuanian Jewry.

I will travel to Lithuania, receptive to my hosts' efforts at reconciliation, but mindful of the need for full disclosure and honesty for this to be possible. I look forward to reporting back on my trip.



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Date	Portion	Candle lighting		Ends
		Earliest	Latest	
3 March/11 Adar	Tetzaveh/Zachor	18.01	19.03	19.53
10 March/18 Adar	Ki Tisa/Parah	17.54	18.54	19.44
17 March/25 Adar	Vayakel/Pekudei/HaChodesh	17.46	18.44	19.34
24 March/3 Nissan	Vayikra	17.38	18.35	19.25
31 March/10 Nissan	Tzav	17.30	18.25	19.15

N.B. Please note that the times indicated are the earliest times for candle lighting. Please consult your Rabbi. * Please contact your local shul to determine their Shabbat acceptance time.

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Are you a descendant of a Lithuanian citizen but unsure about how to reinstate your citizenship through ancestry? Moreover, you may hesitate to initiate the process due to a lack of information about your ancestors. You may only know that your grandparent or great-grandparent was from Lithuania and assume that without documentation such as a birth certificate, the process is not worth starting. This is not the case. In fact, in nine out of 10 cases, my clients do not have documents pertaining to their Lithuanian ancestry. Ideally what information you would need to know is full name of your Lithuanian ancestor, the date and place of birth, approximate year of emigration and his/her parents' names. However often, my clients are not able to provide this information, and that is acceptable. Be assured that knowing that at least one of your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents was from Lithuania is the only essential condition to initiate the process successfully.

If you could, I'd encourage you to ask around your family and relatives for any information they may have about your ancestor. Keep notes on everything you find, including information about siblings or other family

members.

If you find out that your ancestor fled Lithuania before 1918, it doesn't necessarily mean a dead end for you. Ask around in your family if perhaps you have an alternative ancestral line and explore it.

Don't let a lack of information hold you back from exploring your potential to reinstate your Lithuanian citizenship and reclaim your heritage.

Schedule an individual free of charge consultation with me while I am in Johannesburg and Cape Town. During the consultation, I will assess all the information you have, ask questions to guide you in the right direction, and check online archives for any additional information. And, with IN JURE's 100% success fee policy, you don't have to worry about paying if the process is not successful.

"I had never thought that I would say that I am a Lithuanian citizen. With minimal information around my maternal and paternal Lithuanian background, Dainius had assured me that my application would be valid." G. Saben, SA

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CONNECT, COLLABORATE, COMMUNITY

Look before you leap!

By Daniel Bloch, Executive Director, Cape SAJBD

I am sure you have heard the saying “Look before you leap”. This can have multiple meanings depending on the situation in which you find yourself. However, the definition can be simply put as this: you shouldn’t act without first considering the possible consequences or dangers.



I would add to this by stating, one shouldn’t make rash decisions without reviewing all the information beforehand. How many of us have come to a conclusion or made a decision without the full facts? Do you stop, pause and take a deep breath; or do you simply jump into the fire?

In any leadership role, as with mine as Executive Director of the Cape SAJBD, one is continuously faced with challenges, and in many instances a quick decision is required. More often than not, people who are rushed into quick decisions without taking the time to assess all the facts will make a bad or wrong choice. I seem to possess the ability to remain calm under pressure. I don’t get flustered and I don’t run around like a headless chicken. This has been remarked by friends, family members, former work colleagues and my current team. This bodes well in my line of work where there are different challenges each day and a level head is needed before making a decision.

Many people will act in an emotional manner, bringing forth anger and frustration in the decision they take. If they don’t receive an immediate response from someone to an issue of concern to them, then they seek to take matters into their own hands. When dealing with issues affecting our community, one needs to assess all the facts, investigate every possible angle, understand what the consequences and/or risks could be, consult with colleagues and then finally decide on the way forward.

Over the past several months, I have received a variety of challenges as well as opportunities which will affect or benefit our community. Most of the time, these have all been deemed ‘urgent’ and ‘important’. At the Board of Deputies, we are aware of what is happening not just within our community, but also around the world. We continue to engage with other global Jewish organisations and communities. While we may not make public statements or send out a plethora of emails, we are fully invested in the problem and will continuously work to find the best solution. Many issues which are laid before us are extremely complex and take time to resolve. Nothing is ever black and white, and there are always different ways to look at and understand the issues at hand. Hence the importance of dialogue as opposed to emails. Our door is always open — we are here for our community.

I have made it my personal policy to always be available to talk to people and to hear all sides of the story. Coming into an organisation with over 100 years of history, there are always stories and rumours of what happened in the past. While it is important to acknowledge and remember the previous methods of conduct, we live in the modern world. What worked twenty years ago may not necessarily work today. Heck, what worked three years ago will most likely also have changed! It is important to keep up with our ever-evolving community.

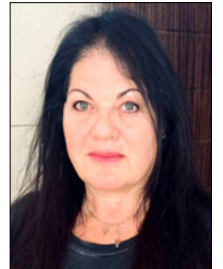
Human beings need to be heard and need to feel understood. Taking the time to listen to people is important, and this is something I take very seriously. I welcome anyone in the community to contact me with ideas or challenges; and I will gladly listen and see how I can help.

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

A mindset of giving builds community

By Adrienne Jacobson, Chairperson, Cape SAJBD

I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of Alison Katzeff z”l.



We at Cape SAJBD again wish Howard, Yael, and Oren a long life. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion. May we all continue to feel the legacy of Alison’s work and may her memory be for a blessing.

A magnificent soul and exemplary leader has left our world and we as a community are mourning her loss deeply. Alison inspired me personally through her leadership, friendship and mentorship. Never too busy to take a call or a meeting, to listen, provide counsel or perspective, she prioritised the best interests of the community in all that she did.

I would like to share one of Alison’s best lessons to me over countless cups of tea around her table. She had a deep understanding of what builds and sustains community. She said, “At a simple level, in order for a community to thrive we have to look after one another. And to do that, we need a mindset of giving and a generosity of spirit. We need to give of ourselves and our resources, whether financial, intellectual, emotional, or our time. We should inculcate this in our families by setting an example for our children to emulate, thus ensuring our sustainability.”

We can apply Alison’s example of an abundant mindset of giving throughout our community and especially in our work at the Cape SAJBD.

At the end of January we held an induction and strategic alignment workshop for the Cape Council, where we explored how our organisation can build a strong culture of community service in line with our external and internal mandates. They are: protecting the civil rights of the Jewish community; enhancing the quality of Jewish life in our community; and serving our affiliate organisations. This strong culture of community service speaks deeply to how we engage with stakeholders in the socio-political landscape that we occupy, as well as how we engage with each other as a council and in our diverse community.

Ian Fuhr, a doyen of strategic leadership in business, took us through his four-stage model of community building. Starting with ‘Pseudo Community’ (seemingly peaceful but hidden concerns and conflict avoidance), through to ‘Glorious Chaos’ (where there is confrontation and/or anxiety), followed by ‘Letting Go’ (acceptance, tolerance, introspection) and then to ‘True Community’ (respect, trust and tolerance — differences are valued, as are learning and knowledge).

The challenge of attaining ‘True Community’ needs what Fuhr calls paradigm flexibility and not paradigm paralysis or polarised minds. This is characterised by empathy and kindness; we engage with *each other*, rather than with polarisation or conflict. Dialogue, exploration, and collaboration in a spirit of genuine empathic curiosity and open-mindedness is always preferable to statements, petitions, or letters of demand.

To carry such a paradigm through to working in the broader political landscape of discrimination and prejudice, fighting hate speech and antisemitism effects real, meaningful, and significant change, as played out in the work of our four subcommittees: *Interfaith and Inter-community*; *Generation Next*; *Antisemitism and Legal*; and *Advocacy*.

An example of this paradigm can be seen in our *Generation Next* subcommittee with Israel Apartheid Week on university campuses throughout South Africa. Our SAUJS students are bravely navigating the complexity of narrative and opinion by using mindful and empathic engagement in a very difficult space. To endeavour to break old polarised patterns of conflict takes courage, and we support their work with pride in shifting the engagement to peaceful change and respectful relationships.

May this mindset of giving, kindness, and empathy, as embodied by Alison, continue to thrive throughout our community and inform our engagement, with each other and with all our stakeholders and those we liaise with. May we continue to create respect, tolerance, and trust in all our relationships, especially when we face challenges.



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Sharing experiences and collaborative learning

By Craig Nudelman

Trust, connect, learn — these are the guiding values that underlie the Entrepreneurs' Network Cape Town.

This network, which provides entrepreneurs from the Jewish community and people of colour from diverse communities the opportunity to connect and learn from each other, had its first official event on 26 January at the Deloitte offices.

Fifty-six entrepreneurs from all walks

of life and various business sectors attended this engaging and inspiring evening. The entrepreneurs were divided into forums, where they shared and discussed challenging issues facing small businesses. Through shared experiences and collective insights, they were able to receive valuable input into tackling some pressing issues.

Members from partner organisations *Over the Rainbow*, *ORTJet Cape Town*, *Entrepreneurs Organization*,

and the *Cape SAJBD* spoke about the different ways in which they could assist entrepreneurs; and explained the format in which the year-long programme would work.

Justin Asher, one of the facilitators and a Board member of the Cape SAJBD, produced a *Mentimeter* and asked the group to input the biggest struggles they faced as small businesses in Cape Town. Top of the list was loadshedding (an issue faced by all South Africans), funding, and

how to access potential markets for their products.

All present were engaged and excited to embark on this new one-of-a-kind networking journey. Over the next few months, look out for individuals who will increase the workforce and infrastructure of Cape Town and South Africa. Creating jobs does not lie in the hands of government, but rather in the hands of those who have ideas and skills to make our economy more sustainable.



Results of Mentimeter showing challenges facing the entrepreneurs



2023 cohort for Entrepreneurs Network



Dawn Nathan-Jones, SAJBD member and one of the organisers of the Entrepreneurs Network, addresses the 2023 cohort

Trees for hope

There is a midrash in the Mishnah about Honi HaMe'agel (Choni the Circle-drawer).

The story of Choni in the Babylonian Talmud speaks of how he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him how long it would take for the tree to bear fruit, to which the man replied 70 years. Choni then asked if the man was certain he would be witness to the fruit from the carob tree, to which the man replied, "I found [already grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted

those for me, so I too plant these for my children."

On *Tu B'Shvat* this year the Cape SAJBD together with our partners visited *Camp Joy Skills Development & Restoration Centre* and donated 12 trees which were planted in and around the area, providing much-needed shade for the vegetable garden which is one of the ongoing projects at Camp Joy.

Camp Joy is a facility focusing on restoration as a guideline to quality of life, healthy living, and re-integration.

Their mission is to combat drug addiction and to rid communities at all echelons of society, of violence, and gangsterism.

We were welcomed by Pastor Craven Engels, who runs Camp Joy, and joined by City Councillor Elton Jansen. Thanks to our partners South African Zionist Federation — Cape Council, South African Friends of Israel, Bnoth Zion WIZO Cape Town, Bridges For Peace and Prime Trees.

Like the midrash of Choni the circle-drawer, although we may not see the

shade of the trees for several years, we plant these trees for generations to come. May the shade protect them not only from the sun, but also provide protection from violence and gangsterism in this much-needed facility.



Daniel Bloch addressing the participants



Participants at the event from the various organisations



Camp Joy's visitors' area with a new tree



Councillor Elton Jansen (City of Cape Town), Pastor Craven Engels (Camp Joy), Linda Saban (Bnoth Wizo), Yvette Rosenberg (SA Zionist Federation) and Daniel Bloch (Cape SAJBD)



The Western Cape Jewish community welcomes you!

The Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies welcomes you to the Western Cape!

If you or your family have moved to the Western Cape in the past few years, or if you know of anyone who has joined our community, then please connect with us. We would like to assist you as best we can to ensure your transition is as smooth as possible. Find out more about this incredible community and how we can work together!

Let's continue to grow and strengthen our Jewish community!



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This month we are proud to showcase four new Mensch members

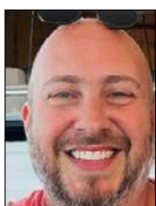
MARIA STACEY is a clinical psychologist, inspired by the spirit of Tikkun Olam. She has always worked for justice, inclusion and equity, especially addressing the deep inequalities in our society. Maria works professionally as a consultant specialising in public health, human rights and social justice. She is also involved in supporting the only old age home in Khayelitsha, *Ithemba Community Old Age Home*.



Millions of South African elderly people survive precariously on a government pension of just R1890 per month. Most live with their extended families, but many families face serious financial stress, and elderly family members are often neglected or abused as they become physically or mentally frail and old age homes are few and far between.

Ithemba Community Old Age Home was founded by Nomsa Gxotiwe, who started taking into her home vulnerable, frail, and ill old people whose families could not support them. Maria works to support the home, and through networking helps them to survive and hopefully thrive.

E P H R A I M MOSS is a technologist and entrepreneur, with a passion for our natural environment and climate mitigation via smart technology. This has led to the creation of *ReSpek Nature*, a digital platform that connects consumers with land restoration projects in semi-arid ecosystems. *ReSpek Nature* is creating innovative solutions for carbon mitigation and restoring degraded landscapes.



Using technology to measure the efficacy of their work, *ReSpek Nature* is making a positive impact on the environment, creating dignified jobs in rural communities, and connecting consumers with restoration efforts.

ReSpek Nature provides a trusted platform that allows any consumer to offset their carbon emissions with one click.

ALAN HOFFMAN is co-chairperson of the *Kensington Educentre*, one of the longest running projects of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW), where he is involved in the everyday running of the centre. Alan joined the UJW as a volunteer 10 years ago and now runs The Flower Group making gifts for Rosh Hashanah.



The Kensington Educare Centre was established in 1942 and celebrated their 80th anniversary in 2022. This centre is dedicated to helping and improving the lives of children living in the Kensington and Facreton communities. Kensington Educare creates a safe space for children aged 3 – 6, has dedicated staff members who provide an educational learning environment that includes nutritious meals, extra-curricular activities and aftercare throughout the school year.

The UJW of South Africa is committed to investing in all the people of South Africa, and will continue in its endeavours to create a better quality of life for all.

VANESSA ARELISKY has been involved in volunteer work since she was at school, and has been a member of Rotary and of the UJW where she chaired a group for many years and sat on the Executive. Today, Vanessa is the new Project Co-ordinator at UJW Cape Town.



Founded in 1931 with the objective of serving both the Jewish and broader communities, the UJWSA provided welfare projects to diverse communities during the depression years and later during apartheid and beyond.

The organisation offered skills training, funded educational programmes, established crèches and nursery schools and empowered disadvantaged sections of society to find employment and to become self-sufficient. Many projects are self-sustaining and are still operational today.

The UJW has active branches in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria – all serving the Jewish community through UJW's Jewish Community Fund, as well as raising funds and goods to assist other communities in need.

Mensch is the leading Jewish social justice network in Southern Africa. An ever-growing group of Jewish people committed to improving our community, country and world.

STUDY IN EUROPE FOR AT LEAST 50% LOWER TUITION FEE, IF YOU HOLD LITHUANIAN CITIZENSHIP

Did you know that European citizens, including Lithuanians, are entitled to study at any European University within European Union territory either free of charge or for at least 50% lower tuition fee compared to international students outside the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA)?

Some of my clients have already explored that advantage and were happy to share this with me. I, myself, was pleasantly surprised to learn the vast difference between tuition fees for EU students vs. non-EU students.

For example, in Netherlands, EU students pay an average of €700-€2,100 per academic year for undergraduate studies, while non-EU students can expect to pay between 6,000 – 15,000 EUR/year. This is because the government of Netherlands, like many other EU countries, provides funding for higher education for EU citizens as part of their commitment to the free movement of people and goods within the EU.

This means that students with Lithuanian heritage can save thousands of Euros on their education, making it more accessible and affordable for them.

In addition to the financial benefits, having Lithuanian citizenship by ancestry can also open other opportunities for students. For example, they may be eligible for scholarships, grants, and other forms of financial aid that are only available to citizens of EU. They may also have an easier time finding jobs and internships in Europe after graduation, as they will be considered a citizen of the EU country.

Most of European Universities have English-taught study programs for international students, which makes it easily accessible and requires no knowledge of local language. You could be granted with Lithuanian citizenship without losing your existing citizenship if you have an ancestor of a Lithuanian origin.

Schedule an individual free of charge consultation with me while I am in Johannesburg and Cape Town. During the consultation, I will assess all the information you have, ask questions to guide you in the right direction, and check online archives for any additional information. And, with IN JURE's 100% success fee policy, you don't have to worry about paying if the process is not successful.

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Risky Business — in conversation with two Israeli professors

By Mandy Allen

Ensuring that Israel — and the world — is prepared for the next major emergency (be it health-related, natural disaster or other humanitarian crises) is a weighty responsibility.

It's a calling to which Professor Manfred Green and Professor Dorit Nitzan have committed their professional lives.

The couple were on holiday in Cape Town (Professor Green is originally from South Africa), and took the time on 6 February to speak to members and guests of the SAZF Cape Council, about their work in the highly specialised field of Preparedness and Response to Emergencies and Disasters.

Both possess qualifications and accolades that are as extensive as they are impressive, and balance their academic pedigrees with

frontline experience.

As Professor of Public Health at Haifa University, leading its International Master of Public Health programme, Green has served as the IDF's Head of Epidemiology and Public Health, was the founding director of the Israel Centre for Disease Control, and currently serves on a number of Israeli and global public-health-related advisory councils. Both Nitzan and Green played central roles in Israel's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. "Can you ever prevent a pandemic? No. But you can be prepared for it," says Professor Green. "As one is ending, we anticipate and get ready for the next. You get through it with optimism, but not denial."

The unpredictable and urgent nature of working in the disaster/emergency field was poignantly demonstrated during the couple's talk. Just hours

before, Turkey and Syria were struck by a series of devastating earthquakes. During her husband's presentation, Professor Nitzan was in real-time communication with a member of Israel's aid mission who was being deployed to the region.

Prof Nitzan is well-acquainted with such situations. She currently directs the Masters Programme in Emergency Medicine Preparedness & Response at Ben-Gurion University's School Of Public Health, which she came to after an esteemed 15-year-long career with the WHO (World Health Organisation). There she served, amongst other roles, as the WHO's European Region Health Emergencies co-ordinator. No stranger to the trenches, in 2022 she led the Incident Management Team and the WHO humanitarian response in Ukraine. In addition to her research, teaching and participation in local and global committees in the fields of emergencies and health security, she is also director of the new Ben



Zvi Brivik (middle) with visiting Professors Dorit Nitzan and Manfred Green

Gurion University Food Systems: One Health & Resilience Centre.

Professor Nitzan explains that she is compelled by the Jewish concept of *Tikkun Olam*; a call-to-action and duty to repair and improve the world. "It doesn't matter if you're religious or not," she says. "The humanitarian principles that we find in the *Torah* and *Tanakh* are deeply ingrained in Judaism and are also fundamental to Israeli norms and values."

Tu B'Shvat — planting seeds of hope

Tu B'Shvat, the 'New Year of the Trees' is traditionally seen as an ecological awareness day.

Trees are planted in celebration and as long-term investment in the future. JNF SA collaborated with partners in Cape Town as part of their 75 minutes of environmental awareness campaign which they have launched for Israel's 75th birthday celebrations this year.

The SAZF Cape Council, SAFI Cape Town, Cape SAJBD, WIZO Cape Town, and Bridges for Peace took up the JNF SA challenge on Tu B'shvat to plant trees and emphasise the importance of ecological sustainability. *Prime Trees* sponsored 12 beautiful shade and fruit trees which were planted to enhance *Camp Joy* and the work that they do.

Adam Kepkey from the *Friends of Israel Parliament* group had suggested Camp Joy — a skills development and restoration centre — as a worthy recipient of this tree-planting initiative. The organisation does critical work with communities battling the scourge of substance abuse. It focuses on rehabilitation and restoration as a guide to quality of life, healthy living, and re-integration.

Ward Councillor Elton Jansen was present at the ceremony, and said a few words about the importance of environmental sustainability and how the rehabilitation of people can be linked to rehabilitation of the land. We hope that these trees will grow tall, and provide shade and fruit for all who pass through this centre.



Tu B'Shvat at Camp Joy

**For information on the University of Haifa's International Master's programme in Public Health specialising in Health Systems, Administration and Global Health Leadership, click [here](#) and on Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Global Health International summer programme click [here](#); or contact doritni@bgu.ac.il*

The 'new breed' of volunteers and how volunteering is changing



Volunteering – the new way! Viv Anstey, Avigail Popack, Gina Winkler, Tammy Isaacman, Yvette Rosenberg, Hazel Levin and Anita Shapiro with Liora Arnon

How do you attract volunteers... and get the most from them?

The SAZF Cape Council recently hosted Liora Brook Arnon in Cape Town. Liora is head of R&D and Innovation at the Israeli Volunteering Council. She is a leading practitioner, trainer and consultant in the field of volunteer management and engagement.

Representatives of various communal organisations were able to hear first-hand how to work with, and attract volunteers. She highlighted that volunteering is changing and the way we work with volunteers needs to change too. Liora questioned whether we are being innovative and changing our approach in order to attract volunteers?

Click [here](#) to read an interesting article by Liora about volunteer engageability. Thank you to the The Jewish Agency for Israel for facilitating her visit.

Find us **SA Zionist Federation - Cape Council**

@sazfcapecouncil

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What's keeping Bnei busy?



The past two months have been packed with *tochniot* for our channichim, evenings for our madrichim, exciting school visits, and lots of planning for the upcoming months!

We started off the year by meeting with our updated madrichim body, welcoming our new grade 12 madrichim with Escape Rooms at the Waterfront! All the madrichim involved enjoyed the day of growth, fun and getting to know each other. A week after that, the madrichim had a session where we were spoiled with breakfast, heard and learnt from our guest speaker Sarit Suisa, and connected with our Shichva groups to plan the opening *tochnit* for our channichim.

The following Sunday was *tochnit* day — a day of power and fun! Each *shichva* ran their own activity — here's what they got up to.

Ktan Tanim (Grade 3) Baked cookies and played games

Ktan Tanim (Grade 4) Slime making and an ice cream party

Gurim (Grade 5) Ice cream and ice breakers

Gurim (Grade 6) Total Ninja!

Roim (Grade 7) Games morning at the bayit

Moledet (Grade 8) Signal Hill sunset picnic and games

Kaveh (Grade 9) Pizza night at the bayit

Hashachar (Grade 10) Burger night

Refael (Grade 11) Dinner and volunteer programme launch

In total, we had 120 kids at our opening activities! We can't wait for the rest of the year, to continue having the best time with all our channichim.

Aside from our *tochnit* on Sundays, we have been busy every single week with school visits, Shabbat programmes, Torah nights during the week for madrichim and channichim, as well as helping out with Tu B'Shvat community events.

The next big thing to look out for is our Purim Carnival on 5 March, *Chesed* Day on 19 March; and MiniMach which we are overjoyed to announce is going to be from the 24 - 26 March and led by our very own Yael Robbins Kalmann! An interest form has already been released and we can't wait to see as many faces there as possible! From Strength to Strength — *Kadimah Bnei Akiva*. — Leah Hepple, Cape Town chairwoman

Netzer — braai and Tu B'Shvat

For our first kickoff event of the year since machaneh on 4 February, we had a Tu B'Shvat themed vegetarian braai at the Temple Israel West Coast in Milnerton.

Our channies were ecstatic to reconnect with their friends from machaneh and to be back in the Netzer atmosphere. We had fun in the pool, and

ran a decorating and planting workshop. We had our channies decorate their plant pots, and plant Spekboom in those pots for them to take care of at home as their *tikkun olam* project.

We later had our vegetarian braai and ended the day off with a classic netzer *havdallah* and song session, led by our maddies. — Ghaim Atash

Habonim's Shnat '23 liftoff

This past month or so has been a very productive one for Habonim Dror SA. We had our first *Veida* since the pandemic and ran the first of two leadership seminars for our incumbent steering committee. But perhaps most significantly, we also bade farewell to this year's *Shnat* cohort.

Speaking as a past participant, Shnat is HDSA's premier offering in terms of programming, a gap year (10 months to be exact) in Israel for those who have just matriculated. Shnat is a hugely exciting time for all those who take part. Not only does it offer a full year of life in Israel with lots of freedom and new people to meet while being supported by fantastic Madrichim, but also has some of the best educational and ideological material I have come across in my twelve years in the movement.



Ogen shichva members off to Israel. Back: Gabriel Dubb, Adam Selikowitz, Ella Phillips, Michaela Perkel, Ruby Chames. Front: Caitlin Cohn, Jacob Cohen and Sarah-Rose Levin

This year's Shnatties can look forward to the hours of gripping discussion and learning at Jerusalem's Leadership Institute, Machon LeMadrichim, the satisfaction of honest work while living on Kibbutz Revivim, and the fulfilment of giving back as they complete their *Messimah*. We recently held two farewell events for the Shnatties, one in Cape Town and one in Joburg. I attended the Cape Town leg, and it was definitely a bittersweet moment. While they are about to embark on the journey of a lifetime, we will certainly miss their fantastic enthusiasm and contributions to the movement's workings. Good luck in Israel, Ogen! — Sam McNally, Rosh Publications

Diller alumni make an impact

Alumni of Cohort 7 had the privilege of visiting *Sisters Incorporated* — the selected organisation of the 2022 Tikkun Olam Grant Project. Cohort members were tasked with researching, presenting and selecting an organisation that best represents their Jewish values. *Sisters Incorporated* is an outstanding initiative, and we are very proud of our teens who continue to make meaningful ripples of impact in our community. For more information please visit: <https://sisters.org.za>

Speaking of the experience, alumni Layla Musikanth said, "This experience was one of the most fulfilling moments in my life. Seeing, in person, the impact we are making on this incredible organisation by 'handing over' the Tikkun Olam Grant was remarkable. This organisation epitomises women empowerment and offers a hand forward to women who have been through gender-based violence, which unfortunately is prevalent in South Africa. I am so glad we had the opportunity to do this through Diller Teen Fellows. I will think about this experience for many years to come." — Martine Katz.



Sisters Incorporated team members with our Diller alumni: Shay-Lee Geva, Kiara Kawalsky, Eytan Labe, Bella Sherman and Layla Musikanth.



Cape Jewish Seniors Association

DIRECTOR: Diana Sochen 021 434 9691 director@cjsa.org.za ADMIN: Amanda 021 434 9691 admin@cjsa.org.za search CJSA on Facebook

Nature has a way of allowing us to grow old gracefully

By Diana Sochen, Executive director CJSA

I am sure that it will be comforting to know that according to a study undertaken at the University of Tiibingen in Germany, it has been proven that older people's brains do not deteriorate.

They simply become slower because they are so full of knowledge (of course there are exceptions). A 20-year-old might seem incredibly bright and be able to access facts almost instantaneously, but has actually accumulated very few facts in a short lifetime, so simply rifles through their relatively uncluttered mental filing cabinet to come up with an answer.

On the other hand, a 70-year-old has mental archives that have been accumulated over a lifetime, and stored away in compartments. Usually, this is why it takes a while to find the necessary folder in order to pull out the right information. Mature citizens sometimes battle to remember a name or date and then, hours later, have the answer which has popped up without any warning after being there all the time, but tucked away in a specific folder for safekeeping — a little time was needed to retrieve it.

Next time you are in the company of an elderly person who is having a problem with recollection, don't think of them as being batty with nothing worth knowing in their old grey head. Rather think of the person as a vast encyclopedia of accumulated knowledge, and be awestruck.

Nature is wonderful in the way it compensates for the problems of ageing. When you get up to fetch something in another room only to stand there wondering what you are doing there and what you have come to collect, more often than not you can retrace your steps and after getting back to your starting point, remember what it was that you wanted. This is not forgetfulness — it's nature's way of making sure we do more walking and thus getting exercise. We are always meddling with nature's clever designs.

Another compensation for ageing is having to wear spectacles. Have you ever thought that maybe nature intended us to have increasingly blurred vision as we grow older so we don't notice the wrinkles on our partner's face. However, when wearing glasses and reading in bed, what a shock to see the old person next to you.

We know that hearing deteriorates. Voices become more shrill, but

with the hearing loss, that voice sounds the same as it always did, maybe just a bit softer. When we begin to use a hearing aid, we suddenly discover that soft, sweet voice which we always loved has turned into a piercing squeak.

"We must recognize that, as we grow older, we become like old cars — more and more repairs and replacements are necessary." (C.S. Lewis)

We made the big move from our two houses in Bellevue Road to join the Union of Jewish Women in their beautiful home at 7 Albany Road, and begin a new chapter with our Sea Point Centre. The renovations are beautiful and we hope to be functioning optimally by the end of the month. It has been a huge project to condense two homes into one, and to sort through both our contents and what the UJW have in their home, to ensure that the best of everything is kept. We are currently discarding what is not needed, and look forward to working together and having some combined activities.

Members are showing interest in our planned Goudini Break which is



Birthday Morning in Milnerton, Shirley Elvey, Freda Jacobs and Sarah Daitsch.

scheduled for October. It is proving quite difficult to work on the costs, but we hope to finalise this very soon. Please ensure that you contact your social worker if you are at all interested in this experience.

Membership fees are due at the beginning of every year and we request that all members settle the amount with the social workers at their local branch. Membership 2023 is R275 which can be paid via EFT or at the branch. Your co-operation in this regard will be appreciated.

We are making the most of the glorious summer days and hope that the outings that we schedule are enjoyed. There is much to look forward to during the year ahead, so please make sure that you receive our weekly programme which is sent online or via Whatsapp.

Most importantly, book for whatever interests you as soon as you receive the information; to avoid the disappointment finding out that you've responded too late, and that a function or outing is full.

Wishing one and all a Happy Purim — enjoy the reading of the *Megillah* and the delicious hamentachen and fun that go with this festival.

Sochen.

Diana Sochen
Executive Director



Mosaics afternoon in Sea Point

Social and Personal

We congratulate our members who have had joyous occasions during the last month.

Barmitzvah: Yvette Zive — Grandson

Engagement: Shirley Greenstein — Granddaughter

Marriage: Rabbi and Mrs Opert on the marriage of their son

Yda Tollman — marriage of granddaughter

Welcome to new members: Doris Danilewitz, Freda Borughowitz, Lynn Stacey, Philip and Gillian Cohen, Avril Rappaport, Etti Mirlas, Mrs M De Beer, Roslyn Rubenstein, Selma Chait
Well wishes to those who have been under the weather: Freda Tucker, Bennie Katzenberg, Shirley Levensohn, Anita Stoch

Our wishes of strength to members who have recently lost loved ones:

Grace Smith on the passing of her brother, Michael Garvin

Fay Alpert on the passing of her husband Morris
Howard Katzeff on the passing of his wife, Alison

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Consider This

Purim – the Jewish Mardi Gras

By Rabbi Malcolm Matitiani

A well-known English proverb, 'Clothes don't make a person' is understood to mean that appearances can be deceiving.

What you see on the outside might not be a true reflection of the person you are interacting with. Most youngsters today are very conscious of what they wear, and the marketing of designer labels is a very strong force within the fashion industry. It is staggering that one even finds designer label baby wear!

Yet fashion statements are not new. Since the dawn of civilization when human beings began to wear clothing to protect themselves from the elements, people dressed according to their social station or their roles in society. The more wealth one possessed the more flamboyant one's garments. Most societies developed uniforms to be worn by functionaries and practitioners of certain professions.

This was also true of Israelite society. *Sefer Shemot* (the Book of Exodus) describes the priestly garments worn by the *kohanim* who officiated in the Temple. Indeed dressing Aaron and his sons in uniform formed part of the ordination ceremony. This part of the induction ritual served to demonstrate that the tunic, robe, *ephod*, embroidered sash and headdress were indispensable to the office of the *kohen*. An ordained priest not wearing his garments of office could not officiate at the altar. He had to look the part.

Similarly in modern Jewish society people dress according to their ideology. Thus observant Orthodox Jewish men wear *kippot* and *tzitziyot* and married women wear long skirts and head coverings. If the man wearing a *kippah* and *tzitziyot* is clean-shaven then he is modern Orthodox, but if he has a long beard and long *payot* then he is ultra-Orthodox. Similarly if a man known to be Jewish does not wear a *kippah* then he is either non-Orthodox or secular. In Israel the type of *kippah* (whether crocheted or velvet) is an indication of whether the wearer is Modern Orthodox or Hasidic, and of course each Hasidic movement has its own uniform that distinguishes its followers from those of other movements.

Many Jews deliberately choose not to wear

clothing that distinguishes them from members of general society. While proud of their Jewish identity they also feel the need to be a part of the secular community in which they live. Thus the garments they wear reflect their philosophy as do the clothing worn by their Orthodox counterparts.

Jewish prayer also requires a uniform. Thus some sort of head covering is considered mandatory for men in the Orthodox world. In Liberal Jewish movements many women elect to cover their heads when praying. The *tallit* worn during *shacharit* is an obligation commanded by Torah, as is the wearing of *tefillin* during weekday morning prayers.

Just as Purim allows for the unconventional in dress and manner, so the messianic era will lead to the overthrow of regressive and oppressive norms that stifle our intellectual and spiritual development.

The rabbinic festival of *Purim* highlights the importance of our choice of clothes. One of the themes of the story of Esther is that of hiding one's true identity. Indeed the very name Esther is not a Jewish one. The heroine who stood up to Haman and foiled his evil plan was given the Hebrew name Haddasah (myrtle) by her parents (Esther 2:7). Esther is a Persian name meaning 'star' from the Greek *asteri*. The name is also a pun on the Hebrew verb *nistar* (to be hidden). Like all biblical names, the name Esther was chosen deliberately because the young Jewess who became Queen of Persia was instructed by her cousin Mordecai to keep her true identity hidden (Esther 2:10). Dressed in fine clothes and cosmetics, she appears before King Ahasuerus as a Persian beauty by the name of Esther. Esther's concealment of her Jewish origins allowed her to become queen, and her timely disclosure of her true identity saved the Jews from annihilation.

The theme of concealment and disguise in the Purim story is played out in our celebration of

Purim. A major feature of the celebration is the masquerade. Dressed in costume, we play a part — either one that reflects our personality and reveals our true nature to others, or a role that purposely hides our true selves and expresses the inverse of our true character.



All cultures have a tradition of fancy dress, one need only think of the Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, Nice and Cologne. The celebration of Purim parallels these carnivals. It is the one time in the year when observant Jews are permitted to be rowdy, and decorum in shul is dispensed with. Even cross-dressing — forbidden by the Torah — was permitted on Purim in communities influenced by the Italian carnival.

The topsy-turvy nature of Purim, with its masquerades and concealment inspired the sages to declare that while the prophetic and hagiographical books of the *Tanach* will be nullified in the Messianic Age, the Book of Esther will be remembered and Purim will continue to be celebrated (*Talmud Yerushalmi Megillah 1:5a, Mishneh Torah Hilchot Megillah ve-Chanukkah 2:18*). Perhaps the idea behind this statement is that in the changed social and political order of the future redemption, all current boundaries and limitations which curb the development of our *neshamot* will be eliminated. Just as Purim allows for the unconventional in dress and manner, so the messianic era will lead to the overthrow of regressive and oppressive norms that stifle our intellectual and spiritual development. This is the true meaning of Purim, a meaning that is hidden behind the joviality and parody, the fancy dress and noise. Perhaps that is why the kabbalists esteemed Purim so highly, stating in the name of Rabbi Isaac Luria that Purim and Yom Kippur are comparable in importance.

Thus on reflection clothes often do make a person, since our outer appearance when deliberately chosen does reflect who we are, or sometimes the opposite of who we are. With this in mind we should give some careful thought to the fancy dress costume in which we will celebrate Purim this year.

Mazaltov to last month's Bnei Mitzvah!



Adam Shandling
4 February



Luca Dobrin
11 February



Jesse Flash
18 February

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**JEWISH
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JCS IN NUMBERS

900+

Average monthly food parcels plus vouchers and Meals on Wheels distributed by the JCS Tikvah Foodbank at an average total cost of R300 000/month. Perishables (bimonthly), Non-Perishables (monthly) and Meals on Wheels (5 240 meals) delivered.

120

JCS is currently assisting 120 individuals who are unemployed but employable.

209

Current caseload of older persons - a 30% increase from 2021.

567

The number of individuals who are receiving material relief - financial assistance via grants, disbursements, rentals, food security, medication, electricity and water etc. Numbers are increasing daily - this is a 36% increase from 2021.

210

JCS is currently assisting 210 individuals struggling with mental health conditions.

1140

Individuals currently requiring Social Services.

210

JCS supplies accommodation for up to 210 individuals.

VISION

The vision of Jewish Community Services is to be recognised as the leading provider of innovative services and programs that address existing and emerging social service needs. To provide a full spectrum of services that promotes quality of life within the context of Jewish ethics and values. Together we can build a caring, self-sufficient community with dignity, harmony and happiness.

MISSION

To develop, implement and coordinate social protection and poverty reduction solutions for and with the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged in the Cape Town Jewish community. To provide quality social welfare services to enable them to meet life's challenges.



www.jcs.org.za



Spiritual resistance in the Vilna Ghetto

CJC staff reporter

2023 marks the 80th anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto.

On Tuesday 7 February, The Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, in partnership with the Embassy of Lithuania hosted the opening of an exhibition of the Vilna Gaon State Museum's collection of archival posters from the Vilna Ghetto. This is the first of a number of events scheduled for 2023 to mark this anniversary.

The exhibition consists of copies of the hand-drawn and painted posters which advertised the cultural events in the Ghetto including discussions on scientific subjects including medicine, university level courses, theatre productions and music evenings. One poster even advertises an

event to mark the 100 000th book to be borrowed from the ghetto library!

These posters survived and were found in the area of the ghetto after the war. They bear silent witness to the the incredible cultural life that residents of the Vilna Ghetto developed in a very short period of time, despite the overwhelmingly dark and uncertain times in which they were living.

"For me they are silent witnesses, yet they speak so eloquently of creativity, hope and resilience. They are tragic reminders of what could have been. They are intimate and demand that we engage with them on many levels: In terms of their remarkable execution at a time when paints and paper were hard to come by, what they say about the people they were made for and for the what

they represent in terms of the spirit of the time and the context in which they were created." Richard Freedman.

Special guest for the evening was Zola Shuman. Born in Cape Town, Zola is a singer-songwriter, composer, performance coach, creative content consultant and performing artist.

Both of Zola's parents were born in pre-war Vilna and miraculously survived the Holocaust. Her mother, Chayela and her uncle Leyb Rosenthal (who did not survive the war) were deeply involved in the cultural life of the Ghetto, and feature in a number of the posters on display.

Zola made a documentary about her mother and uncle, which was screened at the event.

CTHGC chairman Richard Freedman contextualised the exhibition

“After a year of Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the treaty between the Soviet Union and the Nazi Government collapsed and was followed almost immediately by the invasion of the Baltic States in June 1941.

What ensued was a disaster for the Jewish population of the region. Lithuanian nationalists under the protection of the Nazis began killing the Jews across Lithuania. Vilna was no exception. The killing of the Jews of Vilna was conducted in the Ponary forests some 10km from Vilna. This was to all intents and purposes the beginning of the Nazi final solution for the Jews of Europe. Of the 56 000 Jewish inhabitants of Vilna, only about 18 000 souls were still alive after six months; and the thriving intellectual, artistic and historical Jewish community of what was known for hundreds of years as the Jerusalem of Lithuania was all but destroyed. The surviving Jews were forced into a small area of the city in what became known as the Vilna Ghetto.

Like in the other ghettos established across Europe, residents tried to survive in overcrowded conditions on starvation rations. Disease and malnutrition became a daily challenge and took their toll. They were faced with the fear of impending destruction, having all lost family and friends in the preceding months. In most ghettos, schools and religious practice were forbidden. It was forbidden to give birth and pregnant women were forced to end their pregnancies. The ghetto was in effect a prison camp with heavily controlled access and little or no contact with the city beyond the walls and confines of the ghetto. One can only imagine the despair and sense of desperation that the ghetto inhabitants experienced. Yet the response to these appalling conditions was astonishing.”



Dainius Junevičius, Zola Shuman, CTHGC Chairman Richard Freedman and Asta Junevičienė



CTHGC Founder and trustee Myra Osrin, Linda Bester and Zola Shuman



Two of the posters on display

HE Mr Dainius Junevičius Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania shared some reflections on the Holocaust remembrance in Lithuania

“Every year Lithuania joins people worldwide in remembering the six million Jews who were brutally murdered during the Holocaust. The tragedy that started over 80 years ago still casts its shadow over all Lithuanian cities and towns. The Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators erased the entire vibrant layer of our society, destroying the unique Lithuanian Jewish culture and, most importantly, innocent human lives.

“As we pay respect to the 200 000 Lithuanian Jews, our compatriots, lost for our country, I want to ensure you that Lithuania continues to remember and reflect on what has happened and why it happened. The pledges we are making to never forget the Holocaust translate into concrete actions targeting a wider society, but first of all, the younger generation.

“In Lithuania, a member country of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance since 2002, the history of the Holocaust is being taught in schools (teachers are using recommendations on teaching and learning about the Holocaust, prepared by the IHRA and translated into Lithuanian), and more than 150 Tolerance Education Centres have been set up in secondary schools with the help of Yad Vashem and the International Commission for the evaluation of the crimes of the Nazi occupation in Lithuania.

“Lithuania doesn't tolerate any form of antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion that find sophisticated forms today, especially in the digital space. In this spirit, I want to invite you to Lithuania to explore your roots. I hope that you and the Litvak diaspora all over the world will walk forward with us in friendship and partnership, drawing from our shared history to advance the cause of Tikkun Olam.”

The exhibition will run until the end of March. Sunday - Thursday 10am-5pm; Friday 10am - 5pm; Saturday closed

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Great thinkers and writers at the Cape Town Jewish Literary Festival

The Jewish Literary Festival 2023 (JLF2023) will host some of the greatest thinkers and writers in the country on Human Rights Day (21 March) this year in Cape Town.

Join us for a provocative series of panels on business, politics, sport, history, narrative, identity, heroes, villains and much more!

Renowned British historian SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE is our guest of honour and will discuss his latest book *The World*, which takes a wide-angle lens on global history via the shenanigans of ruling families through the ages. It includes everyone from the ancient Greeks and Romans to the Bonapartes, Hapsburgs, and even the Rockefellers and Trumps.

And from the bad behaviour of the elite and powerful, and in an ode to Human Rights Day, we examine the role and value of an apology. Author and professor MELANIE JUDGE will discuss her book *Unsettling Apologies* and the histories of injustice, dispossession and violence in South Africa with her co-author DEE SMYTHE — amid a global resurgence of demands for the acknowledgement of historical and contemporary wrongs.

We will also pay homage to the trauma of seeking justice with authors ANTONY ALTBEEKER, LIZ MCGREGOR, JANINE LAZARUS and moderator BEVERLY LESTER, who will explore that painful challenge through the stories they tell in their books.

Other international authors include historical fiction writer LOUISA TREGER, who writes the fascinating true story of the world's first female investigative journalist, NELLIE BLY, who undertakes the brave mission of writing an article about the horrendous conditions in an asylum on Blackwell's Island by pretending to be mad herself.

We will also hear from authors whose political consciousness has shaped their personal stories which they share in their memoirs. This includes apartheid activist JOHN SCHLAPOBERSKY, who joins us from the UK, and DENIS HIRSON, from France.

And moving from the past we look to the present and future with a session called *Disruption: looking at who and what is changing our world. Beyond*



Bitcoin author STEVEN 'BOYKEY' SIDLEY and *Breach* author RONEN AIRES will chat to RAN NEUNER, entrepreneur and popular host of CNBC's *Crypto Trader* show.

And for those of us who are wondering where the ANC and our country go from here, political adviser and global business leader COLIN COLEMAN chats with former member of parliament and founder of the Democratic Alliance, TONY LEON.

Entrepreneurs ALLEN AMBOR (Spur Steak Ranch founder) and RAELE LEVITT have both written books on their colourful and brave business journeys to success and we are lucky enough to be hearing from them. Talented local authors like GAIL SCHIMMEL, KATE SIDLEY, JONATHAN ANCER, NECHAMA BRODIE, JOANNE JOWELL, and PATRICIA SCHONSTEIN join the line-up along with HEDI LAMPERT, ANGELA ROTHBART and more.

For those who have followed and loved EVITA BEZUIDENHOUT, you will be excited that her alter-ego PIETER-DIRK UYS will be part of a panel on breaking boundaries through the

arts. He joins AVIVA PELHAM and DES LINDBERG as GUS SILBER probes their careers.

The 27 sessions will run over five timeslots and a plenary session. Patrons can enjoy each one with ample time in between to continue conversations with like-minded booklovers. *The Book Lounge* is manning a pop-up bookstore; and a delicious boxed lunch is part of the ticket price as is a cappuccino!

JLF has become a highlight on the local literary calendar, joining such iconic events as the Franschhoek Literary Festival and the Open Book Festival — it makes a welcome in-person return at the Gardens Community Centre.

Partners for the Festival include the Jacob Gitlin Library, The Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, the SA Jewish Museum, Fine Music Radio, the Cape Jewish Chronicle, The Book Lounge, ChaiFM and Lift Airlines.

Gardens Community Centre, Hatfield Street, Cape Town
9am to 5pm (last session starts 4pm)

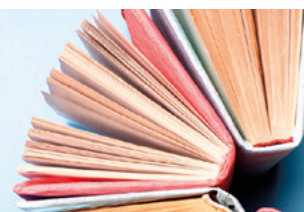
R350 includes lunch, access to all sessions and a coffee voucher.

Patrons may purchase tickets online through Quicket: <https://qkt.io/jW9VTY> or by visiting the Gitlin Library during business hours.

Enquiries: hipzone@mweb.co.za



TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023
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ISRAEL: A JOURNEY MAKING MEANING

Guiding Germans in Israel

Julian Resnick writes from Israel

I was asked to do this piece of guiding a while ago and never hesitated for a moment.

When I started guiding many years ago, I only guided Jewish groups as that was my interest, working with Jewish people on our story.

As luck would have it — and it really turned out to be a wonderful stroke of luck as you will understand later — I was approached by a rabbi who had travelled with me when I took a group from the World Union for Progressive Judaism to Rome, to meet with the Pope. It was 2005 and the 40th anniversary of the *Nostra Aetate*, the document issued by Pope Paul VI which, among other things, redefined the Catholic Church's relations with us, the Jews; and absolved us of responsibility — all of us — for the killing of Jesus (thanks guys, it was a little overdue; a little earlier might have spared us a few 'headaches' over the centuries). The pope in 2005 was John Paul II, but luck would have it that a day after we arrived in Rome, he was hospitalised, and so we never got to meet him (and he never got out of hospital, dying on April 2nd).

Don't complain that I wander off the point, I always do. The point being that Rabbi Jonathan Miller of Temple Emanuel in Birmingham Alabama asked me after the Rome trip if I would lead a 'Friendship Journey' of Jews and Christians from Birmingham. My immediate problems were twofold. I had never guided interfaith groups and had no interest at that point; and on the other hand, I had really enjoyed working with Jonathan and rather fancied the idea of guiding a group of his in Israel. So, I agreed.

It was probably the best decision I ever made — at least professionally. I've come to love the diversity that interfaith guiding has brought me. I love the space where people of different faiths, and people of no faith consider the meaning of life as viewed from additional angles; the space where different commitments enrich one. I have learned so much, have been so enriched, so challenged; and have been able to open spaces for conversations that many people have never had before (by the way, I remain fairly pissed by how we were treated over the centuries by the organised church and many Christians, but am so happy to be able to be a part of working on changing that reality).

Almost all my interfaith guiding has been Jewish-Christian, but to my great delight I was asked once to guide a group of Jews, Christians and Muslims. That was a great delight and privilege, and a huge challenge, and was an amazing success both in the visit to Israel (and the Palestinian Authority) and in Turkey.

I will return now to this afternoon. I have guided South Africans, Americans, Canadians, Indians, even a few New Zealanders (common denominator, the English language), but in an hour or so, a new nationality for me, Germans. No big deal I thought. I was told their English is excellent, so what is the big deal? Why am I so anxious about this?

Why am I so anxious? In 1972 after finishing my

leadership year in Jerusalem on behalf of Habonim, I went with a few friends on a trip to Europe. When we arrived at the German border and the German border guard asked me for my passport, I was physically unable to give it to him. My passport to a German in uniform? I turned around and did not enter Germany. Eventually in 2002 I managed to enter Germany and, even though I am a *kipahless/yarmulkaless Jew*, I wore one all the time on the streets of Berlin, waiting, just waiting. Until this day, I am not sure for what. Oy, a terrible confession to make here — I loved and continue to love guiding in Berlin. To my mind a city which is more honest about its past than any other city I have ever been to (and I have been to many, many cities with a sordid past. Want an example? Try Brussels).

I have to go and meet them now, so the second part of this piece will be, I suppose, about what happens over the coming few days. Later everyone...

Almost a week later and the GGII is behind me.

And I am sad that it is behind me and so glad to have made the decision to guide this group of really special people. I often say to the people I guide, there are not ordinary people, only extraordinary people. Not all extraordinary people are easy or fun to be with.



This group of highly intelligent, articulate people were really good to be with. For me, considering the work that I do and the expectations that I have, it means that they were interested in learning — in exploring — the complexities and nuance of this place. Much of their days were filled with meetings; meeting with some of the central people in the business community in Israel, and some of the people making a difference in civil society over here. My guiding was in the evening at times, in the morning before meetings and then for a morning in the Old City of Jerusalem and a morning in Nazareth and in Tzippori before they flew home to Germany. It was intense, brief and concentrated and I attempted to enable them to fully understand why we are the way we are.

To understand the story we tell ourselves when we try to make sense of our lives over here; why we are so overjoyed to have returned; why we are so traumatised by our history; why we are determined to live with our roots firmly in the soil of our home and at the same time are constantly trying to fly like the birds, free of any roots restraining us; why we are an *Old New Land*, or using the words of Theodore Herzl (in German ironically) an *AltneuLand*.

We walked through Jaffa, Jerusalem, Nazareth and Tzippori. We talked of Hebrews, Greeks, the

Children of Israel, Romans, Jews, Muslims, Christians and Jews, of Palestinians and Israelis.



And then we had dinner in Jerusalem on one of the nights. At the end of a delicious meal (the food in Israel is great), with half a dozen guests from civil society in Israel, all were asked to introduce themselves and to say a few words about their lives. Everyone did, both Germans and Israelis, and then it was my turn.

I had not planned to say what I said, but as soon as I stood up, the words flowed from my mouth as if I had spent weeks preparing them. They flowed because they were real and came from the depths of my very emotional being. I shared the words that I had written before I had met them. The words which are in the first part of what I had written the evening before I began guiding them.

I talked about my decisions to guide interfaith groups, my experience at the German border in 1972, my visit to Berlin in 2002 and my subsequent falling in love with that city. The words just flowed, accompanied by a huge amount of emotion. Tears welled up inside of me as I realised that they had given me a gift.

The gift of enabling me — not for the first time in my life — to confront demons, to share my truths, to continue the task I have set for myself in this work that I do. The task of trying to make meaning out of this wonderfully complex thing we call life. Of trying to be authentic with each and every one of the groups of people that I guide, over here in Israel and wherever I go to tell the 'Story'.

What story? On the surface, the story of the Jewish People and our Journey across Time and Space. In reality, the 'joining of the dots'; the 'making sense out of it all'. There are many apparently different stories. The story in Berlin. The story in Marrakesh. The story in Rome. The story in Cape Town.

And yet, they all share something. They all enable me to keep on asking the questions I am truly curious about. What makes a place holy? Why do some things hurt so much? Why do some things give so much joy? Why do I feel so connected? Why do I feel so distant?

Thank you Andreas, Joshua, Marc, Adalbert, Annabelle, Christine, Martin, Reinfried, Bernd, Julian (yes, there was a Julian), Gwen. And of course Gary Sussman, for asking me to do this.

Julian Resnick was born in Somerset West and grew up in Habonim Dror. He studied at UCT, and made Aliyah to 1976. He's conducted numerous shlichuyot and educational missions on behalf of Israel, to Jewish communities in England and the USA. He works as a guide in Israel and around the world (wherever there is a Jewish story). He's married to Orly, and they have three children and six grandchildren and is a member of Kibbutz Tzora.

USING MY NUDEL

A push and a pull

By Craig Nudelman

At the end of March, my family and I will be moving to the great unknown land of Australia (at least, it's unknown to me!).

We are emigrating to Sydney. Gabi got an amazing job opportunity that we couldn't turn down. I get mixed reactions when I tell people the news. Some are happy for me and my family, whereas others have given less favourable remarks and unsolicited words of 'wisdom'. We understand there are cons to moving to one of the most expensive cities in the world, particularly one which is far removed from everywhere else (it isn't called the antipodes for nothing!) We know we won't have the help and support we have here. But it will give us incredible opportunities for self-growth and security.

We've come across many people who leave the country to escape the negatives like loadshedding, broken government systems, and security. But I can proudly say that the reasons we're leaving are not fatalistic. We're moving towards something positive for all four of us.

It will be a challenge. I've been reading Mark Manson's controversial self-help book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* and it is wonderful. Manson's mantra of not giving a f*ck, as well as his personal and often light-hearted anecdotes, has given me an opportunity to think about this move and how I can navigate Sydney in the best way possible. Because I'm listening to the audiobook, I'll have to paraphrase what he says and my interpretation of his 'teachings'. Essentially, he says that individuals aren't that amazing or incredibly gifted. If we believe that, we become entitled and do not grow and learn. Instead, we must keep on reminding ourselves of what is important in life. Things like money, property, and beauty are nice, but they aren't important. The values that we should take note of, like integrity, family, and curiosity, will help us succeed in life. So, when people speak about the things I'll lose when I leave, such as our domestic help, the beautiful view from our flat, and the low cost of living a high-quality lifestyle, I take it with a pinch of salt.

I think key to finding success, personally and professionally, is just going with the flow. Although this may seem to be a counterintuitive way to think since it's contrary to contemporary hustle culture, we often are most successful when we aren't actively pursuing our dreams and goals. I often say



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that 'everything will be fine'. And it's worked out for me so far. When I have been unemployed, I have actively pursued trying to find a job. But if nothing is going right, you just must wait and see what happens. To be on the lookout constantly can be destructive for your mental health. Getting rejected is not fun. And so, my mantra in preparation for Sydney is that everything will be fine.

Psychologists have noted that negative self-talk is damaging, and these thoughts that keep creeping in can get stuck in our heads. This leads to crippling anxiety and self-judgement. Instead, focusing on positive thoughts change your mindset and can assist you in staying the course. Fretting about what you can't actively control is self-destructive. We must be able to control our feelings. By focusing on the positives, our move will be less scary and more adventurous.

I'm looking forward to the adventure of being in a big city. I've already joined a choir (I'll be singing with hundreds of other choristers in Mahler's epic 8th Symphony) and I will proactively join a Jewish communal organisation. I've been applying for jobs, which will become easier when I arrive in Australia, and so I haven't been letting the lack of response from potential employers get to me. Everything will be fine.



All this positivity aside, our move means I am leaving many things that have shaped my life and are important to me. I will sorely miss my family and friends, and it will hopefully not be too difficult to make new friends in the 'Lucky Country'. The sense of community will also be difficult to leave. I have volunteered and worked in the Jewish community in Cape Town for the better part of a decade. As a professional I've been at Herzlia and the Cape SAJBD; and worked as a tour guide, showing people the amazing Jewish history of this beautiful city. My hope for the community is that it nurtures its youth and ensures that they stay connected to their Judaism. I look forward to seeing how *Vision 2040* pans out, as well as the *Move Down to Cape Town* campaign the Board is currently running.

The pull factor is way more exciting than the push! The fact that Gabi has a job in a university which is more stable than the current one is a bonus. It's also an opportunity for me to grow professionally in a different environment (perhaps not being a Jewish professional!). The kids will have a safer time — they'll be able to walk to school, ride their bikes and have a more diverse group of friends. I'm excited to see their trajectory. But nothing is permanent in this globalised world in which we live — who knows where we'll be in the next five years? Change is inevitable and, whatever happens, everything will be fine.

Craig is a writer, Jewish professional, and tour guide extraordinaire. His deep bass voice has graced stages, synagogues and studios. He is an obedient husband, father to two spectacular daughters, and is known for dad jokes and trivia.

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Remembering Yvonne Verblun

An excerpt from a tribute to Yvonne, written by her grandson, Daniel Verblun.

Yvonne Verblun was Head Librarian of Jacob Gitlin Library from 1972 until 1999.

“After some years at City Libraries she was approached to take over the running of what were the very beginnings of the Jacob Gitlin Library. The work conditions were not as attractive as staying at City Libraries, and she had to continually concern herself with funding the library from donors and grants, but she must have wanted her Jewish self and community to benefit from the legacy of her efforts. A staunch Zionist she visited Israel many times in her work capacity and considered Aliyah during difficult stages for South Africa, but was I imagine too hopeful to go through with it.

“Over the next 27 years she turned what was a collection of old books and periodicals packed in a few boxes into a renowned Jewish reference library that is now regularly visited by tertiary academics and students, many of whom she befriended over the years.”

She retired from the Gitlin in 1998 but continued to share her wisdom and knowledge, serving as a valued member of the committee till recently. The Gitlin Library remains her legacy.

* Yvonne passed away on 11 January 2023.



Astra Centre's annual braai is back!

CJC staff reporter

For the first time since 2019, when Covid shut things down, Astra Centre was again able to host their much-anticipated annual braai for workers and their guests.

This year, the braai took place on Sunday 26 February at Herzlia High School's middle campus hall — a change of venue from Alon Ashel where it had been held in previous years. Steve Sherman (aka Mr S, Chief Imagination Officer of *Living Maths*) entertained the crowd with 'magic' tricks and a few rounds of Bingo that had all present fully engaged. After a hearty lunch, in keeping with previous years' protocol, Michael Ipp recited one of his amazing original poems, and Charles Brand thanked all involved for a truly enjoyable event.

The event reflected the culture of purpose and dignity that Astra Centre achieves by acknowledging each of their clients' unique talents and strengths.



Bingo with Mr S

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BOOKS

An inspirational insight into living with Cerebral Palsy

By Tracy Cohen

Living with a neurological condition is not easy.



In my case, living with Cerebral Palsy, my body fatigues very quickly and I am in constant pain, ranging from back pain to inflammation in my knee. It is frustrating, debilitating and something I am forced to tolerate every day. On the bright side, I am tenacious and will stop at nothing to do whatever I set my mind to, like writing a book, aptly called *Triumph*.

The idea was born during the Covid-19 pandemic, where I was inspired by the collective kindness of my community and the world at large. I, too, wanted to give back in a way that was impactful to people in need. Because I was going through my own personal struggles which drained all resources, this idea only gained momentum in 2022.

A few months into 2022, I started sourcing people who also lived with Cerebral Palsy and who were willing to share their unique story with me. Once this was complete, I set up individual interviews to learn more about the individual's life; from how they grew up, where they were educated, the things that they are passionate about, as well as their challenges and achievements. I then put together a piece about each person, constantly collaborating to ensure I told the story in a way that stayed true to his or her personality.

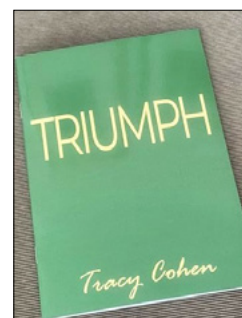
Once all the proofreading was complete, I sent it off to be printed. After a year of hard work, I felt incredibly grateful to everyone who played a role in bringing my idea to life. From my sponsors, my proofreader and of course the brave individuals who shared their lives with authenticity.

The experience was enlightening. I gained so much from the interviewing process. I learnt that people deal with adversity in their own unique way and that success looks different to each individual. Life is full of diversity and I relish the way we respond to our circumstances in our unique ways. I also learnt that the human spirit is strong. There is no doubt about the challenges that disabled people face, but the seven individuals featured in my book, myself included, are resilient and are not afraid to take up space in society.

To anyone who reads my book, I hope it showcases disability with positivity and hope. It is easy to feel pity for people who are disabled, but it is even harder to challenge the stereotypes and see the individual first and the disability second. From my own experience with a disabled body, I know that I do everyday tasks differently and more slowly, and that I have my own set of needs to accommodate my body; but this does not negate my worth. I can contribute to society and make

a difference in a meaningful way. Through the sale of my book, I aim to do just that as all proceeds will be donated to various charities that support children, and people living with disabilities.

To purchase a copy of the book, contact Tracy at: tracycohen37@gmail.com



MENSCH THOUGHT-LEADER OF THE MONTH

Is there a Jewish response to refugeedom?

By Romi Kaplan

In 1994 when I first heard the news about the genocide in Rwanda, I was overwhelmed by a sense of disbelief and horror, and something more — a recognition that I was part of this story.

“This is it”, I thought, “this is genocide happening in my lifetime, as the Holocaust did in my parents’ time.” While Rwanda was different, I had learned the Holocaust lessons of victim, persecutor and bystander from a young age, and so I committed to assisting the most vulnerable people to emerge from the conflict — displaced refugees who are not afforded the protection of a state. This was my way of making meaning in the face of suffering.

My assumptions however, were gravely mistaken. This would not be the nadir of war in our time. A sadly long list of conflict and displacement all over the world has followed since 1994. Just this year, refugees are fleeing conflict and persecution in the Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan to name a few. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees asserts that 32.5 million people are currently refugees.

The second assumption was that Jewish values and history impel us to bring light into the world by caring for

others. Certainly, there are religious imperatives, such as ‘You shall love the stranger for you were strangers in Egypt’ (Deuteronomy, 10:19) that can guide us in our relations with the Other. Nevertheless, we choose our religious leaders, and this view is favoured in some synagogues and not necessarily in others.

I recently learned a lesson on how to forge meaning from our history in a nuanced way. I have been working remotely with Israeli colleagues in offering counselling to Ukrainians now scattered all over Europe. My associate has been working tirelessly — compulsively. One session he shared how he has been battling an internal conflict — his grandparent had been killed by Ukrainians during the Holocaust. Ultimately, he understood that in denying the humanity of these refugees, he would betray his own humanity. I realised that although we did not cause these shifts from fear to certainty to groundlessness, we are incontrovertibly part of this human maelstrom. My colleague chooses to work towards healing this global trauma vortex.

Who better than Eli Wiesel z”l to show us the way? An encounter between Rwandan survivors and Eli Wiesel will always remain with me. I had organised a convention during the time that Israel was grappling with a necessary response to Darfuris

escaping genocide at the hands of the Janjaweed. The Janjaweed attacked Darfuri villagers with bombs from above and guns from below, setting fire to their villages. Many of these refugees were young kids who walked across deserts and three borders to reach safety. *Yemin Orde** housed and educated a number of these traumatised youth who had no family. The head teachers met Mr Wiesel there, and approached him with great respect. I saw them exchange just a few words, and then hug each other. As we walked away, they told me, “It was our dream to meet Eli. We finally met someone who we knew would understand us.” They returned to Rwanda, comforted by those few moments of compassionate understanding from the Holocaust survivor.

Close to home, we could be motivated by our own South African roots stories. Many young men, including my family, fled the shtetl to escape conscription in the 1920s. This is a salient push factor for boys in Eritrea and Ethiopia today. Further, many Jewish families migrated from Lithuania to South Africa when they could no longer afford flour for their Shabbat challot. We found shelter in

* *Yemin Orde Youth Village in northern Israel is home, school and safe haven to 450 at-risk youth from around the world.*



a foreign country, should others not?

Despite the historic precedents, the religious imperatives, the Jewish involvement in writing up the Refugee Convention, despite all this, it ultimately comes down to how we choose to live our identity. When we make use of our Jewish cultural resources, we can extend our help and love to all in need. Let us light the shabbat candles this month and remember our family’s own refugee journey, give thanks for our safety today, and extend our love and good wishes to those who currently need shelter. This month Mensch joins with the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), has chosen to say, ‘this is who we are, and this is what we do. We invite you to join us’.

Romi Kaplan is a Mensch board member. She has a Masters degree in Forced Migration from Oxford University and is a psychotherapist by training. She was a board member of ASSAF (Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel), convened the 60th Anniversary of the Genocide Convention Conference, and is co-founder of the Counselling Hub, Woodstock.

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Some say age is just a number – the Law says otherwise

By Anton Katz SC

Humans are born, spend some time on earth and then die and leave earth.

I remember thinking in the first days of my firstborn child's life that each day was the *only* time he would enjoy that particular day of his life. So after five days I had the odd thought that he had experienced day five of his life and he would never again live on that fifth day. I also recall thinking of the words of one of Nelson Mandela's prison-mates to the effect that the days they were imprisoned on Robben Island passed *sooooo* slowly, whereas the years just flew by. I also remember a very old friend responding to my happy birthday wishes by saying, "I now no longer celebrate my birthday — these days I now commiserate my birthday as things become physically tougher in my life." And we have all heard the expressions, *age is just a number*, *age is only an attitude* or *love isn't affected by age*. These types of comments are often made when two people of vastly different ages start dating. The question struck me of when and how the law deals with and treats the age of humans.

The supreme law prohibits the State from discrimination on a range of grounds. Section 9(3) of the Constitution states, 'The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds — including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth'. But is it fair to make laws or rules concerning, for example, when a child may start school; when a citizen may vote, drink alcohol, purchase a cigarette, possess a firearm, drive a car, have sexual relations, start work, join the army, get married, be young enough or old enough to adopt a child, or be forced to retire from work.

In January 2000 the Minister of Education published a notice — a learner may not have been enrolled in grade 1 in an independent school if the child did not reach the age of seven in that calendar year.

Talya Harris was part of a group of children who had enrolled at the age of three in the (Johannesburg) King David pre-primary school. She had spent three years being prepared for entry to the primary school in the year 2001. Her sixth birthday was in January 2001. Talya was thus not permitted to enrol because she was too young. Her parents challenged the Minister's notice and sought an order of the High Court permitting Talya to be enrolled in grade one in the year she turned six. The Harris family won. The Court ruled that the child's best interests were violated, and authorised King David Primary School to admit Talya to Grade 1. The High Court held that the Minister's actions discriminated

unfairly on the grounds of age against Talya and similarly situated children, was not justifiable, and accordingly violated the right to equality guaranteed by section 9 of the Constitution. It held that by requiring Talya and other children in her position to repeat their final year of pre-primary school or to sit at home waiting for the year to pass, the Minister's actions unjustifiably violated section 28(2) of the Constitution, which provides that a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

All age differentiation is discrimination on the basis of age. What must be considered in every case is whether the discrimination is unfair.

Having qualified as a pilot at his own cost, Mr. Gideon Jansen van Vuuren joined South African Airways as a junior pilot in 1972 at the age of 26. Many years later Mr. Jansen van Vuuren sued SAA because it had forced him to retire at the age of 60, at the rank of senior Captain. The retirement age for pilots had previously been extended from 58 to 60, and was about to change to 63. In a complex case about age discrimination and wages, SAA did not defend the case on the basis that there was no unfair discrimination, because as the court stated there was blatant unfair discrimination. He won his case.

Turning to matters sexual, in terms of the Constitution, and in relation to most provisions of the Childrens Act, a 'child' is any person under the age of 18 years. But for the purposes of sections 15 and 16 of the Sexual Offences Act a 'child' is defined as 'a person 12 years or older but under

the age of 16 years'. In other words, statutory rape or statutory sexual assault can only be perpetrated against a child between the ages of 12 and 15 years (called adolescents). Statutory rape is committed if (a) an adult or a child who is 16 years or older engages in consensual sexual penetration with an adolescent; or (b) adolescents engage in consensual sexual penetration with each other. In the case of two adolescents, if a prosecution is instituted for a charge of statutory rape, both children involved must be prosecuted. So if two adolescents engage in sexual relations with one another, each will be guilty of having statutorily raped the other. In other words, if a 12-year old and 15-year old engage in kissing or petting or mutual masturbation, both commit a criminal offence. Furthermore, if the 15-year-old is prosecuted, the 12-year-old must be prosecuted too; and neither may claim the close-in-age defence. The *Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children*, a not-for-profit company that provides a wide range of medical and related services to abused children and coordinates programmes to divert young sex offenders from the criminal justice system, approached the Constitutional Court complaining about the harshness of prosecuting children. The Constitutional Court effectively held that the kissing and petting prohibition for under-16s was unconstitutional.

What all these cases ultimately demonstrate is that unfair discrimination on the basis of age will be unconstitutional and invalid unless backed up by empirical evidence justifying the age differentiation. All age differentiation is discrimination on the basis of age. What must be considered in every case is whether the discrimination is *unfair*. So, if the government ban those under the age of 21 from drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes or

possessing a firearm, and such a ban is challenged, the state would need to show why it is not unfair to impose the age limitation. Academic studies and evidence explaining why a particular age is selected for the prohibition would go some way to saving the ban. But if the age choice is arbitrary or just a thumb-suck by government it is unlikely to withstand scrutiny by the Courts.

Anton Katz is a practising Senior Counsel, former United Nations special rapporteur on mercenaries and human rights, former Acting High Court Judge, and an admitted attorney in New York. He was born and raised in Sea Point.



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