

# *New Cracow Friendship Society, Inc.*

3905 Arthur Avenue North, Seaford, N.Y. 11783

## CRACOW

# FRIENDSHIP

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY



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תחי מדינת ישראל ועם ישראל

LONG LIVE THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

## NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

President Simone Hilfstein-Scheumann

Editor Bernice Slutzman

[www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org)

### EDITORIAL

At the printing of this issue of our Newsletter we will have just concluded the joyous festival of Pesach. Since the Shoah there has never been a Pesach such as this one. What was normally a time when families would gather together around a beautiful and festive Seder table was not to be. We are in the throes of a pandemic the world hasn't seen since 1918.

We were not able to gather with our families this year, but many of us were able to compensate due to modern technology. Even this dinosaur was able to conduct a seder with family and friends via Zoom. Although we could not embrace and be "up close and personal" the laughter and joy of seeing each other, although on phone screens or iPads, was gratifying.

We do not know when we will again be able to come out and freely associate, but we will get through this. We are SURVIVORS!

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By the time you get this newsletter our March 8, 2020 program to mark the 77th anniversary of the Liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto will have passed. This yearly program highlighted three guest speakers from our 3rd generation members: Anna S. Gallegos, Felicia Heiney and David Hilfstein. They mark the continuation of our legacy. The specific dates, March 13-14, 1943, is remembered with mass murder in the ghetto, survivors sent to Plaszow or other destinations to confront unimaginable hardships and dire consequences. This commemoration symbolizes only one example of the thousands of liquidations in Polish Galicia and Europe. This commemoration continues to be meaningful and dignified thanks to the commemoration committee headed by Bernice Slutzman.

Our Social Committee had planned a June 14, 2020 program with a guest speaker and luncheon. Unfortunately our planned event needed to be postponed due to the pandemic. Of course along with the world community our priority must be to stay safe by limiting exposure.

The Social Action Committee is partnering with existing organizations that are working throughout the country to combat the rise in hate and anti-Semitism. With the continued increase in assaults we must be part of the conversation and take action. They need your help, so please contact and join this important group.

The Outreach Committee is continuing to reach out and develop or reestablish relationships with other like-minded associations. You can find a list of these groups on our website page: **Affiliated Associations**. We are pleased to introduce the "Association of Krakowians in Israel". Their website is in Hebrew or Polish and includes material about Krakow before, during and after the war, plus their 156+ published newsletters.

My personal gratitude goes out to our board of director, our volunteers and membership for supporting our society and our charitable endeavors. The legacy of our families and the future success of this society are in all our hands. Help support our organizations programs, which includes supporting survivors in need. Don't forget to send in your membership dues\*. Donations can be made easily through our website:

[www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org](http://www.newcracowfriendshipsoc.org).

**Reminder: Check the NCFS website and Facebook page for news and upcoming events and program initiatives.**

As we deal with restrictions due to the pandemic. Passover will be especially difficult for many of us I worry about the health and welfare of our 60+ members, yes that's our survivors and 2G's. Perhaps instead of washing hands twice we should add a 20 second soapy hand wash before and after the Seder!

Simone Hilfstein-Scheumann

We will be sending our newsletter via email to those who have provided us with an email address. Please contact us with with a current email address\*, so we can utilize this paperless and safer method of communication.

Reach out to me if I can be of any assistance at: [ncfs.org@gmail.com](mailto:ncfs.org@gmail.com) or call 845 893-5056.

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## NEWS FROM THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

We are pleased to announce that we have formed affiliations with our sister Cracow organizations.

**THE KRAKOW SOCIETY OF ISRAEL**  
**THE KRAKOW SOCIETY OF MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA**  
**JCC OF KRAKOW**

We are very pleased that we are again joined together, as it once was when the NEW CRACOW FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY was run by survivors.

Steven Radwan  
Outreach Committee Chairman

**The following was published by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in THE HILL.**

*AN ANCIENT VIRUS UNLEASHES A NEW PANDEMIC OF HATE* by Abraham Cooper, Opinion Contributor

The world's economies edge toward chaos and populations stand on the brink of panic as scientists scurry to contain a pandemic identified as the coronavirus. Particularly worrisome is that carriers of this virus do not always show symptoms and it may return after a period of dormancy. Even as the human, social and economic tolls continue to spike, it remains unclear if this threat emerged from nature or whether a state of individuals are the source. But another pandemic — wholly man-made — also is upon us. It is the disease of Jew-hatred, once thought to have disappeared after running its genocidal course during the Nazi Holocaust 75 years ago. Anti-Semitism continues to morph, like a carcinogenic tumor on humankind's DNA.

Odious conspiracy theories about Jews are alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consider as evidence a newly released study of attitudes towards Jews, in which 20

percent of European respondents believe that a secret Jewish cabal runs the world. This monstrous lie dates back 1,000 years to an English monk, Thomas of Monmouth, who falsely accused Jews of ritually murdering a Christian child, William of Norwich, on Easter. Every year, the monk charged that a council of Jews decided which country to target for the murder of another innocent child.

The devastating big lie, and 150 more like it over the next 900 years-plus, kept alive hate for generations of Christians and led to the murder of innocent Jews from England to Russia to Syria. Along the way came the publication of the Czarist *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, with the conspiratorial spin that Jews are the source of all modern evil, plotting at secret meetings to control the world through economic manipulation and war.

In our time, Iranian websites and TV programs in the Muslim and Arab worlds have updated the big lie with catchy titles such as "Who are human history's most bloodthirsty people?" to justify hatred for the Jewish people.

In 19745, as the Allies liberated the Nazi death camps and the full barbarity of Nazi Germany was exposed to the world, no one would have predicted that Hitler's legacy of hate would so quickly rise again from the ashes of the Holocaust. But it has — and with a vengeance, from Berlin to New York.

Collective memory fades, but two recent incidents should sound the alarm.

In the small town of Campo de Criptana, 90 miles southeast of Madrid, carnival participants watched as the memory of 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust were mocked by gun-toting Nazi soldiers, followed by a singer on a float standing between two smokestacks of a death camp.

Over in Aalst, Belgium, city fathers defended in the name of free speech and "fun" the depiction of Chassidim as insects, replete with exaggerated stereotypical long noses. Organizers, in the country home to European Union headquarters, apparently couldn't understand what was wrong with poking a little fun at Jews. They were oblivious to Jewish protests and defiant about losing their UNESCO cultural designation. Conductors from the Belgian railroad who played anti-Semitic songs to passengers en route to a football match forgot, or never knew, that 25,000 Belgian Jews were sent to transit camps on special railway cars, and then deported to death camps.

In our time, public displays of anti-Semitism, depiction of Jews as vermin — just as the Nazis and their collaborators did in the 1930s. And, in case you couldn't be there to cheer or jeer, fear not: There is always Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to capture and share the moment.

So how to deal with a man-made virus of hate that won't die?

Jews alone can't defeat it, or even contain it. It would be like asking victims in Wuhan, China, or other

cities with coronavirus outbreaks to find the cure to their ailment.

Our only hope is that our neighbors, immune from the direct threat of anti-Semitism, will rise to our defense. It not only is the right and decent thing to do, it would serve as the first line of defense against this “virus.” For as Simon Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor who lost 89 family members and became a Nazi hunter, warned: “Jews are often the first victims; they are never the last victims of hate.”

*Rabbi Abraham Cooper is the associate dean and director of Global Social Action for the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.*

## **COMMEMORATION 2020**

This year’s commemoration was the last get-together of the Society members before the full impact of Covid19 was felt and we were put on “lock-down.”

Unlike services in the past, we could not meet in the sanctuary of the Lake Success Jewish Center due to the breakdown of the heating system in that area. As a result chairs and a podium were set up in the social hall where it was warm. Despite the situation, it was altogether very heimishe. Another departure from the past was that all of our “guest” speakers were of the third generation. We have included below the offerings by the participants.

**Invocation** by Rabbi Michael Klayman of the Lake Success Jewish Center

Tomorrow night we will celebrate Purim, with Megillat Esther (Book of Esther) the central feature. After foiling Haman’s diabolical plot, the Megillah introduces a phrase, which totally reverses the conditions described earlier in the story:

For the Jews there was light, joy, happiness and honor.

The four uplifting features described here: Light, joy, happiness and honor stand in contrast to the four depressing features which described the Jewish mood after Haman’s ascension: Mourning, fasting, weeping and wailing.

I still imagine that despite reversal of fortune, the scars of a near annihilation would remain with the Jews of Persia, probably forever. They bore those scars, yet successfully emerged from the Haman threat to live with the light, joy, happiness and honor detailed in the Megillah.

In commemorating the Shoah, the mourning, weeping and wailing never fade. The scars remain, even as now we are four and five generations removed from the darkest era of our history. Nevertheless, we are here today not only to mourn and weep, but to celebrate how the survivors chose life; how by living to the fullest and by

raising families they miraculously and resolutely embraced that light, joy, happiness and honor so aptly described in the Book of Esther.

Our grandmother is just celebrating her 93rd birthday. Cracow was her final Eastern European residence before she boarded a train and was saved on the Kindertransport. Despite those scars she still bears, our Nana has been a light to our family, and last week we celebrated how she and papa lived to bring us light, joy, happiness and honor.

As the Shoah generation ages and disappears, it will be up to the 4th and 5th generations to not only bear witness to the scars of our past but to daily re-affirm our commitment to those ideals of light, joy, happiness and honor.

Purim is both a celebration and an act of defiance. We celebrate our tradition with unrestrained passion, bearing the scars of our past but never succumbing to them.

Today as we bear the scars of a resurging and evolving anti-Semitism, may we remain defiant and resolute in celebrating our Jewish identities with a light and joy worthy of those we honor and memorialize today. And may we look toward a hopeful future by re-affirming the light and happiness of Jewish experience for generations to come.

## **President’s Remarks**

The specific date, March 13, 1943, marked the beginning of the Krakow Ghetto liquidation. The SS killed approximately 2,000 Jews in the ghetto and transferred another 2,000 Jews to Plaszow.

During this operation the SS and Police also transported 3,000 more Krakow Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the camp authorities selected 499 men and 50 women for forced labor. The remaining 2,450, were murdered in the gas chambers. We therefore must commit ourselves to gather here today and every year to commemorate our murdered brethren and survivors.

Three speakers from our 3G members highlight this year’s program: they are Anna S. Gallegos, Felicia Heiney and David Hilfstein. They mark the continuation of our survivor’ and martyrs’ legacy. For the survivors their participation is a most significant act and I personally cannot be any prouder of their efforts.

This commemoration symbolizes only one example of the thousands of liquidations in Polish Galicia and Europe. Let us rekindle our resolve to remember and use the knowledge and experiences to combat the hate that we see in the world today.

Thank you, and be well.

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## Anna Scheumann-Gallegos Remarks

Our families were the witnesses to the end of Krakow's once vibrant Jewish life. We gather yearly to do the solemn task of recounting the horrors. When I think about what we are commemorating today I think not just about the families that were torn apart but the extinguishing of the rich Jewish culture that was an integral part of Krakow for generations.

That is certainly what my Papa Max and Babunia Erna did. They went back to Poland often, and spoke about their experiences often. Babunia didn't speak much when I was a child, but Papa's stories were a fundamental part of my childhood. Sometimes a bedtime story would be his silly animated rendition of Cinderella and other times it would be about his happy childhood and how things changed the older he got. How hatred permeated and destroyed everything he held dear.

On days like this we pause, forget all distractions, the minutia of daily life and take a much-needed look back. The question tomorrow becomes; "now what?" Do we wake up in the morning to pat ourselves on the back and say "Well, we did our duty." Or will we use this day of commemoration as motivation to do more and remind ourselves not to be complacent?

After being invited to sit in on a NCFs board meeting with guest David Wachs, president of 3GNY, I knew what to do. I went through 3GNY's WEDU (We Educate) training and became a Holocaust educator. Schools from around NYC send requests out to bring speakers into their classrooms. I don't give a history lesson. I simply tell their story. To date I have spoken in 11 classrooms. A little drop in the bucket compared to some of our members, but it's a start.

During the WEDU course I was reminded that as a 3G I am in a unique position among my peers outside of this community. My generation will be the last to hear the stories of survivors firsthand; to stare directly into the eyes that witnessed humanity at its most brutal. During the WEDU course led by Peter Nelson, former executive director of the New York Facing History and Ourselves office, something I had never really thought deeply about was emphasized. Survivors were outliers. They are the exception to the rule. The story of the Shoah is not one of survival. The retelling of their stories should not serve as a manual for how to survive genocide. The only reason that I am here and able to tell their story is pure luck.

When I speak to students, I talk for a good bit about how Papa was used as a barber and beautician for SS officers and their wives. When the walls of ghetto went up it was coincidence that his was the only salon that was within the borders. It is true that he was deemed "useful". Is that to say that his trade was his key to survival? What of all the other barbers and beauticians? Papa knew that. His stories were peppered with phrases like "I thought I was dead but maybe that officer was in a good mood that

day". When I tell the students about Papa and Babunia trying to find each other after liberation, I mention that by all accounts they should not have survived. Ninety percent of the Jews in Poland were murdered. Throughout the course it was emphasized that we should be honest and not be concerned that what we say will shock the students. The truth is brutal, and I don't sanitize the truth. When talking about the victims of the Shoah I am never to say that anyone "died". People die in natural disasters. I tell them my family was murdered, slaughtered, massacred.

After I am done, the students are encouraged to ask questions and in every class I have been asked: "Why are you here? Why do you want to tell their story?" I tell them because it is my privilege and my duty as their granddaughter to do so. I see the world through the lens of being a 3G and the older I get, the more significant that becomes. I speak because there are things happening now that look a lot like the things that happened leading up to the Shoah. I speak because I am in front of a room full of minority students whose families likely have their own stories of trauma and loss and lastly because I don't want them to be bystanders and want them to feel empowered to look outside themselves at the state of the world and change it.

In my further quest to answer the "now what" I attended the Anti-Defamation League's Never is Now Summit on Anti-Semitism and Hate. It was 10 hours of seminars in the Jacob Javits Center. You would imagine given the very heavy nature of the topic that I would leave feeling angry and hopeless. To my surprise that was not the case. It was no doubt a mentally and emotionally draining day, but I left feeling inspired. I had spent the day with 1,800 other people from all walks of life. Different religions, race, ages, orientations all coming together because they all recognized that anti-Semitism is not just a Jewish problem but a societal problem. One kind of hate and discrimination bleeds into another and forms of prejudice are related.

As Jews we are a minority and a small minority at that. But it is not us versus the rest of the world. There are other minorities facing very similar things. The ADL has a long history spanning over a century and it was a blessing to hear what they had learned and the good that they have done and are continuing to do through collaboration with other groups. My biggest take away of the day was this: We all need to stick together. When minorities band together, we become the majority. The world wishes to divide us up, compartmentalize us, but that only makes it easier to incite violence on who you see as different.

People show up for those who show up for them. After the massacre at the Tree of Life in Pittsburgh, members of the Mosques in Toronto surrounded local Jewish houses of worship during the following Shabbat in what they called a "Ring of Peace". In return after the massacre in Christchurch NZ that killed 50 Muslims in 2

mosques, the Jewish community of Toronto responded by creating their own “Ring of Peace” around local mosques during their afternoon prayers. The message to each other was simple. I see you. I see your humanity. I see your pain. I stand with you. I believe my grandfather would have liked to see that. He would talk often about how when he and my grandmother bought their house in Pelham Bay in the Bronx, that they specifically picked that neighborhood because it wasn’t Jewish. He would say he didn’t want to go from one ghetto to another one. He didn’t want to segregate himself from the rest of the world. He wanted to show other people that he was just like them. He took my then 4-year-old mother, Simone’s, hand and went door to door to introduce himself. “My name is Max Hilfstein. I’m a Jew. I live over there.” There isn’t a classroom I speak in where I don’t share that story and it grows more relevant with each passing day.

This organization was such an important part of my grandparents’ lives. Being more involved in NCFS makes me feel closer to them. I know that they would be happy to see me here. And even happier to see their great-grandson, Max, attending events and continuing the tradition. My son’s birth certainly continues to be a motivating factor for me as well. I want his family history to be as much a part of his life as it is mine.

Lastly, I just wish to give a heartfelt thank you for inducting me as the first 3G member on your Board of Directors and thank you so much for allowing me to speak at this year’s commemoration.

### **Felicia Heiney’s Remarks**

Hello and good afternoon to my fellow members and friends of the New Cracow Friendship Society. For those of you who don’t know me, my name is Felicia Heiney and I am a third-generation survivor of the Holocaust. My grandmother for whom I am named, Fela Patrych, and her mother Bronia Teitelbaum, née Beigel, were survivors from Kraków, Poland, and my grandfather, Rafael Patrych, also a survivor, came from Boryslaw, which was also Poland at the time, but is now part of Ukraine.

My grandma Fela came from an educated, well-to-do family in Kraków, descendants of the great rabbi, talmudist and posek, Rav Moshe Isserles, who contributed to Halakha with his work entitled, *ha-Mapah*, an inline commentary on the Shulchan Auruch. Fela, her parents Bronia and Josef, and her brothers Saul and Henryk, had a good life in Kraków, growing up in a cultured, metropolitan environment. that is, until the Nazis took it all away and put her and her family through the unspeakable horrors of the Shoah.

I never met my Grandma Fela – she died when my mother was pregnant with me, which is why I was named for her, and my middle name, Beth, is homage to my late great-grandmother, Bronia. My mother, Cindy Patrych-

Brotman, often tells me how much I remind her of my Grandma Fela. She lives on in my slightly crooked crossbite smile, love of animals, my talent for languages, my, at times, dry sense of humor, and my chutzpah when standing up to bullies and speaking for what I believe. It reminds her of my grandmother’s heroism when she hid her mother in the barracks during roll call in the concentration camps to save her life.

I know that in some strange way I owe my particular existence to the Holocaust: that my metropolitan grandmother from Kraków would never have met my grandfather who came from a shtetl in Boryslaw, if the historical events of that tragedy did not bring them together in Stockholm, Sweden where they met after the war. And yet, I feel robbed of them because I believe their lives were cut short by the physical and emotional trauma they endured.

Being a third generation survivor, and I imagine first and second, too, is full of these kinds of paradoxes and the guilt associated with them. What does it mean to be the product of genocide? Why did my predecessors survive while others didn’t have the chance to continue their time? I know that understanding the course of history is not necessarily a logical pursuit, yet I still feel deeply the human impulse to try to make some kind of sense of it. I think it’s important to confront and sit with these complexities and nuances rather than shy away from the discomfort they cause. They are very real parts of history, our lives, and the stories of where we came from.

Anna {Scheumann-Gallegos} and I attended the Anti-Defamation League’s annual Never is Now summit on anti-Semitism and hate this past November as 3G representatives of the Society. I want to share some insights and things I learned while there. Ads, anti-Semitic acts, hate speech and violence have increased recently, we must recognize that no part of the political spectrum is devoid of or immune to anti-Semitism. Whether it’s coming from white supremacists on the right, anti-Zionists on the left, Islamist extremists in their political camp, or anywhere else, one thing is clear: anti-Semitism is still a real threat to the Jewish people, here and throughout the world.

But it is also necessary to understand that anti-Semitism has evolved since the 1920s and 30s in Europe.

The establishment of Israel though of course a wonderful thing, has changed our position in the world and, therefore, resulted in a new manifestation of anti-Semitism. Now that Jews finally have a homeland that we protect and defend from those who want to destroy us, people think we can no longer be victimized or persecuted, or go as far as saying we have become like the bullies who persecuted us. Some even question our allegiance to our countries of origin, as though the existence of a Jewish state somehow makes us less American, Canadian, British or any other nationality.

All of this is to say that, sadly, we must continue

the fight against anti-Semitism. But let's remember not just what we're fighting against. Let's remember what it is we are fighting for: our right to self-determination, a homeland, and a safe, peaceful existence, no matter where we are in the world. Let's stand tall and be proud of who we are and our journey as a people. Being resilient survivors is in our DNA – we are strong and we will not just survive, we will thrive.

While at the ADL conventions, I had the incredible opportunity to hear survivor and radio personality Dr. Ruth Westheimer speak about the human dimension of anti-Semitism. One of the things she said that struck me was that up until recently she wouldn't talk politics, but she has changed her mind given the state of affairs in the world. At 92 and a half, she has decided to start speaking out against child separation at our borders and advocating for more funding for Planned Parenthood and abortion access.

At this Commemoration of the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto, I want to encourage all of us to think about the importance of standing up for the downtrodden and raising our voices for those whose voices are not heard. Perhaps if others had done so for us when we needed it, the tragedies we are commemorating would never have happened. Now that we have the opportunity, let's do better than they did. I can think of no better way of honoring those who perished.

Thank you.

### Remarks by David Hilfstein

“If you have been brutally broken but still have the courage to be gentle to other living beings, then you're a badass with a heart of an angel”

- Keanu Reeves

My grandparents Dr. Erna Hilfstein and Max Hilfstein, my Papa and Babunia... as I'm sure most of you in this room know were founding members of this great organization. Today, on the 77th annual commemoration of the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto- I stand on their shoulders and on the shoulders of the New Cracow Friendship Society, whose mission it has always been to tell the stories of those you are no longer able to... to ensure the world knows the truth and to educate and advocate in every capacity possible, so history never repeats itself. My grandfather spoke publicly about their experiences in the Holocaust, she wasn't as willing to reopen the wounds, but they both knew the dire importance of education to teach against hate and intolerance, and to show what hate can do if it's fed and empowered.

I stand here as a proud third generation Holocaust survivor and most recently a Jewish activist (but aren't we all, really) as I've have parlayed my passion and gifts as an actor and storyteller into being a Holocaust educator. More

specifically, last September, I went through the 3GNY WeEdu course which my dear cousin Anna, (who just spoke beautifully) went through first and encouraged me to do the same. She does a magnificent job of sharing our grandfather's story, so naturally not to be redundant; I chose to focus on developing and sharing my grandmother's miraculous story.

I speak to middle and high school classrooms in Manhattan and various Jewish organizations all over NYC where I have been invited to speak. This past November, I spoke at a private 3GNY event at The Museum of Jewish Heritage for a group of 2nd and 3rd generation survivors- who were seeing the Auschwitz exhibit. I was honored to share my grandmother's story, and for the first time, during my preparation in writing the speech, and unbeknownst to me, I discovered horrific personal recounts that I listened to her share in her Shoah testimony videos. I consulted with my family to clarify any inaccuracies but it gave me new insight into who my Babunia was and I used that to channel her spirit, strength and fortitude to emotionally help me get through that speech. The response from people afterwards moved me, as I engaged in conversation with many different people, furthering the need for awareness and advocacy in Holocaust education. What a special night it was, my beloved mother, and a few dear friends were in attendance to support me.

Most recently I was at the United Nations for International Holocaust Memorial Day. I found it rather interesting and inspiring to be with so many Jewish people of all denominations, ages and backgrounds- listening to leaders from Russia, Germany, Israel, and the United States talk about ways in which we can fight and educate against Anti-Semitism. As I sat (well actually stood, the place was packed wall to wall) listening to Yitzhak Perlman play a gorgeous and haunting 10-minute piece on the violin... I couldn't help but think to myself, I really hope these aren't empty words and these ambassadors and leaders really care about making changes. As we all know- this is the Jewish people's plague for as long as our history goes back- we know it always exists, it just seems in our current times, it's a type of infectious disease but far worse than our current virus outbreak) This disease infects people's hearts and souls, it destroys empathy and understanding creates apathy and spreads like a dark evil wildfire across races, cultures and ethnicities.

When I took part in the No Hate No Fear March on January 5th, I was completely overwhelmed by the outpouring of support for our Jewish communities, and moved by walking across the Brooklyn Bridge with 25,000 other people, bringing awareness to the recent string of Anti-Semitic attacks during Chanukah on various orthodox communities. We showed publicly and proudly, we are not scared; we will not shrink into the shadows and cower in the face of fear, in the face of hate.

Here are a few thoughts I wrote down that day, I'd

like to share with you- because of how prolific that experience was for me.

I marched because these are our people. I marched because our people were marched against their will to gas chambers and systematically murdered 75 years ago and now we're resiliently marching, by choice, saying NO MORE. Never again means, NOW. We will not be passive and quiet while we are being hated and attacked. It doesn't matter that I or the other 25K people marching, almost all Jews, don't look like the other Jews who have been attacked during the last 14 days. It doesn't matter we're not ultra orthodox, or orthodox, or Hasidic or whether we wear a kippah or black and white or cover our hair with a wig. These specific groups are quiet, pious, and humble people who are too private to come into the public to be an advocate. So... that's where we step in. We are all ONE. An attack on a Jew is an attack on ALL Jews, and an attack on all people.

Today felt like one of the most important Jewish things I've ever done in my life, and I hope to never have to do it again. I felt a deep responsibility to be there and be a presence for our entire people. We made history. As we walked in the freezing cold, united, singing songs of hope and strength, holding signs, we proclaimed dayenu, ENOUGH!

I am particularly blessed to be here and carry on the tradition and mission of education and outreach of my family, and also because so many can't, they weren't given that chance. I know how lucky and fortunate I am, and not a day goes by without thinking about my grandparents' sacrifices and otherworldly strength, intelligence, and perseverance in the face of catastrophic proportions. My Babunia always said, "she survived, because she survived-that was it." And I know grandfather helped as many people as he could, even if it meant him possibly getting punished, he felt he had to. That's who he was, he always thought of others.

My grandparents imparted things in me that I use everyday of my life. My Papa Max had the most beautiful, loving heart, he was the best. A talented beautician, and as I've been told many times, he was also quite the lady's man- as it's been said to me my entire life, that apparently, I've inherited both these qualities... and my Babunia, in her own words (imagine this with a beautiful Polish accent)

"Remember this; always stand up for who you are and where you come from." She imparted the importance of being true to yourself, standing up for what you believe in, and never apologizing or being ashamed for being a Jew. She said, "The Nazis destroyed my body, my dignity, and almost my life, but they could NEVER take away my knowledge."

Knowledge and education were what she was most passionate about, and of course her family. She spoke, wrote and read fluently in seven different languages, and was brilliant, a genius- a world-renowned scholar,

published author and science historian...and most importantly a high school teacher. Through her and my own experiences- I've learned that knowledge truly is power. Education is the most powerful tool we all have at our disposal to teach what hate can do.

I'm grateful for her courage, strength and moral integrity when it would have been so much easier to just give up, she didn't, and she always kept going. I don't know how, I can't comprehend it, but she did, and that is the only reason why I'm here and able to stand before you today. It turns out that my niece Taylor, now 14 years old is just like her, we call her a mini-Babunia. I've never seen a young girl devour books with the voraciousness or attack her academic pursuits just like my grandmother did. Frankly, it's scary, and completely beautiful to watch unfolding before our family's eyes. So Babunia is absolutely still with us, in her way, and I feel her and my Papa with me every day, just like all my grandparents, they guide me and protect me on my life's journey, and I just hope to make them proud in all I do.

Since moving back to NY, from Israel where I lived for seven years- I've had the privilege and opportunity to become more involved with NCFS, something that I am proud of, not just because it's my family's history, but more because it's my obligation and my responsibility... What could be closer to me than this?! Not to mention, my father, grandfather and now aunt have all been presidents and my cousin Anna is on the board. My mother is as involved as she can be and if my sister were not living in Florida, I she would be as well. I am inspired by all of you, your burning passion and tireless work. And even though we all live busy lives, we have to do our part to spread awareness and tell the stories of those who can longer do that themselves. If we don't, who will? I hope to become more involved than I am today, and I pray with HaShem's help, we as the Jewish people can all live in a safer, kinder, more loving and mindful world of all living beings, nature and our earth's environment.

On a day like today, but really everyday, I not only feel them closer with me, but I think about all my family members I never got to meet... especially my grandfather's brother, my great Uncle David, whom I'm named after, and look a lot alike. He was murdered at 18 years old.

In my opinion everything starts with love, if love was taught instead of hate, I know the world would be a more beautiful and peaceful place to live.

To quote one of my favorite people Fred Rogers, better known as Mister Rogers, "When we love a person, we accept him or her exactly as is: the lovely with the unlovely, the strong along with the fearful, the true mixed in with the façade, and of course, the only way we can do it is by accepting ourselves that way." We have to be a voice, a light and we have to, always, always lead with love.

Thank you.

## Closing Remarks by Bernice Slutzman

We have come today as we have since 1967, to commemorate the liquidation of the Cracow Ghetto. At that time the gathering was held at the now gone, Jamaica Jewish Center. Since 1977 our gatherings have been held right here at the Lake Success Jewish Center due to the most generous donations by Gloria and Herbert Seaman who funded the two stained glass windows dedicated to Cracow.

The actual date of the event we are recalling was March 13, 1943. It fell on a Friday. Perhaps that is why it was selected. The Nazis would often time their actions to take place on days of significance to our people. This year we parallel that calendar. In 1943 Shabbat Zachor fell on March 20<sup>th</sup>. This year it was yesterday. How apropos that we should be meeting today following Shabbat Zahor.

Zachor, an injunction to remember, is given to the Jewish people in the Torah. *remember what Amalek did to you, on the way, when you were leaving Egypt, that he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were hindmost, all the weaklings at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear God. It shall be that when Hashem, your God, gives you as an inheritance to possess it, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven — you shall not forget!* Devarim 25: 17-19 [Deuteronomy]

Why do we read that passage on Shabbat Zahor? In the Megillat Esther Haman is described as Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite. Agag was the king who was spared by King Saul despite the command that all be wiped out. Agag was a descendant of Amalek, hence the connection to Haman and the reason for remembering the incident described in Devarim. As an aside, Samuel, who did kill Agag, was of the tribe of Benjamin. Mordechai, who brought down Haman, was also a Benjamite. I bring this brief lesson on Jewish tradition to you today because, although it is not Amalek we remember today, we follow the commandment to remember the evil that was done to our people not in ancient times, but in the vast scope of our people's history, only yesterday.

Almost all of us here today are not old enough to remember first hand any of the events which took place on Plac Zgody but we are the repositories of the memories of our parents, and in some luckier cases, grandparents. We remember their memories as imparted to us. Relatively recent scientific research has shown that children of survivors of the Shoah carry an inherited trait from their parents. We are able to cope with very stressful situations, but tend to "sweat the small stuff."

Too many have said that the past is dead and gone. IT ISNT! Scientists are and have been warning us all about global warming and climate change and most of the world's leaders are finally paying heed, although not ours. Well OUR climate has certainly changed. Not since the Shoah itself has anti-Semitism been so overt worldwide.

Recent parades in Europe featured Representations of Jews as the caricatures published by the Nazis in the 30s together with people dressed as Nazi troopers. Here, the number of anti-Semitic incidents has been steadily on the rise. Recently at a rally for Bernie Sanders, a young person unfurled a large Nazi flag. Fortunately two young men nearby, yanked it away and the perpetrator was quickly escorted out by security. Since our last Commemoration, violent crimes against Jews, including senseless murder have taken place.

Over the now 55 years of the Society's existence we have seen the shift of responsibility from the survivors to the second generation. This observance has been under the direction of the second generation for 30 years. Just as the founders had hoped so many years ago, their dream has continued past their own time with us. Today we were privileged to hear about how our Third Generation has picked up our symbolic torch to carry the truth about what happened in the Shoah to future generations. Through education perhaps we will be able to stop the hate. By not permitting public figures to engage in behavior that fosters actions, they will no longer be considered "acceptable" behavior. Anti-Semitism is not a joke.

As long as we are able we, of the second and now third generation, will continue the principles on which the Society was founded, strive to impart to the next generations that which you have entrusted to us, and keep the Society alive.

## GROUNDHOG DAY

If you are not familiar with the classic 1993 film featuring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell in which Murray is stuck in a time-loop reliving the same day over and over again, you should watch it. Not only is it a great movie (at least to me) but it serves as a metaphor for so many things. Especially, the elections held in Israel on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the third within the last year. For Israelis, to quote the cliché, it was DeJaVu all over again. And the sad thing is that it may not be the last time.

It's hard to analyze the results of this third election just days after the event, but with the deadline for this article looming, I will do my best. Keep in mind that by the time you read this article, countless scenarios may have come to life. But even at this early stage, there are several things that can be pointed to with a great deal of certainty.

Let's start with the obvious. Despite having been indicted on three separate counts, including bribery, Israel's incumbent prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, remains the most popular politician in the country. One can make the argument that following the indictments and the announcement of the start of his trial on March 17, his victory is more resounding than ever. Indeed, he made that point himself. His supporters rallied behind him. Especially in the North and South. This is even more astounding considering that the south has been pounded by

Gaza missiles without the serious response the government has been promising and the North also has had its share of security issues emanating from Hezbollah and Iranian activity in Syria. Beyond this, we can say clearly that the campaign of Blue and White against the Prime Minister because of his indictments, hasn't worked.

A second point is that for now, the right-wing block of 58 – inaugurated after the previous election, as well as the Likud political machine, is sticking with Netanyahu come hell or high water. The first thing Netanyahu did after the election was to reconvene the block who swore allegiance again.

A third point that can be clearly stated is that Blue and White and the other center-left parties are nowhere near being able to form a government, but Blue and White is still a force to be reckoned with. Three elections in, the party seems to be at 32 or 33 seats, which is still a very respectable number for a new party. In fact, more people voted for them in this election than the other two, though they still lost ground because many additional people voted for Likud this time around. It may seem like they have been around forever, but it was only a year ago that they came into being. What will happen going forward is less clear. Can they survive being in the opposition if Likud forms a government? Many feel they can't. The party is made up of so many diverse opinions, some very right wing, some very left wing, and the core very much middle of the road, that some may be tempted to bolt given the failure of the party to form a government (though the usual suspects vehemently deny that possibility). There are others, (me included), who feel the party made a big mistake not accepting President Rivlin's proposal after the previous elections to have a unity government in which Netanyahu served first for six months and then Ganz from Blue and White would take over. That plan never went anywhere. Blue and White claimed Netanyahu wasn't serious about it and couldn't be trusted to turn over power. Maybe so. But officially, they never accepted it. It is very possible they will live to regret that decision. But for now, 32 or 33 seats remains a force not to be ignored. Together with the rest of the left block and Avigdor Lieberman's party, that block may yet prevent Netanyahu from forming a government this time too. And based on events just days after the election, they may even be able to do more than that. More on that in a moment.

Which brings us to Lieberman. His Yisrael Beitenu party, though it likely lost 1 or 2 seats, retained its role as kingmaker. If Lieberman wants, Netanyahu will be Prime Minister. If he doesn't, the deadlock will continue. Simple math. The right-wing block has 58 or 59 seats (the final tally will come after this article is submitted). The Left-wing block, including the Arab parties, will be 54. Lieberman's 6 or 7 is the swing vote. He has vowed there won't be a 4<sup>th</sup> election. But he said that last time too. He also has vowed not to sit with the ultra-orthodox parties who are built into Netanyahu's block. So if he keep to that

promise, he won't join the right, which is exactly what happened in the past two elections. So what exactly does he want?

As I write this article, news came in that Lieberman will support a bill that will be proposed by Blue and White that will prohibit someone with an indictment from serving as a prime minister. This is dramatic indeed. Today the law only relates to ministers. That this law is personal against Netanyahu is obvious. The goal is clearly to prevent him from being able to form a government. Blue and White has said that this law would only come into power in the next Knesset. Meaning, only if there was a fourth election. Some of the commentary is that this is being used to pressure Netanyahu to compromise in negotiations for a government in the Knesset that was just elected in the March 2 election, as he will have little incentive to ride it out like the last two times and go to yet another election. But the bombshell in the news was that Lieberman said he will support that law. This has a lot of meaning. Firstly, if he is supporting a law denying the prime minister the ability to serve once indicted, its hard to see him sitting with him now, if invited to join the government, something he has declined to do in the past two elections. And if Lieberman doesn't join, the right-wing block, unless people defect from the other side, will not have a government. But it goes beyond that. The current talk is that the Arab parties will support the bill too. Together with them, Lieberman, Blue and White and the Labor-Meretz list, the central left block (or perhaps better described as the non-right wing block) will have 61 seats, enough to pass legislation: legislation blocking a prime minister from serving if having an indictment, legislation mandating a two term limit. And if the Speaker of the Knesset – the Likud's Yuli Edelstein – would act to prevent those laws from coming to vote, there are enough votes to replace him. In short, there is an emerging parliamentary threat to Netanyahu that didn't exist before that may very well change the game. Will the right-wing block continue to stick with him under these circumstances? Will the Likud political machine stick with him under these circumstances?

Like I said, the future can move in many different ways and it is almost impossible to prophesize which way the wind will blow. However, we can safely make the following conclusions:

- 1) Neither side will be able to form a government (not the right wing as described above, and not Blue and White – despite the potential cooperation on legislation, the Arab parties won't be in a government, unless one of the sides capitulates.
- 2) The new proposed legislation with Lieberman's support may very well be a game changer. It has the potential to change the dynamics of the government formation process and even mandate Netanyahu's removal from the scene

3) The political situation in Israel is a mess. It is ugly and getting uglier. **DONATION**

4) We may very well be on our way to yet another election **Sonia Traulsen in memory Helga and Julian Grunberg, \$100**

Deja vu all over again. Happy Groundhog Day.

Barry Spielman  
Oranit, Israel  
March 2020

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