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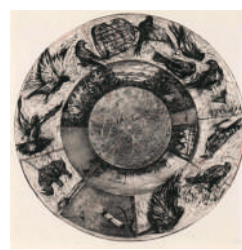
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Lamola may soften stance to appease US

TALI FEINBERG

In one of his first media interviews as South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Ronald Lamola appeared to parrot the party line, but his delivery wasn't vitriolic like his predecessor, Dr Naledi Pandor, according to analysts.

"We believe this [ICJ case] will be the beginning of the end of Israel's impunity," Lamola said in an interview on the Muslim radio station Salaamedia on 15 July. "Israeli exceptionalism is the reason that Israel continues to defy [ICJ orders], because they know that they will always find protection, but the ICJ has now exposed them to the world. This is a genocide aimed to eliminate the Palestinian people. We will continue with the case on behalf of the South African government."

Speaking about pursuing South Africans in the Israeli army, he said, "That's a process that should be guided by law enforcement. We have said if such evidence exists, and such people are identified, anyone who has that evidence must bring it to the attention of the police, so that they can investigate and the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] can prosecute."

He denied that the government had a relationship with Hamas, saying, "Our relationship is with the state of Palestine."

Political analyst Daniel Silke believes Lamola may bring a fresh approach to South Africa's foreign policy. "What's critical for the Ramaphosa administration is to remain on relatively good terms with the United States. With the potential of a Trump presidency and a much more insular US, South Africa will need to play a much more pragmatic role in trying to placate the Americans. I think that's what Lamola will bring to the table," he said.

"In doing that, South Africa will need to be less radical in terms of her support for the Palestinians and Iran," Silke says. "Lamola will hopefully take a much more pragmatic approach and realise that less 'in-your-face' pro-Palestinian is probably the way to go."

Steven Gruz, also a political analyst, says the African National Congress (ANC) still controls the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), with both deputy ministers and the new minister coming from the party. "It is still calling the shots. It's early days, but judging by this recent [Lamola] interview, there will be a strong continuity of Pandor's policies," he says.

"There certainly remains within the ANC the same view on the Palestinian cause," Silke says. "The same anti-Israel bias is still very much there. Perhaps it's just going to be a marginally more nuanced foreign policy, understanding that South Africa's fortunes lie not just with the BRICS countries [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates], but with having better relations with the West. That perhaps, will take a modicum of pressure off Israel. But I don't expect a dramatic change from the ANC."

"The GNU [Government of National Unity] partners are going to have a tough time in reconciling some of their views on Israel with the ANC's prevailing view, and it will be interesting to see if any pressure from within Cabinet, perhaps behind closed doors, has a more moderating effect on the extreme nature of what was reflected largely by the Pandor Dirco," says Silke.

South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks took Lamola to task in incorrectly claiming that Israel was acting with impunity in Gaza. "Israel has every right to defend itself under international law, which Lamola should be aware of. In addition, no finding of 'plausible genocide' has been made, as the substance of the ICJ case is still to be heard. This claim is misleading," she said.

Meanwhile, the former minister, Dr Naledi Pandor, continues to spout her one-sided view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, peddling antisemitic ideas and encouraging boycotts against the Jewish state.

"It's highly unusual for a former foreign minister to continue to be involved in international relations after retirement. Pandor clearly feels that she has the



Holding the torch for SA

Robbie Brozin runs through Paris carrying the Olympic flame

See story on page 2

authority to continue making pronouncements," said Gruz.

Pandor implied in a speech at Rhodes University on 8 July that Jews isolate others or should be isolated. "I have no hatred of Jewish people, but you are either with us, or you are against us. And if you don't hold the view we hold, we will label you as powerful institutions, and ensure we diminish your status in society," she said. It wasn't clear whether Pandor was saying South Africans must do this to the Jewish community, or that the Jews do it to South Africans, but either way, she emphasised that South African Jewry was a separate entity.

"This is not the Israel of Moses," she stated. "It's something else that we're dealing with. It's a cruelty which the world cannot tolerate. A country that enjoyed massive impunity is now exposed in its horrible dimensions for all the world to see, and South Africa did that."

In what was her first appearance since retiring, she claimed that Hamas should remain in power if that was what the Palestinian people wanted, and that universities, sporting bodies, and trade unions should boycott Israel.

She implied that Jews were a dark force that controlled the world, and that South Africa had exposed this with its ICJ case. She claimed that though Israel said it was fighting only Hamas, the truth was that the Jewish state wanted to obliterate all Palestinians.

Pandor admitted that she had strong ties with Iran, and told students that resistance movements shouldn't resort to violence like 7 October because it may lead to a loss of support. There was no mention of Israelis' right not to be subject to violence.

Pandor said she spoke to Iranian officials about 7 October, and "Iran was very clear in its support for

Continued on page 5 >>

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Kiss of fire: Nando's Brozin bears Olympic torch

STAFF REPORTER

Robbie Brozin held the Olympic torch high in France this week as he ran the Olympic Torch Relay in the run-up to the official Olympic Games, all while contemplating the importance of keeping alight South Africa's flame of democracy.

"It was very emotional," Brozin, the co-founder of Nando's, told the SA Jewish Report from France this week, the morning after his 200 metre run with the Olympic torch through Paris on Monday evening, 15 July. "As I was running, I had such a sense of the value of our democracy, and how the work we do in South Africa keeps its flame alive. It's this same flame that represents the values of the Olympics."

The Olympic Torch Relay is this year being run from Marseilles to Paris through many of the French towns, taking the Olympic torch and flame through Olympic Games 2024 country. The flame and relay run represents spreading the Olympic message of peace and unity, and provides a unifying link for celebrating the Games.

The torch was lit in Greece, the original home of the Olympics, and brought to

Robbie Brozin carrying the Olympic Torch during the Olympic Torch Relay in Paris



France to make this trip. The lighting ceremony took place in Greece on 16 April 2024, and will eventually light the Olympic Games torch on Friday, 26 July, at the opening ceremony.

"I was so proud to be able to be a torchbearer, especially as a South African,"

said Brozin. "The whole day was quite surreal."

Brozin said that with Coca-Cola being the global sponsor of the Olympics, it recommends certain people and companies to carry the torch. So Nando's was chosen for the philanthropic work it does.

He carried the torch because of the work Nando's does in eliminating malaria; helping African artists and young designers; as well as reimagining the City of Joburg, among other philanthropic projects.

Donning a white short-sleeve tracksuit with #138 on it to represent his number in the lineup of torchbearers, Brozin ran "about 200m" holding the torch specially designed for this particular Olympic Games by French designer Mathieu Lehanneur.

"I got the torch from a young guy called Alex, who was a downhill BMX skier from Switzerland. When he hands it over, it's called 'the kiss,'" said Brozin. "I then did my run, and handed it over to the next person who was French and couldn't speak English, so we didn't quite vibe."

"The whole run for me took a few minutes, but they were minutes I will never forget."

True communication is a blessing

Torah Thought



Rabbi Sam Thurgood
– head of Jewish Life and Learning at United Herzlia Schools

I heard a wonderful podcast some months ago with Rabbi Ido Fachter, the head of Beit Midrash LeMaaseh (the Practical Beit Midrash), in which he engages with issues relating to halacha and Israeli society. The discussion that stuck in my mind was, "In the aftermath of 7 October, is it permissible to greet someone with, 'How are you?'"

The basis of the question is that it's considered insensitive to ask a mourner, "How are you?", as if expecting that the answer will be they are fine. Of course, they may not be, and shouldn't be expected to be, and when the entire country is in mourning, shouldn't we be showing that same sensitivity and restraint towards one another? Around the same time, I met an Israeli friend over Zoom, and warmly, innocently, and thoughtlessly asked, "How are you doing?" He looked at me in a silence for a moment, sighed, and replied, "k'mo kulam" (the same as everyone else).

Now, maybe you're thinking, "Rabbi Sam, that's moving and quite sad, but what does it have to do with parashat Balak?" First, not everything has to do with the parsha of the week, but second, it relates to the attention that we pay to others in our communication, not just in what we say, but in what is heard, and this dynamic certainly lies at the heart of the story of the Bilam so central to our parsha. Bilam plans to curse the Jewish people. He tries again and again to do so, but in the end, it's beautiful blessings he proclaims. The story with his donkey is illustrative. He thinks that he is a great orator, but it's Hashem who decides what's

ultimately heard, and even a donkey can communicate if Hashem wills it.

What I intended to communicate to my friend was that I cared about him, that I was interested in his welfare, but what he may have heard was a request to share his inner turmoil. How many miscommunications happen this way every day, when we think more about what we want to say than what may be heard through our words? True communication involves an openness and a curiosity about the inner world of the person we're talking to. Rabbi Abraham Twerski says empathy is a kind of attuned guessing, making our

best estimate of what the other person is feeling, and behaving accordingly.

We rely on visual cues, tone of voice, and so much more, but not enough of the time on direct questioning – asking the other person what they understood about what we said or telling them what we understood about what they said.

When we think about ourselves in our communication, it can indeed come out as a curse. When Hashem directs us to connect with others, it can be a blessing for them, for us, and for the entire world. May we indeed all know such blessing!

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Heroic South African brothers saved thousands

NICOLA MILTZ

Brothers Keith and Brett Isaacson, born in Klerksdorp, are real-life modern-day action heroes, reminiscent of characters from the Israeli television series *Fauda*. On 7 October, amidst heavy bombardment and savage attacks by Hamas terrorists, they risked their lives for hours and days on end to protect Gaza border communities in the south, potentially saving thousands of lives on that fateful Shabbat.

Father of four, Brett, 54, almost single-handedly protected the Mivtahim Junction, the main access point to seven moshavim from approaching terrorists. Meanwhile, Keith, 58, as head of security for the Eshkol region consisting of 32 communities in the south totalling more than 17 000 people, commanded intense operations from a bunker, desperately thwarting further attacks.

“It was the worst day since the beginning of the state of Israel. It has been the hardest time of my life,” said Keith.

Today, nine months after the gravest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, the brothers, who still speak with a South African accent, have a mission: to help rebuild affected communities with a vision to make them stronger, more resilient, more vibrant, and appealing than ever.

“Otherwise, they [Hamas] will have won,” said Keith.

Their goal is to fortify these areas to ensure that they never again have to rely solely on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for protection.

“The army let us down that day,” said Brett. “I’ve experienced a lot of pain and personal hardship having attended the funerals of many close friends. My wish is to be able to trust the army again, but I’m not sure this will ever happen,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The brothers, who live in Moshav Sde Nitzan, about 7km from the Gaza envelope, left South Africa in 1975 aged nine and five with their parents, Eve and Joe, and their baby sister, Jennifer, settling as farmers in the south. The family farmed tomatoes for years for the local and overseas market, and later flowers.

They are well known *olim* in the region, having lived their life in service to their country and communities.

They are also seasoned military men. Keith and Brett served in the Givati Brigade, one of

the five infantry brigades of the IDF and one of two under the Southern Command, as combat soldiers and then reservists, but according to Keith, “The October massacre changed us forever.

“More than 216 people in my Eshkol region, including the communities of Kibbutzim Be’eri and Nir Oz, were killed, 160 were injured, 30 were orphaned, more than 300 houses were destroyed and burnt, 16 of my communities out of 32 were attacked that day, 33 of my reservists were killed, and many dozens were taken hostage and still remain in Gaza. It’s difficult to comprehend,” he told the newspaper.

Early that morning, he twice narrowly escaped death after terrorists opened fire while he was travelling in an armoured, bullet-proof vehicle to try reach a nearby army base. After



Keith and Brett Isaacson

fleeing for safety and having made it to the Eshkol municipality, he remained stationed there for days on end co-ordinating rescue and operational control of the area. His family were at different moshavim in the area, his four children involved in defending the borders in various capacities.

The events of that day and the weeks that followed will haunt him.

“It wasn’t just killing, it was slaughtering, cutting off limbs, doing things I don’t want to talk about because it’s not things that humans do. They aren’t humans, they aren’t

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animals because animals don’t do that, they are monsters,” he said.

The entire area under his security jurisdiction of more than 17 000 people was evacuated. Several thousand have since returned, but many are still too fearful. Others say they will never return.

“They came not only to kill, but to destroy and make it impossible for people to return,” he said.

However, he’s hoping to get enough support to rebuild.

Recalling the events of that day, Brett said, “As rockets rained down, my phone rang at about 06:30. It was my best friend from the nearby moshav, Mivtahim, urgently seeking help.”

“A group of terrorists was advancing on the Mivtahim Junction, the main gateway to our cluster of moshavim. My friend and one other policeman were trying to hold them off, but he urgently needed to return to his own moshav, which he feared was under attack.”

Brett immediately put on his uniform, gathered the limited arms and ammunition available, and headed to relieve his friend,

not knowing that would be the last time he would see him alive.

When Brett arrived, he was shocked at what saw.

“Young people fleeing to safety from the Nova festival in their cars were shot to death. There were 16 bodies. Terrorists lay in wait.”

With only a few rifles and limited ammunition, he had no idea how many attackers he and the traumatised policeman faced. “I needed to calm him down. It was hard, he had witnessed a lot. I gave him some ammunition and we became the final stand.”

For hours, they were the only defence that remained between the approaching attackers and hundreds of civilians in the various moshavim behind them, including Brett’s entire family made up of his wife, adult children, elderly parents, and Keith’s family.

“I knew I needed to make the ammunition last because I had no way of knowing when IDF forces would be arriving to help us,” he said.

“We could see there was smoke, gun, and rocket fire along the borders. The IDF was fighting elsewhere, and we were alone,” he said.

His fears grew when he heard gunfire behind him coming from the direction of the moshavim.

“Terrorists had made their way in from a back road. My calls to my friend went unanswered, so I knew the situation was dire and no-one was coming to help us,” he said.

The pair were alone for what seemed like an eternity, guarding the dead bodies and neutralising the hidden attackers.

Eventually, security forces arrived to help, and he was able to leave to assist elsewhere.

Nothing could prepare Brett for what he discovered when he arrived at Mivtahim.

His friend and several well-known reservists, also friends of his, had been shot in battle as terrorists had moved in, killed, looted, and finally left for Gaza leaving a trail of death and destruction.

“That was a hard moment,” said Brett, who protected the bodies for hours until the army arrived at about 01:40.

“The area is still a war zone. It’s not a safe place for children,” said Keith. But the brothers are determined to change this.

“The area has to be 200% better than it was before 7 October,” said Keith. “We don’t want mediocre, we want people to flock here because we’ll offer the best of everything, from roads and gardens to education, security, and lifestyle,” he said. He has been on a fundraising drive to countries such as Australia, Canada, and Finland.


What the brothers witnessed that day and in the sorrowful, mournful days that followed will remain with them for the rest of their lives, but it won’t deter them.

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SA prioritising Palestinians while Africa burns, says MK

TALI FEINBERG

Andile Mngxitama may be a controversial figure, but in his maiden speech as a uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MK) Member of Parliament, he spoke straight and true.

In a debate on the budget allocation for Stats SA on 11 July, he recalled how the National Development Plan promised to work towards "international peace", yet "we see the South African government prioritising Palestine while Africa is burning".

"In the Sahel [Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal], there are massive terrorist attacks, our people are being moved, they're being killed, they're being murdered," he said. "There's never-ending conflict in the Sudan. We don't see the same amount of intervention from the South African government because these are black people. These aren't Arab people that are close to whiteness. Therefore, they don't matter. Black lives don't matter from this point of view."

Analysts told the *SA Jewish Report* that South Africa had a duty and a crucial role to play in reducing war and violence on the continent. Not only that, but they say that if South Africa put as much energy and effort into criticising the genocide and human rights violations in Africa as it did in defending the Palestinians, it could make a significant difference.

Steven Gruzd, the head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs, says, "It's a fact that South Africa seems to be pretty obsessed with the conflict in the Middle East between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It dominates foreign policy thinking, and is probably the only non-African issue that gains so much attention in our foreign policy making."

"Indeed South Africa does seem to neglect wars that are raging on the continent, be they in Ethiopia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]. We have sent troops to the eastern DRC, but we've had some losses of soldiers, and the mission is under equipped and is really struggling to make headway in a vast area. There have been many other conflicts in which we have tried to mediate but don't seem to have the same resolve and drive as in the case of the Palestinian issue."

"I find it interesting that the MK party is calling the ANC [African National Congress] out on this," says Gruzd. "It has been quite supportive of the Palestinians, but even it is recognising that there's an unhealthy obsession with this conflict to the exclusion of many other conflicts much closer to home."

"It's clear that the hyper-focus on Palestinians is a distraction from the rights of South Africans who are being misgoverned," says Dr Charles Jacobs, the founder of the African-Jewish Alliance, which seeks to highlight and fight Islamist supremacist ideology in Africa and the Middle East. "Not to mention, it's a distraction from the plight of fellow Africans who are being murdered, raped, and kidnapped in at least nine African countries by people driven by the same ideology as Hamas."

Adam Charnas, an analyst at the South African

Hamas, a recognised terror group which committed the most severe atrocity against Jewish people since the Holocaust, South Africa has compromised its ability to act as an impartial mediator in peace negotiations," says Marks.

"South Africa's foreign policy continues to harm itself and its economic prospects, while doing nothing to promote peace in Gaza or Israel," she says. "South Africa's stance towards Israel and closeness to rogue nations such as Iraq and Russia alienates it from some of

its largest trading partners in northern America and Europe. South Africa should take a sensible approach to Israel, stop alienating Western powers and trading partners, and turn its attention to African conflict."

Mirjam de Bruijn, a professor of contemporary history and anthropology of Africa at Leiden University, told the *SA Jewish Report* that, "South Africa, especially after the ANC came to power, expressed a wish to participate in pan-African peace building. Whether these peacebuilding efforts have been successful is a question."

"South Africa has contributed largely to United Nations [UN] missions on the continent, but two recent UN interventions in the Sahel region shows the absence of South Africa. This is, at least, remarkable. Is the Sahel and its Francophone character too far away for South Africa? Or is the economic development in these Sahelian countries not interesting enough



uMkhonto weSizwe Member of Parliament, Andile Mngxitama

Jewish Board of Deputies, says, "Mngxitama has made a point which should be obvious to all. Department of international relations and cooperation policies have a hyper fixation on a single conflict in the Middle East. This stance isn't just hypocritical, it completely disregards the many conflicts and humanitarian disasters on African soil."

South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks says, "South Africa, despite its position and responsibility in the African Union, is prioritising taking sides in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians over addressing conflicts within Africa, such as in Sudan, where there's ongoing war with more than 13 000 estimated dead. Perhaps South Africa's emphasis on the Palestinian issue is a tactic to divert attention from its failures and neglect of responsibilities towards African nations. This is particularly concerning for a country that sees itself as a leader on the continent."

"By increasingly aligning with countries like Iran, known as significant sponsors of terrorism, and with

for South Africa to invest in peace processes? Would mediation or other peace-building processes animated by South Africa for the Sahel make a difference?

"If South Africa would be interested in the Sahel region and invest in the peace process, it could make a difference," says De Bruijn. "A conflict that has a geopolitical explanation but has by its ethnic violence also genocidal characteristics should be of concern to the world. South Africa could play a role in turning this conflict into a visible conflict. Visibility is part of the solution. It needs to be part of the search for peace, and to show who the perpetrators and victims are in this conflict."

"South Africa is politically better situated to make such contributions to the understanding of the conflicts in the Sahel than, for instance, Europe, or any other with colonial legacies associated with power," she says. "South African governments after 1994 stand for equality, the end of apartheid, and peace, and this should be for the whole of Africa."

US Jewish groups alarmed by GOP's deportation plan

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Three Jewish organisations dealing with immigration and community relations said they were alarmed by the Republican Party's plans to launch mass deportation, saying they are steeped in a racist conspiracy theory that at times has veered into antisemitism.

The Republican platform, published this week, pledges to "carry out the largest deportation operation in American history".

"President Trump and Republicans will reverse the Democrats' destructive open borders policies that have allowed criminal gangs and illegal aliens from around the world to roam the United States without consequences," the platform says. Analysts have said that such a deportation order could affect as many as 11 million people.

The platform almost wholly reflects the priorities of Donald Trump, who will secure nomination at the party conference next week.

Mark Hetfield, the president of HIAS, the Jewish immigration advocacy group, said that such a plan would trigger legal challenges and that HIAS would join them, the way it led challenges to some of Trump's immigration policies in his first term, including his ban on migration from a number of Muslim-majority countries.

"I'm certain we would once again challenge them

and join challenges, and of course, we will be named plaintiffs," he said in an interview, noting that in the past HIAS and other Jewish groups, including Jewish Family Service of Seattle, had led lawsuits. "We can't stand by while any of these policies regarding immigrants are implemented."



An Afghan refugee family on their way to a refugee processing centre in Washington in August 2021

Amy Spitalnick, the chief executive of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, a national community relations body, also predicted that the community would challenge any plans for mass deportation.

"If any official tries to advance mass deportations, make no mistake, the Jewish community will be among the loudest voices fighting back because we understand precisely where this hate and extremism can lead," she said in an interview.

Jamie Beran, the chief executive of Bend the Arc, a Jewish social-justice activist network, singled out how deportation fits into the platform's mention of antisemitism, which pledges to "support revoking visas of foreign nationals who support terrorism and jihadism".

"Jewish people should never be used as justification for racist, xenophobic policies that harm our immigrant family and fuel antisemitism," she said in a text. "Bend the Arc will participate in challenging this outrageous plan, and every part the right's catastrophic Project 2025, in the legal system and in the streets, together with our partners in the immigrant rights community." Project 2025 is a massive government overhaul proposed by the Trump-aligned

Heritage Foundation think tank.

Other Jewish groups that have in the past advocated for immigrants were silent. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the American Jewish Committee declined to comment, and the Jewish Federations of North America didn't return a request for comment. Centrist Jewish groups generally avoid weighing in on hot-button issues in an election year. The ADL's proposed recommendations for party platforms doesn't include any mention of immigration or refugees.

Continued on page 5>

UCT prof forced to retire over exam question

TALI FEINBERG

Anton Fagan, the WP Schreiner Professor of Law at the University of Cape Town (UCT), who set an exam question in May depicting a fictional terrorist attack at a Jewish school, has been forced to take early retirement after the exam question led to a petition calling for him to be investigated and fired.

"As a consequence of the question that I set for my delict students in their recent examination, I was asked to move my retirement forward from the end of next year [2025] to the end of June 2024," Fagan told the *SA Jewish Report* in late June. "Having been persuaded that it would be in the law faculty's and my best interests to do so, I agreed."

Fagan has written several reasoned and rational opinion pieces in support of Israel, against the barbarism of Hamas, and questioning the strongly anti-Israel stance of UCT, which also led to a hostile environment for him at UCT.

"We all know which views about Israel and Hamas are orthodox, and which are no longer tolerated within South African universities," wrote Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at UCT, David Benatar, regarding Fagan's early retirement.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) analyst Adam Charnas says, "The SAJBD considers UCT's approach to the position of Professor Anton Fagan to be draconian and heavy-handed. Considering Professor Fagan's strong academic reputation, it seems that this decision is biased, due to his political support for Israel. We observe that UCT has become increasingly hostile towards any perspective that doesn't align with a very narrow stance on Israel/Palestinian issues, and we view this action as bullying rather than constructive."

Looking back on the chain of events, Fagan says, "The examination containing my delict question was written on 23 May. The next day, an organisation calling itself UCT4Palestine launched an

online petition describing the question – and me as the person who had drafted it – as Islamophobic, racist, and genocidal.

"Three days after that, the Law Students' Council [LSC] lodged a complaint with the dean of the law faculty, in which it claimed that the question had been 'triggering and traumatising'; that it had been intended to push a specific political agenda, and that my setting it had amounted to a violation of my professorial responsibilities and an abuse of my professorial power," he says.

"Four days later, the dean sent me an email proposing that I take early retirement from 1 July. I rejected the proposal," says Fagan. "A week later, in a face-to-face meeting which he scheduled, the dean urged me to reconsider. He informed me that my delict question was tearing the law faculty apart and that, if I remained, I would inevitably be investigated for misconduct."

"He also gave me the impression that, in such investigation, neither he nor my head of department would support me," he says. "On the basis that it would be in the law faculty's and my best interests to do so, I relented to take early retirement."

At no stage before or after Fagan took this decision "was I asked to respond to the LSC's complaint. However, a week and a half after I met the dean, I sent a detailed response to him, my law faculty colleagues, and my students. A version of this response was published as 'Sturm und drang in a UCTeacup' on *Politicsweb*."

In addition to UCT4Palestine's petition and the LSC's complaint, there was also an LSC-run questionnaire sent out about the question. "Of the 32 students [out of a class of 213] who completed the questionnaire, 27 made similar allegations to those in the petition and complaint," says Fagan.

"That aside, I faced no overt hostility," he says. "When my early retirement was made public by the dean, several law faculty colleagues whom I expected to contact me about it didn't. I had for many



Former University of Cape Town professor, Anton Fagan

years been on good terms with these colleagues. But their views about the war in Gaza are diametrically opposed to mine. It's possible that these colleagues' failure to contact me reflects some hostility towards me on their part."

Meanwhile, "two of my students expressed support, one in a chance face-to-face encounter, the other in an email. I received expressions of support from four or five law faculty colleagues and three or four former law faculty colleagues. About 10 other people, some former members of UCT but not the law faculty, also contacted me to express support."

Advocate Mark Oppenheimer, whom Fagan supervised in his LLB thesis, says, "Professor Fagan was undoubtedly the greatest legal mind at UCT, and his departure from the law faculty is a great loss for his colleagues, his students, and legal academia. He's the professor who had the greatest influence over my own legal thinking, and I owe my clarity of thought and precision in legal writing to his enormous influence."

Regarding how he feels about his career at UCT ending this way, Fagan says, "I have no regrets and would do the same again. Excluding my five years as a student, I spent 28 and a half years at UCT. The first 20 were golden years, and I wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else."

"It was less pleasurable from 2015 onwards," he says. "There were the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall

protests. Then there was the COVID-19 pandemic. Then we had protests again, as well as a malfunctioning university leadership. Ironically, this year was the first since 2015 that I managed to get through my delict lectures without disruption. I was just starting to count my chickens when the uproar about my delict question began."

For now, Fagan will probably continue his academic writing, hopefully as an emeritus professor in UCT's department of private law.

"This series of events revealed the fact that some LLB students at UCT hold irrational and uninformed views about the war in Gaza," says Fagan. "But that doesn't distinguish them from many students elsewhere in the world, including at leading universities like Harvard, Columbia, and Oxford."

"Moreover, some of these LLB students' predecessors have been no less irrational and ignorant about other matters. More significant – and worrying – is the fact that similarly irrational and uninformed views about the war in Gaza appear to be held by a substantial number of UCT academics, as was shown by the two propositions concerning the war which were adopted by the UCT Senate and subsequently endorsed by the UCT Council."

Benatar notes that "Professor Fagan's early retirement is an immense loss to UCT, and the circumstances of his decision to take early retirement once again highlight both the institution's intolerance of 'unorthodox' views and its culture of bullying. It's once again clear that all the talk about 'diversity' and 'inclusion' amount to empty words."

UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola told the *SA Jewish Report*, "UCT confirms that Professor Anton Fagan took voluntary early retirement after serving as a distinguished academic at the university for close to three decades. UCT greatly appreciates the many years of contribution he made to teaching, learning, and research at the university."

US Jewish groups alarmed by GOP's deportation plan

>>Continued from page 4

Spitalnick and Hetfeld both expressed alarm at how the language of the platform appears to be steeped in "replacement theory", a baseless conspiracy alleging a liberal plot to replace whites with people of colour. Versions of the theory have antisemitic overtones, alleging that the plot is led by Jews.

Hetfeld singled out a passage targeting family reunion policies, which conservatives call "chain migration".

"Republicans will prioritise merit-based immigration, ensuring that those admitted to our country contribute positively to our society and economy, and never become a drain on public resources," the platform says. "We will end chain migration, and put American workers first!"

The platform also declares, "We must not allow Biden's migrant invasion to alter our country."

"They're using the language of invasion and a cultural takeover, and focusing on crime as if all crime is brought into this country by immigrants," said Hetfeld, who reviewed GOP platforms through 2012, and found language welcoming refugees that is absent from the current platform. "The scariest part, although we're starting to get used to this and I hope we never really get used to it," is that the plan is "basically ... a manifesto on replacement theory", he said.

Spitalnick noted that replacement theory had often veered into antisemitism, spurring deadly attacks by antisemites in recent years.

"The 'invasion' and other extreme immigration rhetoric and policies embedded in this platform aren't just draconian and cruel, they have also directly fuelled a cycle of xenophobic, racist, and antisemitic violence targeting Jews, Latinos, black Americans, and so many others," she said. "This is fundamentally at odds with Jewish values and Jewish safety. I can't believe this is a real conversation in America in 2024."

Hetfeld said a separate pledge in the platform to deport visiting students who organise pro-Palestinian protests would also face legal challenges.

"Protesting isn't grounds for removal," he said. "That's an infringement of free speech. And if you're rounding up protesters and you're deporting those who happen to be noncitizens because they were engaged in a protest, that would be completely unacceptable."

Lamola may soften stance to appease US

>>Continued from page 1

Hamas". She repeatedly stated that she wasn't anti-Israel or antisemitic, but "there's almost conspiracy theories [in her talk] about Jews controlling the narrative and being unnecessarily powerful", notes Gruzid.

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) says, "Pandor's tenure has been marked by an obsessive focus on vilifying Israel, deviating from the traditionally balanced approach of negotiation and dialogue. She has unashamedly demonised the Jewish state as she has done no other international player."

"This contempt has also been evident in her treatment of South African Jewry," says Kahn. "Even after leaving government, she has continued to attack SAJBD President Zev Krenkel and question the SAJBD's understanding of antisemitism."

"Pandor's distaste for South African Jewry was further observed in her enthusiasm to import the anti-Israel protests on US campuses to South African universities. It's apparent that in her post-ministerial period, Pandor intends to continue this. We call on the universities to stand against Pandor's toxic campaign, and ensure that their campuses remain safe spaces for all."

Says Marks, "Pandor is negligent in encouraging protests against Israel on campuses, sacrificing stability at South African universities. Moreover, pro-Palestinian protests will disrupt learning and threaten Jewish students."

"Rhodes University also failed in its responsibility by organising an event that welcomed only anti-Israel speakers," says Marks. "How can students develop educated viewpoints when exposed to only one perspective? This isn't academia, it's propaganda."

"Additionally, Pandor's giggling when mentioning concern about South Africa's foreign policy is inappropriate. This is no laughing matter. That she finds this situation amusing shows contempt for the people of South Africa. Pandor's stance damages South Africa's standing."

Dr Glen Segell, a research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran & Gulf States Research, says, "Although Dr Pandor is no longer a Cabinet minister, she still holds a significant sway in the ANC and more so among its supporters. Her constantly voiced negative views about Israel can endanger Jews in South Africa." Instead of vilifying Israel and Jews, "Pandor needs to call openly for South Africans to respect each other's identity, and emphasise that Jews have a spiritual and religious obligation to Israel and shouldn't be held to answer to Israel's actions."

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Living a Mandela legacy life



It's 11 years since former President Nelson Mandela died at the age of 95. And this Thursday, 18 July, would have been his 106th birthday. Hence the 18th of July has long since become Mandela Day, an annual global celebration to honour his life and legacy. It's a day we are all called to action to reflect on his values and principles, and a day to make a positive impact on our society, communities, and world.

Mandela's legacy is vast, and he had such a positive influence. Some people do criticise him for various reasons, and that's their right. However, his immense positivity and ability to always see the glass half full enabled him to walk out of prison after 27 years of being incarcerated and still look up, not down. Despite what was thrown at him for almost three decades, he managed to avoid being full of hatred and anger.

He was kept from his young wife and children for that time, during which they were living their own nightmares and he couldn't be there for them. This must have been devastating for him. Also, many of his years in prison were spent doing hard labour on Robben Island. Some would say he had 27 years of his life taken from him, only he didn't see it like that, nor did he allow what happened to him to taint his future.

He walked out of there 72 years old, but with a will to live and build South Africa into the country he dreamed of. He set aside any anger to focus on building a nation free of racism, hatred, and animosity. He was determined to reconcile this country, in which there would be social justice for all men, women, and children so they could live together in peace and harmony. No matter what was done by white people, he was determined to build a colour-blind country. He was on a mission to build the country most of us still long to live in, and under his leadership, he took us a distance in that direction.

Although it has been a long time since he was our leader and more than a decade since he died, there's still so much we can learn from the example he set as leader and a human being. He refused to live in the past and focused on what he could accomplish in the present and future. Mandela was known to get a maximum of five hours of sleep a night because he believed he needed all his waking hours to accomplish what he had to do.

He was a man determined to achieve so much with the years he had left. Amazingly, he was president for only five years, but he changed the way the world looked at South Africa, and he made South Africans proud to be part of this country.

How many people do you know who see themselves as "past it" at 75? How many over 75-year-olds are changing lives, let alone a country? How many people do you know who could achieve just a fraction of what this man achieved in their lives, let alone in just five years as a septuagenarian? Not a helluva lot, but why not? He was, after all, only human, just like us.

It isn't about age, but about perception. It's about having a dream and a mission that you believe is worth putting your all into to realise. Mandela was the kind of leader who woke up every morning thinking about South Africans and how he could make this country better for them. That's the kind of leadership we need.

We want that leadership like that here, in Israel, in the United States – everywhere actually. We want world leaders like that because that's what will secure the future of our countries and planet. Leaders who think only of what works best for them and their parties are invariably leaders who make it into power but never truly benefit their people. In these cases, it doesn't matter whether you are right or left wing, or who you represent. If you are on the side of the people, you will benefit the country no matter your politics. If you are on the side of your own success and fame, you won't benefit anyone.

Unfortunately, the latter appears to be the most common type of leader in 2024. I dream of living in a world full of leaders like Mandela. He was inspirational, and gave us a sense of pride in who we are as a nation that nobody else has done before or since.

Also, as we age, it's easy to see the process as something negative and an end to all we can achieve. Mandela is the perfect example of what a load of nonsense that is. If you have work to do, a mission to achieve, and health on your side, there's little that can stop you.

We all have different periods in our lives, some which make it more difficult to focus on specific goals. However, I would hate to live this life without having fulfilled a dream, and hopefully in this life, I'll be able to achieve more than one.

I accept that we aren't all Nelson Mandela, and we may not all have his vision. We may also not have as big a goal or plan as he did, however we all have dreams. There may not be a million things to do in our lives, but if we have one dream or goal to achieve, don't let it go! Make it happen! Take on the challenge!

I do believe we should all be trying to spend at least 67 minutes a day every day doing good for others. If that isn't possible, then at least do something good on Mandela Day. However, consider using Mandela's legacy to inspire you to fulfil your dreams and make every day a day you can bring your positive goals a little closer to fruition.

Imagine if every one of us had such a plan, just how much good we could do for our people, our country, and our universe. Here's to living a Mandela legacy life!

Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor

Seize the 'gnu' moment!

OPINION

MIKE ABEL



This year, arguably more than any other after 1994, our country has chosen to honour the legacy, lessons, and vision of Nelson Mandela. Let's reflect on this on #MandelaDay2024 on 18 July.

It has been three decades since the birth of the new South Africa and the "Rainbow Nation", as coined by the late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu.

Many have claimed over the years that this multicoloured, multicultural, and tapestried land of peace since 1994, reminiscent of the famed biblical cloak worn by Jacob, has been long dead. A dream ended. A fantasy. How wrong they are!

One of the most defining sayings of Madiba was, "Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again." And that's exactly what millions of South Africans did in the 2024 elections. We voted with our heads and hearts to rebuild our democracy. We decided to get up again.

This observation isn't about the African National Congress (ANC), but about everyday South Africans choosing actively to determine where and how they want to take our country forward. And that's what Nelson Mandela ultimately embodied. Not a party alone, but the responsibility and power of the individual to drive positive change, for themselves and their country. This, as enshrined in our glorious Constitution. It was also respected by our president and government in accepting the brutal 2024 election results and by embracing the possibility that comes from listening to the will of the people.

And so, it's the man in the street who, once again, came to the call of our beautiful land. A land so often brought back from the very brink.

Few realise that we were at a perilous crossroads just weeks ago. One in which the country could have gone down a dangerous path of populism, identity and hate politics, and quite another, where we embrace diversity, the rule of law, the will of the majority, and those who have repeatedly sworn to support our Constitution as opposed to undermining it. The ANC thankfully made the best decision for South Africa in whom it chose to partner with. And it was, indeed, a choice.

And only in in South Africa, and with our unique ability to laugh at ourselves when there really is often nothing else left to do, we embraced a new national animal, the "gnu", our Government of National Unity or wildebeest – it promises to be both. Democracy is after all, a messy business.

But putting our X in a responsible box on a voting ballot doesn't end the work we need to do. This is where responsibility and opportunity now starts. What are we going to do with this unique blank page of possibility? Will we harness it to its fullest potential, or wait for others to determine whether it's a success or not? I urge us all to embrace the former. To shape and mould this block of national clay into the form we want – with the love and care of Demi Moore and Patrick Swayze in *Ghost*, and to the strains of Roy Orbison.

Mirth aside, that's precisely what we must now do. Channel our individual passion and strength to the betterment not just of our families, friends, and business endeavours, but the collective improvement of our country. And not passively – because we pay tax – but actively in raising the tide for all ships.

South Africa has a tsunami on the horizon that, without a collective response, will one day hit our shores. It's called unemployment.

Unless we create a far more just, equal, and shared economy and an inclusive culture for possibility, this land will know neither peace nor prosperity. And the only way to tackle unemployment is through economic growth. For domestic and foreign investors to believe they can get a decent return on their investment here. And for this, as a start, you need stability.

So what can we do? The answer is participate in active citizenry

Skills transfer, mentoring, and education

There are tons of retired and semi-retired people who have invaluable skills they can pass on to those who are eager and desperate to learn.

Run free online tutoring courses and extra lessons for those without means. Go to a community hall in the afternoon, and help school kids or those at varsity with their subjects. There is that truism that "people die of boredom", not work.

I recently hosted an incredible human on my *Willing & Abel* podcast: Ayanda Vabaza-Mvandaba. She's a chartered accountant, serial entrepreneur, and philanthropist. Her husband, who shares these gifts, is an actuary. On the weekend, Vabaza-Mvandaba runs extra lessons in maths in her home while her husband cooks up delicious pastas in the kitchen to delight their students. This is an exemplary contribution and case of active citizenry.

Each one of us has strengths, talents, and wisdom to impart. Think about how you can help with skills transfer. Be it a trade, a hobby, literacy, or cooking. The possibilities are literally endless. And it will feed your soul.



Be an active citizen by giving back through education

Give back via opening education opportunities

Something I'm passionate about is contributing to bursaries. My companies embrace this philosophy too, and we try help those who may not be able to attend the right school to do so. And by the right school, I mean one that can enhance and amplify the pupil's talents. For example, we have kids who are musically talented attending schools that can unlock that child's full potential. It's not just about sport or academia. Talent comes in multiple shapes and forms.

Unlock your wardrobe

When we started The Street Store in 2014 for The Haven Night Shelter, we had no idea how a free, pop-up clothing store could clothe more than a million people around the world and in many instances, have a lasting impact on so many lives. Why not commit to host your own one this Mandela Day – go to www.thestreetstore.org and sign your pledge, today, on Thursday, 18 July.

Keeping the "gnu" fed and happy

Big or small, we can play our role in ensuring that our Government of National Unity holds. Through encouragement, putting pettiness aside, focusing on the bigger picture, and again active citizenry. Relationships are hard, be they at home, at work, socially, and certainly politically. They need cheerleaders, they need people fighting for them. Our job is to foster this relationship, irrespective of our individual parties. The far bigger picture is to build and rebuild where necessary. This is a massive opportunity for South Africa and each of her people. Let's honour Madiba through our individual responsibility and contribution.

• Mike Abel is the founding partner and executive chairperson of M&C Saatchi Group South Africa.



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Biden: will he or won't he?

OPINION

With President Joe Biden having recently produced what has been described by many commentators as the most disastrous performance in a debate in modern times and his cognitive decline becoming more and more apparent with each public appearance, the question is: why is Biden and his camp so determined for him to stay in the race? And then, as a follow up, why have the Democratic Party heavyweights been so reluctant to come out publicly and call for him to stand down?

Why is Biden so determined to run?

The first thing to understand as part of Biden's DNA, is that like him or hate him, the man is a fighter who has overcome much adversity in his life. He won his first senate race at 29, and then before he was sworn in, he lost his wife and baby daughter in a car crash. He has reportedly survived two brain aneurysms, and lost a son to brain cancer. His other son has caused him nothing but anguish with his very public battle with addiction. He lost two presidential races before finally winning in 2020. As the *Economist* put it, "He has good reason to believe in his capacity to confound his sceptics and beat the odds. But now he's facing an opponent no-one has ever defeated" – namely, father time.

Biden also believes, and has said it repeatedly, that he is the best placed in his party to defeat Trump, although the polls aren't showing this, and he is no doubt being egged on by his campaign staff and coterie of close advisors. Sadly for them, they are all failing/refusing to see the obvious truth: that the aging and visibly confused president is in no state to defeat Trump, and even less likely to be able to govern the country for another four years.

Photo: Anna Moneymaker - Getty Images



United States President Joe Biden

Why have the Democrats been so reluctant to turn against the president?

At this stage, only a trickle of Democrats have openly urged the president to abandon his campaign. There are many reasons for this:

First, no senior members of the party want to be seen to be disloyal to their leader and possibly jeopardise their career and prospects for re-election in their own House or Senate races.

Second, every senior Democrat fears chaos. Their worst nightmare is Biden standing down and a free-for-all ensuing at the Party Convention in August, with bitter infighting and a public brawl among a whole group of candidates, all putting up their hands to replace him. A convention is meant to be an uplifting and unifying spectacle, a coronation, not a divisive melee played out on national television viewed by millions. History has shown that candidates who get appointed after bitterly contested conventions tend to lose the presidential election, and the Democrats' worst nightmare is a contentious convention like the notorious one they had in 1968, when President Lyndon B. Johnson announced that he would drop out of the presidential race and not seek re-election.

Third, the other problem the Democrats have is that if Biden steps down, Vice-President Kamala Harris would be in the pound seat to replace him. She was a poor campaigner in 2020, and is hardly doing any better in the polls against Trump than Biden is. She's not popular nationally, and doesn't inspire much confidence. However, removing her as well would be another divisive move, particularly for the progressive wing of the party. As the *Economist* quotes a White House insider, "Are you going to shove aside your [president] and vice-president, and beat Trump in six weeks? If you fail, you're dead."

The next few weeks will be pivotal

A few more Democrat legislators have recently come

out against Biden running. About 20 Democrats in Congress have now called for the president to stand aside, as have a few big donors. Many were saying that the party wanted to allow the president to attend the recent North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference as his "swansong" before they openly turned on him. The NATO conference went better than expected for the president, although at the end of the conference, he did accidentally refer to Kamala Harris as "vice-president Trump". The next few weeks will be pivotal. In a few months' time, it will be too late to replace him on the printed ballots, and there's probably a 50-50 chance that Biden won't actually end up running for re-election. If he does pull out, he will no doubt discover, as many other aging leaders have before him, that although it's never easy to acknowledge your mortality and pass the baton to the next generation, once you do so, you quickly find that there are many able, willing, and competent younger leaders ready to take your place.

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.



HARRY JOFFE

Africans failing their people but focused on Israel

OPINION

KENNETH MOKGATLHE



It has become clear to me over the years that governments from my continent display little respect for the lives of their fellow black people. In many of the mismanaged failing states on the African continent, vast populations live in extreme poverty, remain unprotected from diseases, have little to no access to adequate health services as well as hygienic water sources, and seem cursed in having an uncaring leadership as defenceless citizens are slaughtered like chickens.

While sickening, it has struck me as particularly strange how some of these incompetent governments will meddle in the Israel-Hamas conflict while neglecting the welfare of their own people.

South Africa, which dragged Israel to the United Nations' International Court of Justice (ICJ), is the most unequal country in the world. About 75 to 85 people are violently murdered daily, and most victims are black. South Africa has the highest unemployment rate – 33% – in the world, and most of those young people are black. According to the World Bank in 2020, 50.5% of the population lived in poverty while 25% – almost 14 million people – experienced food poverty.

South Africa has major domestic problems that pose a threat to national security. It's a ticking time-bomb that could explode at any moment. It should be a given that the newly elected incoming government should prioritise the plight of its destitute black people before interfering in affairs a continent away that are of no strategic benefit to the larger population of the country.

A country's foreign policy should be an assertion of its national self-interest and be to the benefit of its domestic situation. A sober person should ask how many millions the ICJ case cost the South African government, how it served the nation domestically, and what effect the exercise had on bringing an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.

To make matters worse, we have a continental body, the African Union (AU), headquartered in Ethiopia, which has no regard for Africa and its people. We have a bloody war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which according to the Council on Foreign Relations, has claimed the lives of more than six million black people since 1996. Daily, black people continue to kill each other in the eastern DRC, but the AU appears unwilling to deliver a clarion call to end the bloodshed.

The 2020-2023 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia claimed more than 700 000 lives and has resulted in continued war crimes in the north of Ethiopia. Here again, the AU (and the UN) hasn't taken action. Maybe this is because this war didn't trend in the mainstream media. The AU should be the voice of the powerless on the continent, but has emerged as a paper tiger. It's becoming irrelevant to many Africans because it doesn't advance their interests.

In the words of Mozambican human rights activist Adriano Nuvunga, "Today, the African Union is an organisation that primarily represents the interests of the powerful. It's toothless and ineffective, and it repeatedly

proves itself incapable of ensuring prosperity, security, and peace for all Africans."

I'm dragging the toothless AU into this discussion because the chairperson of the AU Commission, former Chad Prime Minister Moussa Faki Mahamat, constantly uses all available platforms to condemn Israel.

When is he going to prioritise the welfare of black people on his own continent?

If he's so passionate about international human rights, why does Mahamat ignore the horror playing out in Haiti, where fellow black people who are descendants of Africans are slaughtering each other? Why is he so obsessed with Israel when black people are dying in their thousands in the Caribbean? What's extra special about Israel that diverts his attention from any concern about the lives of the descendants of Africa?

Some African leaders have neglected their own people by giving more attention to the Israel-Hamas war



Mr Mahamat, are African lives so cheap to you?

According to media reports, about 15 000 Sudanese – also African – have been killed, while more than 30 000 have been badly injured since the start of the civil war in 2023, but the AU has done absolutely nothing to quell the volatile situation there. The World Food Programme has recently alerted the world that Sudan is now facing unprecedented levels of starvation. We should be asking whether starvation has been used as a weapon of war.

Africa needs to defend and protect the lives of Africans in the continent. We have enough problems to preoccupy our minds rather than finding ourselves trapped in conflicts elsewhere in the world. African countries need to unite and co-operate to combat war, violent murder, terrorism, poverty, inequality, water insecurity, human and drug trafficking, and unemployment among the youth and women.

I'm reminded of the spirit of awakening across Africa in the early 1960s, captured in the words of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, at the Organisation of African Unity founding on 25 May 1963. Nkrumah said, "We must now unite or perish."

The policies pursued show little evidence of adhering to that spirit.

• Kenneth Mokgatle is pursuing a Master of Arts in African Studies, African sustainable communities programme, at Ben Gurion University of the Negev. He's a political writer, analyst, and researcher.

Article courtesy of Lay of the Land (www.layoftheland.online)

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Trump assassination attempt strengthens his appeal

STEVEN GRUZD

As former American President Donald Trump, 78, walked away from an attempted assassination on 13 July, the world is asking whether this will make him a shoo-in in the upcoming presidential race against incumbent President Joe Biden.

The presumptive Republican candidate, Trump, narrowly escaped the assassination attempt at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, when a sniper's bullet shot from a nearby rooftop grazed his right ear. The suspected gunman, 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, was killed by secret service agents.

In a tight presidential vote come November against the 81-year-old Biden, experts expect the shooting – in which one person was tragically killed – to boost Trump's electoral support, at least in the short term. It will distract from his legal problems. This is especially so as pressure mounts on Biden to bow out of the race due to his age and mental health, only compounded by his abysmal performance in the presidential debate on 27 June 2024.

Former United States (US) diplomat and writer J Brooks Spector told the *SA Jewish Report*, "At this point, three-and-a-half months before the election itself, it's still hard to tell just how this is all going to shake out. My sense of it is that Donald Trump's attempted assassination is going to solidify his support among Republicans generally. There's nothing that Trump likes more than to be both a martyr and a victim, at least in public affairs and public relations terms. I'm not entirely convinced it's going to do very much to sway Democratic Party-inclined voters, and I don't know whether it will have much to do with changing the minds



A triumphant former United States President Donald Trump after surviving an assassination attempt on 13 July

of that small group in the middle, the so-called 'independent voters', who tend overall to be more interested in policy than person. But it really is a little bit early to tell."

Spector said that the tone adopted at the Republican nominating convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, that began on 15 July will matter. "How will Republican office holders play the shooting? Do they try to make this sound like it's an effort to draw the country together, to unite, or do they stay with their older style of invective, finger-pointing, and blame-casting? That probably won't endear them to many independent or Democratic Party voters. Offers and efforts to unify may have more of an effect, and we'll see how that goes. But then there's always the imponderable of events that we can't predict, which may or may not occur in the next several months both

internationally and domestically."

John Stremlau, honorary professor of international relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, also warned about the dangers of premature predictions. "Forecasting US election results this far out is fool's play. Did you expect that a Government of National Unity would emerge [in South Africa] five months before? Did you expect the MK [uMkhonto we Sizwe] party would end third?"

"In the short run," Stremlau said, "we will witness the coronation of Trump at the Republican convention. We have the iconic picture of a bloody Trump raising his fist in defiance. He has the wind at his back now. He'll probably get a bump in the polls from this attempted assassination and go into the convention on a roll."

Stremlau said the real question is whether

Biden will step aside, initiating a scramble by the Democrats to find the best person to defeat Trump. With just five weeks before the Democratic nomination convention in Chicago, Illinois, this is a decision that will need to be made soon. But, unless Biden drops out of the race, he said, "we'll get a Trump presidency".

"In the debate, Trump lied, but he presented himself as the 'can-do' guy next to poor old Joe Biden," said Stremlau. "Remember, Nelson Mandela was 82, and wisely decided not to run for a second term. Biden would be 82 next year. It's hard to see him as president for four years, and doing it effectively."

As serious questions are being asked about the lapses in the Trump campaign's security arrangements, world leaders offered their condemnation of the attack.

Among them was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In a video message, Netanyahu said he was shocked by the "horrific" attempt on Trump's life. "This wasn't just an attack on Donald Trump. This was an attack on a candidate for the presidency of the United States. This was an attack on America. It was an attack on democracy. It was an attack on all the democracies. On behalf of myself, my family, the government, and people of Israel, we wish President Trump a speedy recovery, continued good health, and continued strength."

In spite of the support that Biden has given to Netanyahu since the terror attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023 and Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, many feel that the Israeli prime minister would probably favour a second Trump presidency. "It would be a dream for Netanyahu," Stremlau said. "He'd be delighted to have Trump back in the White House."

Whether this would be good for Israel and the Jewish people is an entirely different question.

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Fresh elections – ‘only way for Israel to recover’

LEE TANKLE

“We still believe in a two-state solution, although right now, it doesn’t seem practical,” Yair Golan, the newly appointed leader of the Israeli Democrat Party – a combination of the Meretz and Labor parties – told a Habonim South Africa webinar on 14 July.

Golan said the Israeli government was “changing the soul of Israel, the structure of Israel, the regime of Israel to a combination of a corrupt and authoritarian state that could disintegrate Israel and disconnect it from the rest of the Jewish world”.

He told the Habonim Engaged in Dialogue webinar this was unacceptable, and the only way to change Israel’s trajectory was to stand up and fight.

“We should struggle together to save Israeli democracy because Israel as a democratic state is the most important issue, otherwise we’ll deteriorate into a messianic, authoritarian, failed state like other faith states in the region, namely Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya,” he said.

“This is the most extreme anti-democratic, anti-Jewish government Israel has ever had. It’s unacceptable,” said Golan, “We need to be on the streets, we need to put as much as possible pressure on the political system to convince the prime minister and the rest of the members of the Knesset that we need new elections right now.”

Golan insists elections are essential because without them, he cannot see a way for Israel to recover from the trauma the nation has experienced.

Although the people of Israel have been traumatised by the events of 7 October and the war, he won’t allow them to be paralysed by trauma, he said.

“We need to take the initiative, and it should be on the route to the two-state solution. But we’ll move forward most cautiously in a way that will ensure Israelis that we won’t take the risk of another attack like the attack on 7 October.

“In Israel, under good leadership, we could explain to you why we have deteriorated into the situation we are in, in which we have been perceived as weak by our neighbours,” said Golan, “We could explain that the minute you try to destroy Israeli democracy, you start diminishing Israeli cohesiveness. When you lose cohesiveness, you show weakness to the rest of the region. And in our neighbourhood, the minute you show weakness, someone will exploit it.”

Golan also believes that the government hasn’t been handling the trauma of Israelis correctly. “Right now, the Israeli government isn’t willing to show compassion and empathy to Israeli citizens. In many cases, if you cannot do something to help and it’s not practical, at

least you can show empathy.”

Golan said that even though the Israel Defense Forces had made great strides in its military operation in Gaza, succeeding in destroying Hamas’s operational activity, it was unrealistic to carry on fighting until every last terrorist is found as that could take years.

“I fought Hamas in Judea and Samaria from 2000 to 2007. We still have Hamas activity in Judea and Samaria,” Golan said. “It didn’t vanish entirely. What’s needed now is to keep going with this military pressure. But we also need to reach a hostage deal as soon as possible.”

A hostage deal wasn’t just about the lives of 120 hostages and their families, he said. “It’s much more than that. It’s about the solidarity of the Jewish people. It’s about the solidarity of all Israeli citizens. It’s about, you know, the soul of Israel.

“We cannot leave this issue in the hands of crazy people with a messianic approach, like Benjamin Netanyahu, who is willing to sacrifice 120 people on behalf of his political destiny.”

Golan said the sooner a hostage deal was reached, the sooner a temporary ceasefire could be enacted both in the south and the north so that Israel could hold elections and a new coalition government could be formed.

“All political parties could be in this coalition

except those who are denying the very basic principles of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish state, and at the same time, a free, egalitarian, democratic state.”

Golan also said that when the war was over, there needed to be an alternative to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. “It’s not enough to fight Hamas. We need to build an alternative. It should be some sort of a regional effort combining the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and other nations like Morocco, with strong backing from the United States and maybe NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] members to come to the Gaza Strip with a presence like the Palestinian Authority.

“Without it, we won’t be able to move forward. And the meaning of that is that, yes, there’s a positive prospect for doing something positive with the Palestinians,” said Golan, “It’s wrong to think that all Palestinians are like Hamas.

“We cannot reconcile with the Iranians. We cannot reconcile with the Hezbollah or Shia militias in Syria and Iraq, or the Houthis in Yemen. We have nothing to discuss with them. But there’s a possibility for reconciliation with the Palestinians – not all of them, but some of them. We need to take full advantage of that possible process with the Palestinians in order to become more capable, to cope with the more severe threat imposed on Israel by the Iranian front.

“We live in a critical era that demands great deeds of courageous people,” Golan said. “I’m sure we’ll be able to co-operate and work together to save Israel and the Jewish people.”



Leader of the newly formed Israeli Democrat Party, Yair Golan

Netanyahu’s challenge in Congress to unite frayed Jewry

OPINION

AVINOAM BAR-YOSEF

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s planned speech this month to the United States Congress poses a complex challenge for Israel. Not just to the Biden administration. Not only against Donald Trump. Not only to the West, which is exposed to violent antisemitic demonstrations organised by Hamas.

Antisemitism (ISGAP) when it discovered that the Bafrayung Fund, headed by Rachel Gelman, is among the main donors to the Westchester Peace Action Committee (WESPAC), which supported anti-Israeli groups and Hamas-inspired demonstrations on campuses all over the US. I don’t know Rachel personally, but I know her parents well.

New York. He excitedly told me that there are Jewish leaders who are encouraging members of Congress to leave the hall during Netanyahu’s speech. They are asking them to join the demonstrations against him outside the Capitol. “When Israel wobbles, all of Judaism trembles,” said my friend. “Many American Jews fear Trump, and worry that Netanyahu will play into Republicans’ hands. They hate Israeli meddling in American politics, even if they admit that the US administration doesn’t hesitate to step in the Israeli political arena.”

During the speech, hundreds of thousands of Hamas supporters are expected to demonstrate outside the Capitol, chanting, “Palestine from the river to the sea!” It won’t be a rose garden. Jewish leaders of major American Jewish organisations say that Jews who intend to join the demonstrations and encourage a Democratic absence are a handful of identified activists of the progressive Jewish lobby J-Street. They draw inspiration from and are helped by a handful of Israelis. The *New York Times* article revealed their identity.

Israel’s supporters don’t believe that many Jews will join the Hamas “river to the sea” call. Those who arrive will be swallowed up in the crowd. They take solace in the fact that even in 2015 during Netanyahu’s speech in Congress, about 60 Democrat delegates abandoned the plenary in protest at his appearance. In their estimation, the picture will be similar in 2024. The leadership of both parties signed the invitation to Netanyahu, so a significant Democrat presence is expected.

For decades, American Jews have given Israel a safety net. They have largely become a strategic asset. World War II gave birth to deep frustration that stemmed from their powerlessness to help their brothers in Europe. After the war, they came to their

senses, and organised themselves.

On the eve of the Six-Day War, Levi Eshkol sought to characterise Israel, which hadn’t yet turned 20 as “*shimshun der nebeckhdikehr*” (poor Samson). A young country facing an existential threat, strong in spirit and determined to exist, ready to fight against enemies who seek its extermination.

The Jews of the world stood by the Jewish state as one. They came to volunteer in kibbutzim and moshavim to free reservists from the burden of their daily life. The power of the Jewish community in the US gained momentum after this war.

The unequivocal victory of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria added to the country’s national pride. In America, Jews, who had been excluded from leading universities, from private country clubs, from hotels and resorts reserved for Wasps (white Anglo Saxon Protestants) only, became more and more welcome.

Talented young Jews were absorbed into public service, in politics, in the media, and in academia. The same Wasps who, moments earlier, had opposed the reception of Jews to their clubs, began to take pride in brides and grooms of Jewish origin. Many of them, including American presidents, became grandparents to Jewish grandchildren.

This success worked in favour of Israel. During the Yom Kippur War, when Israel was undergoing one of its most difficult times, then secretary of state and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had a decisive influence on the American airlift sent to Israel, which changed the battlefield’s configuration. In the early 1990s, China, countries that had broken free from the Soviet bloc, and a significant part of the Third World, established relations with Israel because they believed that the road to Washington passed

through Jerusalem.

This in spite of the fact that the White House at the time acted against the re-election of Yitzhak Shamir, who was considered a right-wing, nationalist, and rigid leader.

This was mainly thanks to the unity of the Jewish people, thanks to the prosperity of the Jewish community in the US, and its visionary leadership headed by the iconic Max Fisher, and thanks to a thriving Israel. Jews who occupied senior positions in government were able to identify not only common values, but also tangential interests between the two countries, and strengthen their relations.

The events spurred by 7 October devoured the cards. Israel’s position as a regional power is eroding. The rift, the demonstrations in Israel, the shuffling on the battlefield, and the rise of antisemitism, are damaging.

Netanyahu must take advantage of the opportunity in Congress to strengthen the unity of the Jewish people, to recall the apples that have fallen far from the tree back to the roots. To tiptoe smartly between Biden and Trump. To make it clear to Americans and the free world that even though the Israeli Samson had a haircut on 7 October, he’s not a nebbish. That the Israeli soldiers fight bravely, and that the IDF stands resolutely at the head of the Western front, against the radical axis of evil led by Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea.

And, to the critics at home, they should be a little more patient and shoulder some more responsibility if the Jewish state is still dear to them.

• Avinoam Bar-Yosef is president emeritus of the Jewish People’s Policy Institute, and former diplomatic correspondent and Maariv bureau chief in Washington.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaking to the United States Congress in March 2015

The speech poses a serious challenge to the US Jewish community. American Jewry opposes Israeli interference in US internal affairs. October 7 didn’t pass them by. The tragedy in the villages around Gaza and the war that followed, have deepened the crisis in the community, a crisis that may affect the identity and identification of the young Jewish generation in North America.

The recent article in *The New York Times*, written by Ehud Barak, Tamir Pardo, and company, “We are Israelis calling on Congress to disinvite Netanyahu” (26 June 2024) wasn’t aimed at diaspora Jews. It was tuned to the political identity of Israeli Jews. The authors fear that a good speech will strengthen Netanyahu, and therefore they demand that Congress cancel the invitation.

A warning light was turned on by the Institute for the Study of Global

Suzy and Michael Gelman are prominent leaders and major philanthropists in the Jewish Federations of North America system; chaired the Jewish community of Washington, D.C. for three terms; are active on the board of trustees of the Jewish Agency; and were among the founders of Birthright (Taglit). I’m familiar with their warm Zionist affinity and liberal worldview. Their perceptions are typical of many North American Jews attached to Judaism and the Jewish state. As I understand it, Suzy and Michael have established a philanthropic foundation through which their children can do whatever their heart desires. The apple turns out to have fallen as far from the tree as a golf ball flying out of bounds.

However, the wake-up call came from a friend who has dedicated most of his life to the prosperity of the Jewish community of

Making us smile: Mandela the *mensch*

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Nelson Mandela made an indelible mark on everyone he met. Among them were many community members.

Affectionately referring to Solly Krok as “twinnie”, Nelson Mandela established a friendship with the renowned businessman and philanthropist following Mandela’s release from jail in 1990. “We hosted him at a function at Gold Reef City,” Krok recalls. “Then I got to know him because he was intrigued about me and my brother, Abe, the twins.” At the time, Mandela was also working to raise funds for the African National Congress (ANC).

“Mandela was a straight, honest person,” says Krok. “He asked me for money for people that needed funding, but he never touched a cent himself, it went to an attorney. He was a *mensch*.”

Mandela and Krok became close, and saw each other often in spite of the unrelenting queues of people always waiting to see Mandela at his office in Houghton. “He said to me one day, ‘Let me sort out the Israeli-Palestinian problem. You’ve

got to give land for peace’. So, I said, ‘Well Mandela, you want to try?’”

Krok also recalls Mandela’s connection to successful Johannesburg lawyer Lazer Sidelsky, for whom as a young man, Mandela worked as an article clerk. ANC stalwart Walter Sisulu, who had business dealings with Sidelsky, introduced the two men and Mandela’s path was set. In a letter to Sidelsky, Sisulu wrote about the day he introduced the two men in 1941 and they forged an enduring bond.

“You can now look back on that day as a truly historical one for it was from there that Nelson Mandela went on to become an attorney, a leading politician, and



Takara Lubner and Nelson Mandela

subsequently the state president of South Africa,” he wrote. “It’s amazing how history is fashioned.”

A function where Mandela was told Sidelsky was in attendance stands in Krok’s memory. “Mandela stopped and said, ‘Oh my G-d, my boss is here!’ He made Sidelsky come up to the stage, where he hugged him.” On another occasion, Krok called Mandela to let him know that Sidelsky was in hospital. Mandela dropped everything and went to visit him.



Michal and Tony Leon with Nelson Mandela

service of others.”

“One story is worth retelling since it has a current echo,” says Tony Leon, who led the Democratic Party and Democratic Alliance from 1994 to 2007, and was a negotiator in the creation of the new GNU. “In January 1997, the president’s office invited me to breakfast with Mandela at his Houghton home. This was his preferred form of political *toenadering* [approachment]. However, the hour – 06:00 – was a little alarming for me but not for the early rising president. I presented myself, and we chatted about trivialities over Jungle Oats. Then he dropped a political bombshell on the table. ‘Tony’, he intoned, ‘I would very much like you to join the Cabinet as one of my ministers.’

I was taken aback. At the time, I led the seven seat Democratic Party. Mandela’s party commanded 62% of the seats in Parliament, he bestrode the world stage.”

Yet, following discussions, Leon realised that what Mandela was proposing was co-option not power sharing. “Thus, with respect and affection, I declined, and my party went on to build opposition outside government,” says Leon.

“Last month, I was part of the negotiations which led, 27 years later, to the Democratic Alliance entering an ANC-led government not as a guest, but as a partner in power sharing with a humbled ANC which has shed the support it enjoyed under Mandela. That’s the theory anyway.”

This Mandela Day, we hope that the promise Mandela brought to the country in 1994 will be realised.

from Mandela was that when he wanted to get something done, nothing would stand in his way,” says Lubner. “This was particularly true if he knew that what he wanted done was for the good of the people. He was truly a leader that cared about national interests, probably the greatest thing that we should remember him for at this moment of Government of National Unity [GNU].”

Lubner also recalls how Mandela taught Takara always to take notes at their meetings even though she was only about 12 at the time. “He told her that no South African should be sitting around doing nothing, everyone had something to contribute. He wrote Takara a note saying that he recognised her as one of our future leaders, which both of us still treasure. Today, Takara conducts her life in pursuit of

Marc Lubner, the group chief executive of non-profit organisation Afrika Tikkun, recalls how a call that was mistakenly transferred to him instead of his father also changed the course of history. On the line was Mandela asking that Lubner help him to secure surgery for a young child suffering from a disfigurement due to a facial-paralysis condition.

The skills to perform the complex surgery didn’t exist in the country at the time, but through his Young Presidents’ Organization connections, Lubner was able to source surgeons from abroad. He recognised the opportunity to equip local surgeons with these skills so they could help children with similar conditions.

It was the start of the Smile Foundation in 2000, which today operates in 12 state hospitals across the country performing more than 1 000 surgeries a year.

“Mandela and I, and often my daughter, Takara, who joined me, sat and planned how we could launch an organisation that would address the needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds who faced various forms of facial disfigurement: cleft palate,

burns, and various other forms of facial and hand disfigurement,” Lubner recalls.

Mandela’s focus was solely on the children the Smile Foundation supported, and he visited many in hospital. “He was less interested in how we were funding the organisation and more concerned about the children and how they were advancing post-surgery.” So deep was his fascination, that throughout his life, he kept the Smile Foundation file on his desk.

“The most important lesson I learned

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SA-based expert joins Israel's 7 October legal team

ELKA COHEN

"I remember checking my phone at 11:00 on 7 October to find 54 unread messages from my closest friends and family in Israel," recalls Michalya Schonwald Moss. Today, she's the chief advancement officer of October 7 Justice Without Borders, a non-profit organisation devoted to the legal representation of survivors, murdered victims, hostages, and their families.



"I was in a state of shock," she said, the heartache still in her voice, "but I managed to maintain contact with my niece who was hiding in a safe room on Kibbutz Be'eri, where violent atrocities were taking place around her. It was horrifying to know that she was amidst the chaos, but news channels allowed me to share information with her about what was going on around her while she remained in hiding. It was only at midnight that I eventually got confirmation of her safe evacuation."

Schonwald Moss was emotionally shattered by the events of that day. She felt so far away from home, having made aliya from America at the age of 13 and living in Israel for most of her life before moving to South Africa in 2009.

"During the week following the attacks, I absorbed whatever news coverage I possibly could. I watched endless hours of footage of abductions and barbaric

human rights violations. My heart broke that day. I was so overwhelmed by grief that I got physically ill with pneumonia."

While Schonwald Moss regained her strength, her desire to help grew stronger too.

"I kept asking myself how I could lead through these dark and troubled times. I had no answers."

Her education at Colombia University, with a master's degree in international development from the University

of the Witwatersrand, had given her 20 years of experience in peace and conflict mediation. Her work placed her in many roles across the United States and Israel, where she built a vast knowledge of strategic partnership building, multi-sector collaboration management, and philanthropic advisory services in the social-justice sector. But Schonwald Moss still couldn't find her place in all the mess.

"It was a tough challenge to find my focus, especially being an American Israeli Jew living in South Africa. Not only was my heart in Israel, but I felt vilified here. When being a Jew equates to being a Zionist, to being a Nazi, I felt an angry sense of betrayal," she says.

At the end of February, Schonwald Moss was invited to Jerusalem by the World Zionist Organization to attend the first global leadership conference post-7 October. More than 500 leaders, community heads, and activists arrived to map the challenges facing Jewish people in Israel and in the diaspora.

"I wanted to find out how I could help lead in South Africa, a country known to be one of the strongest and most Zionist communities in the diaspora, now facing

some of the strongest anti-Israel sentiment by our own government.

"Jewish leaders from all over the world expressed similar feelings of insecurity, complete disempowerment, abandonment, and anxiety. As leaders of the diaspora, we realised we needed to come together and strategise," she says.

Soon after attorney Yael Vias Gvirsman founded October 7 Justice Without Borders in March, she invited Schonwald Moss to join the initiative. That's when she knew she had finally found her fit.

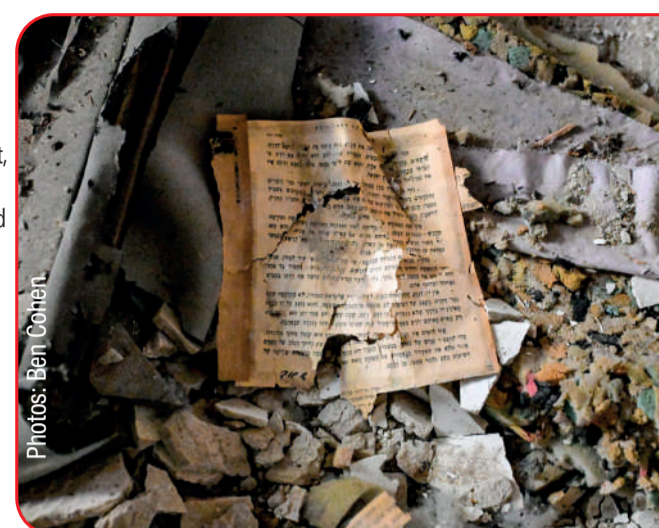
The goal of the registered nongovernmental organisation based in Tel Aviv is to ensure that any victim of 7 October atrocities receives free pro-bono legal representation and strategic litigation. Vias Gvirsman's expertise as an international criminal lawyer representing victims of atrocities worldwide prompted her to start the organisation. She's also the only Israeli female attorney to advocate successfully at The Hague.

From the very first days after the attack, the initiative accompanied hostages and survivors directly from the field, collecting and preserving evidence and leading a legal front in their name, one that not only preserves their rights, but also their safety.

"Twenty of our 36 missing hostages have been safely liberated," says Vias Gvirsman. "Unfortunately, some bodies were returned to Israel dead, while other bodies are still being held in Gaza. But there are hostages who are still alive, and we're waiting for their return home – safely, immediately, and unconditionally."

The non-profit organisation is representing 262 victims – hostages, survivors, and the estates of the murdered victims – from several kibbutzim and the Nova festival, one of which is the family of murdered hostage Shani Louk.

The initiative was the first to file a complaint on behalf of the victims at the International Criminal Court, and the only one representing victims at The Hague without intermediaries.



Photos: Ben Cohen

"We investigate the truth by working with forensic experts who have collected and preserved evidence in more than 28 crime scenes," says Schonwald Moss. "Our teams document witness testimonies humanely, collecting all the evidence to prove that the crimes did occur and then we work towards reparation and compensation," she says.

"We present civil lawsuits against the state, corporate entities, and individuals in order to give direct reparations to victims. We also aim to deal a fatal blow to the funding of terrorist infrastructures in order to ensure that this never happens again," Schonwald Moss says.

A holistic approach ensures that clients are treated with the utmost sensitivity, with consideration towards the well-being and mental health needs of victims, and the initiative connects them with those resources too.

We have recently marked nine months since the attack on Israel, and hundreds of Israeli protesters blocked highways across the country, demonstrating outside the homes of ministers to incite pressure on the government to reach a hostage deal with Hamas.

The "Day of Disruption" began at 06:29 – the exact time Hamas terrorists launched the first rockets in its deadly surprise attack that triggered war. Since the brutal attacks, 116 of the 251 abducted hostages still remain unaccounted for.

Orthodox NYPD graduate receives top award

LUKE TRESS – JTA

New York City Police Department (NYPD) recruit Allan Pearlman was running laps in the gym in May during his training to become a police officer when he heard a loud thud behind him.

Pearlman, a modern Orthodox Jew from Staten Island, turned around and saw one of his classmates lying on the ground, immobile.

Pearlman's training as an emergency medical technician kicked in. He grabbed a police academy medical bag, rushed to his classmate's side, made sure she had a pulse, and treated her until an ambulance arrived.

The following month, Pearlman saw another recruit for NYPD traffic enforcement lying on the ground on the police academy's muster deck, an outdoor gathering spot. Pearlman ran outside to treat the recruit, who was having a diabetic episode. Again, he provided urgent care until an ambulance showed up.

"I don't think I did anything special," Pearlman told the *New York Jewish Week*. "I saw somebody that needed help, and I went."

Pearlman graduated from the police academy on Monday, 15 July, and for his fast response in those two episodes, he received the Police Academy Commanding Officer's Award for exceptional police duty, one of seven recruits to be honoured from the graduating class of 600. The Police Academy, in College Point, Queens, trains recruits for about six months.

Pearlman joins the force as it grapples with the surge in antisemitism across the city and raucous anti-Israel protests that have disrupted city life on the streets, college campuses, during major events, and at prominent public gathering places. There have been at least 223 antisemitic hate crimes reported to police since 1 January, according to preliminary police data. In one of the most recent incidents that is being investigated as a suspected hate crime, an arsonist lit a Hatzalah emergency services vehicle on fire in the Lower East Side on Saturday, 6 July.

"It's concerning what's happening across the city with the Jewish community, but as you see, the police department is actively recruiting members of the Jewish community,"

said Deputy Chief Richie Taylor, the NYPD's highest-ranking Orthodox Jew. The NYPD recruits candidates from communities around New York City, although Pearlman was motivated to join the force from an early age.

"It's important for the police department to reflect the city that we serve," Taylor said. "Every community would appreciate seeing someone who reflects them and speaks their language."

Taylor said the NYPD didn't track the number of Orthodox Jews on the police force.

Pearlman, 26, who grew up in the modern Orthodox community on Staten Island, was always drawn to the NYPD.

"I always wanted to be a police officer ever since I was a kid," he said. He worked as an EMT in New Jersey with Hatzalah for eight years, which solidified his desire to join the force.

"I got to see what it really did, and that further drew me to it," he said.

The NYPD provides officers with cultural sensitivity training, including for Jews. Pearlman said a rabbi recently came to his class to give a presentation on Judaism, such as the significance of Jewish holidays. In addition to training for all recruits, Pearlman believes his Jewish background will be an asset once he's assigned to duty.

"It's important to have every culture, every religion. It just

gives us a better understanding of how to police and protect our communities," he said. "If I end up in a precinct that has a predominantly Jewish community, it will definitely be beneficial. I'll be able to understand why certain things are being done the way that they're being done."

Jewish officers can be an asset to their coworkers by explaining nuances about the Jewish community, said Mitch Silber, the former head of intelligence analysis for the NYPD and current director of the Community Security Initiative, which coordinates security for Jewish institutions in the New York area.

"They can help explain some of the traditions, rules, and regulations of that community that other police officers may not be familiar with," Silber said. For example, if someone rode a bicycle to an Orthodox synagogue on a festival day, or *yom tov*, non-Jewish officers would probably not realise that such behaviour is banned by religious law as a type of work and out of the ordinary.

"In that community, nobody does that, so that would be an anomaly and maybe something suspicious," Silber said. "Other officers might not be aware that that's a type of behaviour that's worth taking a second look at."

Silber said it was especially important to have Jewish representation on the police force since 7 October and the rise in antisemitism.

"Orthodox Jewish members of the NYPD are rising in the ranks," he said. "Just as it's helpful to get their unique insight at the street level, it's also [helpful] at One Police Plaza and headquarters to have Orthodox high-ranking officials so that the top brass of the NYPD is in tune with and sensitive to some of the unique elements of this community."

Pearlman doesn't anticipate any problems due to his religion, noting that he has spoken to other observant Jews on the force who have found the NYPD accommodating.

"They always get Shabbat off. They get off holidays," he said. "The ones that need a beard, they get a beard."

"I just want to make sure that wherever I end up, I can hopefully make a difference, bring the community and the police closer together, make sure people do feel safe," he said.



NYPD recruit Allan Pearlman outside the New York Police Academy

GNU breathes fresh air into Parliament

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The new Government of National Unity (GNU) is in the best interest of South Africa and its people, says Democratic Alliance (DA) Member of Parliament Glynnis Breytenbach, who has been chosen to resume her position on the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) for another five-year term.

Her fellow DA members, Michael Bagraim and Darren Bergman, who also occupy positions in the GNU, say the new government has already brought positive changes to the country.

Bergman, a DA whip in the National Assembly and a member of the planning, monitoring, and evaluation portfolio which is in the office of the Presidency, says the GNU has given many a renewed sense of hope. "You can feel it in the markets and headlines and on the streets," he says. "A lot more people are wanting to engage around political activity."

Bagraim, elected to the National Assembly in 2014, says the GNU has led to positivity in civil society and small businesses wanting to reinvest and employ. "It is like a breath of fresh air to hear how entrepreneurs want to take up this new challenge immediately," he says. "On a personal level, I'm feeling a lot more positive and excited about what can be achieved over these next five years."

Breytenbach says the GNU is still in its early days, and "we all have to get used to it. We must all work really hard to make this work."

An advocate, Breytenbach says the role of the members of the National Assembly who sit on the JSC is to "participate in the interviewing of aspirant judges to satisfy ourselves as to their suitability to occupy a space on the bench".

Bagraim, the DA labour spokesperson, a position he has held for 10 years, is looking forward to continue serving in this position "as the structure of the portfolio committee on employment and labour has become far more effective and my voice has become a lot more powerful. Under the GNU, I'm finding that my ideas have more traction."

Bergman, a DA Member of Parliament since 2014, says, "Given the gravitas of my portfolio, it transcends all the ministries and departments and should hold them all to account."

Breytenbach, known for her infamous stare as a state prosecutor, points out that members of the JSC represent Parliament, not a political party. As the JSC sit twice a year, she will next sit with the other members in October, having already done so with the previous committee in April.

She hopes new Chief Justice Mandisa Maya will follow in the footsteps of her predecessor, Raymond Zondo, by making positive changes to the JSC. Zondo's changes come on the back of the JSC fielding a lot of criticism in the past. "We certainly learned from our mistakes, and we made changes to the rules of the JSC regarding how we engage people and what precisely it is that we try to achieve," Breytenbach says. "So, we refocused and I think it made a big positive difference to the JSC. Hopefully going forward, we'll be able to do a proper, thorough,

efficient, and objective job of evaluating aspirant candidates."

Breytenbach, 63, along with the African National Congress (ANC's) Soviet Leganyane (50) and Fasiha Hassan (30); ActionSA's Athol Trollip (60); Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema (43); and uMkhonto weSizwe (MK's) John Hlophe (65) will represent Parliament in the JSC.

Breytenbach says each member functions individually in the JSC, so they won't be working together per se. "It's not a team effort. We all interview candidates as we see fit within the rules of the JSC. Then we all participate in the deliberations thereafter in order to assess and vote on the fitness of the candidate."

The DA will continue to oppose the appointment of Hlophe to the JSC, the same body that found him guilty of gross misconduct. "We're going to the Constitutional Court," Breytenbach says "We're taking the decision of the National Assembly on review. That's not something that you can drive at the JSC as it's not within the purview of the JSC. The DA, along with other non-governmental organisations, is taking the measure on review to set it aside."

Breytenbach knows all of the members of the JSC, including Hlophe. "Hlophe has covered himself in disgrace, and has no place on the body like the JSC," Breytenbach says. "He was found guilty by the JSC of gross misconduct and that led to his impeachment by Parliament. He's allowed into Parliament as there are no rules to prevent him from being in it." Breytenbach describes this as "a lacuna in the law which must be

addressed. To allow him to go to the JSC is, in my view, irrational and unreasonable."

The DA has previously been working with other parties on Parliament's portfolio committees, Breytenbach says. "Just the way we approach things now differs slightly because we're trying to achieve a common goal. One has to try and find areas of agreement. When there is disagreement, we have to try our best to sort out the differences before we go into the committees."

The DA had good relationships with certain parties long before the GNU, Bergman says. "Unfortunately, there are some parties in Parliament that are keen to ensure instability and the failure of the GNU. We have to work around that too."

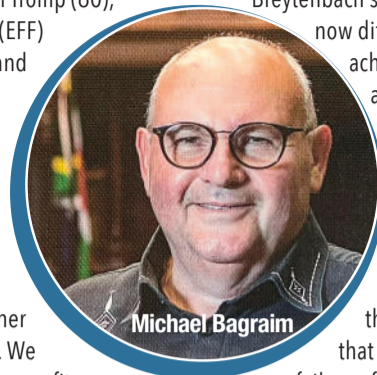
Breytenbach points out that the alternative to the GNU would be a government run by the ANC in coalition with the EFF or MK. "The EFF and the MK have stated an objective to overturn the Constitution and return South Africa to a Parliament-governed country. We all know what happened the last time there was a Parliament-governed country [during apartheid]. It didn't turn out well. It leads to despotism."

Bagraim says the GNU has led to the DA being viewed not only as a powerful voice of opposition but also as the future structure of almost all of the 30 portfolio committees.

The GNU has resulted in the vote for members of the portfolio committees being structured differently. "I will on occasion have more than 50% support on new ideas and amendments," Bagraim says. "The reality is now much brighter. I fortunately found traction even with the representative from the EFF in spite of our differences. Clearly under the GNU, even with those outside national unity, the approach has been more accommodating and, dare I say it, friendly."



Darren Bergman



Michael Bagraim



Glynnis Breytenbach

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365 Finance – fit for a king

LEE TANKLE

When South African-born Andrew Raphaely launched his lending business, 365 Finance, he would never have dreamed that 12 years later, King Charles would personally award him and his company for enterprise and innovation.

Last Tuesday, 9 July, King Charles bestowed on Raphaely's company the King's Award for Enterprise at a ceremony held at Windsor Castle.

"We didn't expect it at all," said Raphaely, pointing out that the award was for his company and not him personally. "It's something we're proud of, and we have some South Africans on our board. It was exciting to be put on such a profound stage to show what South Africans can do."

Among the guests at the reception was Jonathan Reynolds, the new secretary of state for business and trade, and while pointing to the business people including Raphaely, King Charles told Reynolds, "They represent the best of the British."

Raphaely, however, qualified as a chartered accountant in 1998 in Johannesburg, and went to the United Kingdom in 1999 after completing his articles. He started 365 Finance, a business that lends money to SMEs (small and medium businesses) in 2012. In the years since, 365 Finance has won several awards including Credit Awards SME Lender of the Year – which it has held since 2022; Leadership Awards: Business Leader of the Year in 2024; and Employer of the Year for the Women in Credit Awards in 2023.

The company is celebrating 10 years since it granted its first loan as it took the first two years of the business to get its systems right. Said Raphaely, "Over the past 10 years of 365 Finance, we've collected a lot of data over which loans have performed better, which have performed worse, what makes a loan good, and what makes a loan not so good."

"Now we have artificial intelligence and machine learning programmes on how to underwrite customers. That's the innovation that has won us the award."

"We take company culture seriously with our 65 employees in our two offices in the United Kingdom," said Raphaely. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, I reached out to our staff and asked them to write a page about what the business culture meant to them. We published a book to give to new and prospective employees, and we update the book each year."

"It's important for us that our customers can easily afford what we're lending to them, and aren't put under pressure," he said.

"For example, if we lend £30 000 [R704 823] to a restaurant and it is going to pay back £35 000, 365 Finance makes sure that no matter how long it takes to repay, that restaurant will only ever owe us the amount of £35 000. So every day, when customers give a pound to the restaurant, they get 90p and we get 10p until the £35 000 is paid back. When they're trading more heavily, we'll get paid back faster. When they're trading slower, we get paid back slower. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we didn't collect from many of our restaurants but we did collect from our convenience stores. The collections are very much based on performance," Raphaely said.

They initially heard they were to receive the award in mid-April, and much jubilation followed.

"My mother was born in London and was always a keen royalist. Sadly, she passed away on 6 May, so didn't get to see me collecting the award, but I learned that we had won the award before then so she knew about it before she passed away and she was very proud," Raphaely said.

Raphaely described King Charles as personable,



King Charles III and Andrew Raphaely

and said he had asked relevant questions to all those at Windsor Castle. "He has this defining presence when he walks into the room. You know that the king has arrived."

"Ahead of the award, one of my friends told me that there's a special blessing to say when you meet a monarch, so I was blessed to perform this *mitzvah* of saying this blessing as well," he said.

In winning the award, 365 Finance can put the king's emblem next to its emblem in all communications that the company makes for the next five years including its letterhead, and can put up the king's emblem in its offices.

"This will raise the profile of our company and attract interest in investment in the future," Raphaely said.

UJW Sewing School plants seeds for life

LEE TANKLE

Being given a skill when life is tough is the biggest gift of all. Graduates of the Union of Jewish Women's (UJW) Sewing School have a career ahead of them after having nothing positive in their paths.

The four women who graduated on 4 July not only have a diploma to their name, they also have a sewing machine and proven ability to design and create stylish outfits.

"The sewing school changed my life because I could make beautiful garments," said Nomvula Setuke, one of the school's graduates from 2020. "I could make things that I never thought I could. I started selling, and I earned some income by doing so. I'm now financially stable and can support my family," said Setuke, who did the course when she was already in her sixties.

This year's four graduates are full of confidence, having made the outfits they modelled in their graduation ceremony fashion show in July.

The school, at the premises of the Oxford Road Shul, started in 2010. Since then, it has empowered more than 100 people by teaching unemployed men and women from 18 to 65 how to sew. All of these graduates are able to work for themselves and create beautiful garments.

"The school was created to contribute towards alleviating South Africa's poverty problem through skills development," said Ariane Heneck, the director of the sewing school. "We teach our students how to sew so that they have a skill that they can use however they may choose."

"Most of the graduates go on to work for themselves, producing items for sale to their families and friends," said Heneck. "Some have even started clothing brands."

"When the four-and-a-half-month course is over and the graduates are modelling their designs, they have such a sense of pride and empowerment," Heneck said.

Though the course costs R400, "it's difficult to get that amount of money when you're unemployed", Heneck said. "People often have to fall back on their families or money they have saved. We try to serve them the best we can. That's why we don't give our students qualifications from CETA (the Construction Education and Training Authority). If we did, the course would be too expensive and inaccessible."

"It's amazing to see how far our graduates have come in such a short time," said Heneck. "Many enter our school without knowing how to thread a sewing machine. By the end of four and a half months, they are making elegant evening gowns."

After attending a few programmes at the San Kopano Resource Centre in Alexandra, Setuke, one of the school's most successful graduates, heard about the sewing school, and made further enquiries.

She worked to get her certificate during the COVID-19

pandemic, when they learned to make masks and other garments like beautiful dresses at home.

After graduating, Setuke made and sold baby cushions, and created her own brand, Cotton Harvest. Then she got a call from Heneck asking her to step in as teacher at the school while the regular teacher was away. She has since become the sewing school's full-time teacher.

"I've grown so much, even while teaching. Some of the things I thought I couldn't do, I can now do perfectly," she said.

"Some of our graduates start their businesses making dresses for their church, some work in other businesses making clothing or curtains," said Heneck. "We're lucky to be able to prepare them for whatever their future may hold."

"They all impress whoever they show their garments to. Some have been able to build their businesses after showing their dresses at church," she said.

"Our students come to school every day, and for those four and a half months, they work hard to get skilled so that when they graduate, they can compete with some of the best seamstresses in town," she said.

Heneck said their numbers dwindled over the COVID-19 pandemic, but even in the years since the pandemic, the school hasn't had the volume of applications it had before, receiving only eight applications for the upcoming intake in August.

"I don't know if the market is saturated and that's why we haven't been getting as many applications," she said. She's also baffled why people aren't jumping at the



Graduates of the UJW Sewing School

opportunity to learn a new skill that can help them to improve their lives because "it's a skill we give them. The ones who finish or are fantastic seamstresses."

"We have lots and lots of donations of fabric that our students use to create their beautiful garments, but we wish we could do more to help these men and women kickstart their career," she said.

"We aim to make sure that every student that graduates can do anything that a good seamstress can do: make curtains or a dress. There's nothing our graduates cannot do."

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Auschwitz Museum conserves shoes of tiny victims

ELKA COHEN

Following a year of painstaking conservation work at the Auschwitz Museum Conservation Laboratories, more than 3 000 shoes of Jewish children murdered in Auschwitz have returned to display. This marks the success of the first phase of a historic restoration project that requires half a million dollars to reach its goal of restoring a total of 8 000 shoes.

In September last year, The Auschwitz Museum, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, and the International March of the Living joined forces, issuing an international call to raise funds. The fundraising campaign, "From Soul to Sole" resulted in thousands of people from the public and businesses, both in Israel and abroad, contributing thousands of dollars. By April, just a few months later, the first phase was ready to begin.

Says Phyllis Greenberg Heideman, the president and co-founder of the International March of the Living, "When we received the request from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation to preserve the shoes of children murdered in the camp, it was a moral obligation. We see the conservation of the shoes of these innocent children as an eternal testimony to the brutality of the Nazi regime as well as a significant educational initiative."

South African businessman and chairperson of the Neishlos Foundation, Eitan Neishlos, provided the lead funding to kickstart the conservation project. Neishlos, a third-generation Holocaust survivor and philanthropist, was motivated not only to help preserve evidence but also to empower future generations by keeping the stories of the children alive.

"The shoes represent the lost memories, lost dreams, and lost aspirations of an entire generation," says Neishlos. "The project is a vital testimony of our history."

"Preserving the last remaining evidence of the children who were murdered at Auschwitz has even more meaning today as Jewish people around the world experience rampant antisemitism. We must all come together to make sure that no-one will be able to deny or distort the horrors the Jewish people endured in the Holocaust."

It's been 79 years since the liberation of the death camp in 1945, and with the passage of time, the shoes had become sadly deteriorated. The main problems facing conservators was the damage to the leather and its fragility, along with corrosion of the shoes' metal parts. Meticulous conservation work to address these challenges entails that each shoe is treated on a case-by-case basis.

"Although they belong to the same group of objects and share a common part of history, they each have individual characteristics, constructed from similar materials but with distinct details that are significant in the conservation process. Each one is unique in that it contains traces of another person's life. Therefore, conservation cannot be approached collectively, repetitively, or mechanically," says expert Nel Jastrzębiowska, from the museum's conservation laboratories.

The project is expected to last about two years, and will ensure the preservation of the children's shoes for another 100 years.

Says Piotr Cywiński, the director of the Auschwitz Museum, "The murder of more than 200 000 children at Auschwitz seems to represent the darkest area of history. This is where all the innocence, trust, helplessness,

and goodness of children is juxtaposed with the ruthlessness of the German Nazi murderers. This is the apex of crimes of an ideology built on hatred. Very often, the only thing left of these children are the shoes. And just as every human step leaves a mark, so these shoes remain today the footprints of child victims."

shoes at the Auschwitz Memorial, holding the crumbling children's shoes, I kept thinking how my twin sisters' shoes are among them," said Pinsker. She's deeply moved to hear about the progress being made, and thanks the public for its involvement in preserving the evidence of Nazi crimes.



Shoes belonging to children who were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau undergoing conservation

Like all the other personal items saved by the museum's conservators, the tiny shoes of the youngest victims require preservation. Although the shoes are symbolic of the crimes perpetrated there, they evoke an even greater sense of responsibility.

Auschwitz survivor Arye Pinsker was present at the launch of the project at the conservation laboratory. Pinsker was a child when she was incarcerated at the death camp in 1944.

"When I stood in front of the mountain of

The 7 October attacks in Israel forced the Jewish people to face the worst massacre since the Holocaust and reignited its historical trauma.

"Our voices were silenced back then," says Neishlos, "but today, with Israel, the Jewish world does have a voice and in the face of antisemitism, in the face of Holocaust denial, in the face of distortion of information, with both our past and present realities, I think evidence is key, and having a voice is key."

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Sex for Dummies: Dr Ruth Westheimer 1928-2024



HOWARD SACKSTEIN

TRIBUTE

Not for sensitive readers

The phone rang, the German accented woman said, "I've just landed. I'm having a massage, come collect me in an hour." "But you've just landed from a 16-hour flight from New York, don't you want to sleep?" I protested. "Have a rest, I'll collect you for dinner." "Collect me in an hour," said Dr Ruth, and the phone went dead.

As I walked into the Monarch Hotel in Rosebank, a diminutive 4 foot 7 inch (140cm) Holocaust survivor pranced out with sparkling eyes, followed by a 6 foot 4 inch rippling muscled black massage therapist who said to me, "I wish I had her energy."

For the next week, the nearly 90-year-old would run me off my feet. Brunch at Moyo's in Melrose Arch and a visit to Nelson Mandela's home energised rather than tired her. When the others had left dinner at The Fishmonger, Dr Ruth asked me to take her to see African prostitutes. We were in the perfect area, up and down Rudd Road, Illovo. We drove and then past a hotel in Corlett Drive, which Patrick, my housekeeper, once informed me was a haven for sex workers.

Never have I met anyone with greater insight. Over the next week, I lapped up her wisdom. "Those girls want to marry the Prince of Monaco, but he's not interested in them, they aren't 18 anymore ... People ask questions, the right answer is usually, 'None of your business.'"

On the way into Soweto, a group of American tourists ran her off the road, so excited to meet the world's most famous sex therapist and one of the most famous TV stars in America. At the Lion Park, Israeli tourists ignored the animals and wanted selfies with the diminutive superstar.

At our public event hosted by the South African Zionist Federation, she told me, "I don't want to answer questions in public about 'anal', *dis past niet* [the Yiddish term for 'it's not appropriate']". But Dr Ruth wasn't one to

Howard Sackstein with his two favourite sexologists, Kiki Boffard and Dr Ruth Westheimer



shy away from embarrassing questions. During a tour of the Lion Park, she peppered our guide, TikTok influencer Shandor Larenty, with questions about gay lions – which apparently occurs as a sign of dominance – and whether these lions ejaculated during gay sex, which a blushing Larenty informed her he had never checked.

Wherever we went, Dr Ruth had the same question, "Did you tip the parking attendant, if not for a twist of fate, that could have been me. Did you tip the toilet attendant because if not for a twist of fate, that could have been me."

I sat down with Dr Ruth and asked her to tell me her story. I wanted to understand her twist of fate.

As a teenager in Germany, her parents witnessed the rise of Nazism, and put her on a Kindertransport to Switzerland. She never saw them again.

She spent her teenage years in a Swiss orphanage before making her way to the British Mandate for Palestine at the end of World War II. She joined the Haganah, the Israeli underground army, fighting for Israel's independence from British colonialism and Arab attack. She became a sniper, and turned red when she told me that she lost her virginity on a kibbutz haystack

with her rifle at her side. The poor guy must have been terrified. She told me she could dismantle and assemble a Sten gun with her eyes closed.

After having her legs shredded in a mortar attack on her birthday, during the last days of the war, she recovered, married, and moved to France. A few broken marriages later, she landed up in New York, where she saw a notice offering free education to Holocaust survivors. She got a job as a maid to put herself through a Master's degree and then a Doctorate, becoming an unknown academic and sex therapist.

One day, the university department secretary walked into the staff lounge and informed all the academics that the Broadcast Association of America was having a conference and wanted a speaker to talk about why sex was an inappropriate topic for radio and TV. All the professors questioned how much the talk would pay, and on learning that there was no stipend, they all refused. Ruth Westheimer said yes.

After her talk on the inappropriateness of speaking about sex on radio, a radio executive approached Dr Ruth and asked her to try a radio show, at midnight on a Sunday evening for 15 minutes on radio station WYNY.

The show, *Sexually Speaking*, lasted for 10 years, and became an hour-long live call-in radio talk show. Within three years, it had become the most popular radio show in America and soon morphed into the Dr Ruth TV Show, which attracted two million viewers each week. In the days before Oprah Winfrey, Dr Ruth became one of the most famous faces in America. She wrote 35 books about sex including *Sex for Dummies*.

If not for a twist of fate, Dr Ruth could have been the parking attendant or the toilet cleaner. Kismet or fate or destiny or the will of G-d?

But in spite of it all, Dr Ruth never felt completely comfortable in her role, and she would never allow her husband, Manfred Westheimer, to come to her talks – "*dis past niet*". But one day, she told me, she made an exception. Dianne Sawyer of American television show *60 Minutes* wanted to film Dr Ruth in her home, she knew Manfred had always had a crush on Sawyer, so she agreed that, on this one occasion, he could stay. Sawyer arrived, her crew set up cameras in the lounge and asked for a visual of Dr Ruth and her husband on the couch together. Suddenly Sawyer asked, "So tell me Mr Westheimer, how's your sex life?" Not missing a beat, Dr Ruth's husband turned to Sawyer and said, "The cobbler's children have no shoes!"

After leaving South Africa, Dr Ruth travelled to Israel and insisted that she wanted to meet my parents who were on holiday in Tel Aviv. She arrived bearing gifts, at their hotel, to thank them for my hospitality in Johannesburg. Thereafter, Dr Ruth met her children in Switzerland for their annual hike through the Swiss Alps.

Dr Ruth, my friend, passed away on Friday in New York aged 96, after a remarkable life.

• Howard Sackstein is chairperson of the SA Jewish Report and a public speaker who often talks about the life lessons taught to him by Dr Ruth. He writes in his personal capacity.

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Make Mandela Day every day

ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

This week marks the 30th anniversary of the bombing of the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires, which claimed 85 lives and left more than 300 people injured. This was the first targeted attack against a Jewish installation in the diaspora, and fundamentally changed the way our communities operate. Since then, securing Jewish installations and following sensible safety protocols at community events has become a major focus of global Jewish leadership. Indeed, our own Community Security Organisation was formed on the initiative of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies soon after the AMIA attack, mirroring similar Jewish security organisations around the world.

Regrettably, world Jewry continues to be the focus of extremism, and we have over the years witnessed many similar tragedies. Our community must remain vigilant about its security, and steadfast against indoctrination to hate. I recall a poignant statement made by AMIA survivor Anita Weinstein, who addressed our Gauteng council in 2022 stating, "To defeat these evil ideologies, it's our abiding duty to build together a culture of tolerance and respect for the sanctity of human life and to inculcate these values into our own and in future generations."

With this in mind, how fitting it is that in this same week, we honour Nelson Mandela, a leader who stood so staunchly for these very ideals of tolerance, acceptance, and peaceful coexistence. By celebrating Mandela Day with community service, volunteering, and social-upliftment projects, we enshrine the ideals of this great man, and make a positive statement in favour of cohesion and coexistence. In this way, Mandela Day may be the strongest statement against the forces that

are responsible for AMIA and so many other atrocities.

South African Jewry has a long and proud history of contributing to the broader South African society. The Board has been privileged to work with many organisations in our community over the years that are making a practical, positive difference in the lives of our country's people. A testament to the amazing work taking place across South Africa has been recorded in the second edition of our *Jubuntu* book: *Jubuntu 2.0*. The book will be launched this year, and I encourage everyone to support this publication.

However, we must understand that the Jewish ideal of *tikkun olam* (healing the world) isn't something reserved for Mandela Day, but should be an ongoing and integral part of our community ethos. We must harness the goodwill experienced on Mandela Day into a continued and perpetual culture of social investment and upliftment. I thus wish to motivate the community to take on projects that can have an impact lasting well beyond 18 July.

There are numerous charitable bodies that serve both the community and our associated bodies, Jewish and non-Jewish, that are in constant need of support, both financial and in volunteer hours. I strongly encourage everyone to harness the momentum and spirit of Mandela Day, and of Mandela himself, and take more of a role in the upliftment of our country and community.

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

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

Surf, sun, and Sefer Torah: Muizenberg's new rabbi

LEE TANKLE

When Rabbi Ryan Goldstein left Johannesburg and moved to Muizenberg in April to take over the Muizenberg Hebrew Congregation, he was staying true to his belief in second chances.

This week on 15 July, Goldstein proposed to self-employed mother of three, Nicky Malka Leib, originally from Johannesburg, on the beach across the road from his apartment in a beautiful display.

The pair met while getting IV drips, and were told not to talk to each other, but they couldn't help but connect, and all these years later, they are starting a new life together. Goldstein wouldn't say any more about this or anything else about their relationship, saying it was personal.

Leib stays in Johannesburg with two of her three children – one child lives in Israel. But she plans to join Goldstein in Muizenberg. Three of Goldstein's children live in Israel, with three others living in Johannesburg.

"Nicky was here visiting. The beach is right across from my flat, and three of my children were here for the school holidays, so it seemed like a no-brainer to do it now," said Goldstein.

"The proposal was put on Facebook, not by me, but the response has been amazing. We've been getting great comments," he said.

Goldstein jumped at the chance to take over the Muizenberg Hebrew Congregation as full-time rabbi when he was told last year that the very popular Rabbi Ryan Newfield, known as the "surfing rabbi", was looking to go back to the United States after four years in Muizenberg.

"There's so much work to be done here and so much potential in Muizenberg compared to Johannesburg, so when the option came

up, I jumped and did a secret trial run in June of 2023," said Goldstein, "You want to experience Hashem's world, you want to live life, and you can also learn Torah and do good. There's so much thirst for it."

Goldstein said that through living in Muizenberg and engaging with the people there, he had discovered a whole new side to the beachside town. "There are a lot of secret, hidden Jews. You'll find them on the beach and in the bars and their flats, but they don't come to shul," he said, "Our mission is to find them all and show them that our shul is amazing, our *brochas* are amazing, the Torah is amazing, and just to give us a chance."

He described an incident when he was talking to a Jewish woman on the beach one day, and told her she should come and join the shul service for the coming Shabbat. The woman came to the Shabbat service and at the *brocha*, told him she hadn't set foot in a shul in more than 20 years. She's now a regular attendee on Shabbat.

Goldstein said he was drawn to Muizenberg because of the simpler way of life there. "Muizenberg is like a little *shtetl*," he said. "Just to live in a town without a bank is amazing and different. It's got just the basics, and it's such a good lifestyle. There are so many activities to do. It's refreshing and exhilarating. I've been trying my hands at surfing, fishing, and hiking. I love it."

The shul's activities have gone back to normal after it celebrated its centenary in December, when South Africa's chief rabbi, Dr Warren Goldstein, and the United Kingdom chief rabbi of the Commonwealth, Ephraim Mirvis, were in



Rabbi Ryan Goldstein proposing to Nicky Malka Leib on a beach in Muizenberg

attendance.

"My plan is for monthly events to let people gather, and to make sure we have *minyanim* every Shabbat," Goldstein said.

"I'm also trying to grow the shul and get people to join us for a daily *minyan*," Goldstein said. "We also have weekly *shiurim* on a Tuesday night, where people can join us in person or via Zoom."

Those who don't live in Muizenberg are urged to participate in these *shiurim* so that when holiday-goers visit Muizenberg in December, they can come to a shul where they already feel part of the community.

"We're even thinking about getting a deli going so that people don't have to schlep to Sea Point to get kosher food," he said.

Goldstein sees much potential in the small Muizenberg Jewish community, and cannot wait to invite many others into this "special place that we are building".

He still maintains his business of providing gravestones to the community, even while being on the other side of the country from some of his clientele.

"Since the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of people realised that you didn't need to have like a sit-down interview, and that tombstones could be made virtually over email and WhatsApp, and that's what most of my customers do," said Goldstein. "But the seniors who like the traditional method can still meet my mother. She's retired, but assists me in Joburg by meeting people to discuss tombstones."

Goldstein has also been using the opportunity in Muizenberg to hone his skills as a *sofer* (scribe) and run his website Ketubah.co.za where people can order ketubahs. He has also used this new space to write a Torah, which he intends to do over the next five years.

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Liar, liar, pants on fire: SA's fabulist history

Journalist and author **Jonathan Ancer** is launching his latest book, *Bullshit – 50 fibs that made South Africa*. The *SA Jewish Report* chatted to him before the launch.

What inspired you to write this book?
Historians have examined the world through various lenses and perspectives, but I thought telling SA's history through our lies would be an interesting, unique, and entertaining way to look at our country. I just didn't realise how many fibs I would have to wade through!

I began by travelling back in time to look at the lies I'd been told. My memories took me back to primary school and the one-sided history I was taught about our country,

Why do you believe so many of these lies emanate from our politicians' mouths?

Politicians are motivated to tell voters what they want to hear ... and sweet lies are much easier to swallow than bitter truths.

What do you believe we should learn from this?

That we shouldn't believe everything we're told. Our democracy depends on citizens being able to separate the facts from the fabrications, and the proper from the propaganda. We shouldn't spread misinformation and disinformation; and we should do what historians do: assess the credibility of the sources. We must also remember politicians' lies when elections roll around.

Which is your favourite utterance of bullshit in SA and why?

My favourite political bullshit was spewed by the former Police Minister Nathi Nhleko when he told us that a swimming pool

isn't a swimming pool but a firepool. It's my favourite because it was so blatant. He knew he was lying; we knew he was lying; and he knew we knew he was lying, but he continued to lie. For similar reasons, my favourite non-political lie was the *Pretoria News* insisting that it had the scoop of the century with its decuplets "exclusive". The editor, Piet Rampedi, and his boss, Iqbal Survé, just kept doubling down on their lies.

And your worst?

A lie that made me angry was Thabo Mbeki's utterances that HIV doesn't cause Aids. Because of the Mbeki government's obstruction of lifesaving treatment, more than 330 000 people died prematurely from HIV/Aids, and at least 35 000 babies were born with HIV that could have been prevented. And those are conservative numbers.

Also, Hansie Cronje and the cricket match-fixing saga upset me. Hansie was a national hero, an honest-to-goodness star South Africans could unite behind, so his betrayal felt personal because, in a way, he stole our innocence.

Loadshedding being over in 18 months was probably the most painful utterance of this nature for the country. Why do you believe Cyril Ramaphosa did it?

In South Africa, there are lies, damn lies, and promises to fix Eskom. Ramaphosa

knows that a week is a long time in politics, and 18 months is a lifetime. It's easy to make bold statements when you have to deal with the consequences of those statements only in the future. When

shame, the dude is in a league of his own.

But he's still not SA's most shameless liar!

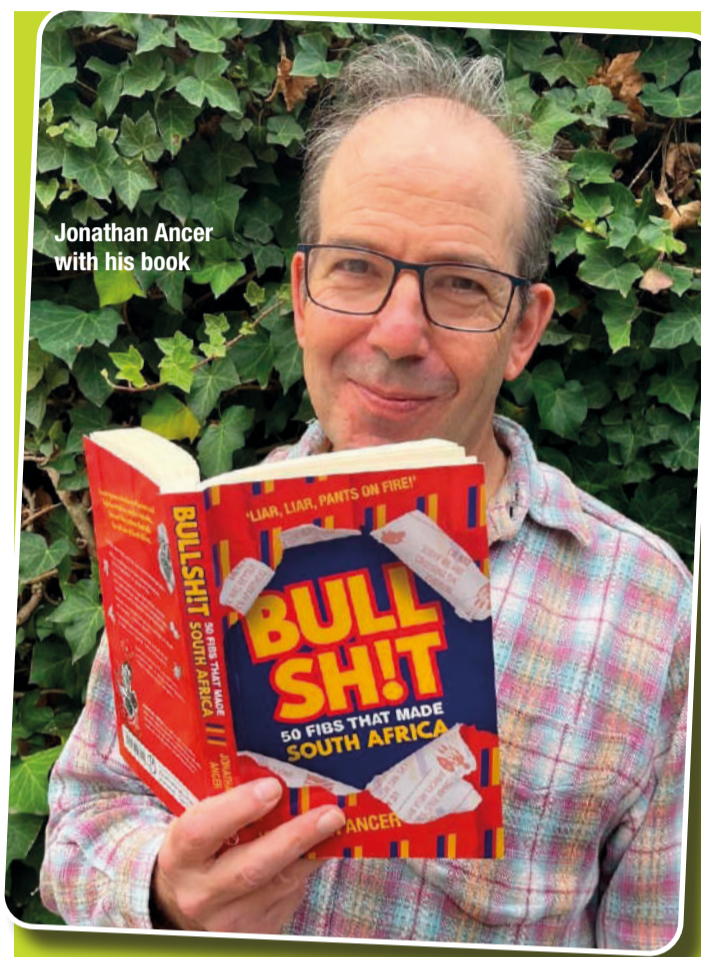
Other than politicians, which group of people are best known for fibbing and why?

Prophets who perform "miracles" every Sunday for their congregation – they make people in wheelchairs walk, spray Doom in the faces of terminally ill people to cure them, take selfies with G-d, and raise the dead.

Very similar to them are con artists. If you take a deep sniff, you can probably still smell the audacious pyramid scheme that left a terrible stench in South Africa 40 years ago. In the small Northern Cape town of Garies, sheep farmer and serial swindler Adriaan Nieuwoudt launched a Ponzi scheme that is considered the defining scam of the 1980s – not only in SA, but worldwide. The scheme was based on *vrot* milk. And then there's Markus Jooste. Why do they fib? To fleece desperate people out of their hard-earned money.

What do you hope readers will gain from this book?

My hope is that this eclectic mix of falsehoods will give readers a peek into SA's past from a very different



Jonathan Ancer with his book

Ramaphosa said in 2015 that loadshedding would be over in 18 months, he hoped citizens would forget – after all, who can keep up with all our country's scandals? Now we no longer have "loadshedding", we have "load reduction".

What is it about politicians that makes these utterances acceptable?

They aren't acceptable and when politicians lie, we must call bullshit. It's up to journalists, civil society, and citizens to ensure that politicians are held accountable for what they say and do.

Can we ever trust a politician in SA? If so, why? If not, why not?

It depends on the politician. Who could trust Julius Malema, who flip-flops at the drop of a red beret? He has performed more flips than the Russian circus, and has had more flops than first-time cake bakers.

I think politicians have to earn our trust – and that means stop talking about delivering services, and actually deliver services.

Who are the top fibbers in the country?

The penultimate chapter of *Bullshit* lists SA's top-10 fibbers. If I had to list all lying politicians, the book would be a telephone book of names, so I picked one fabulist to represent the lot – Bathabile Dlamini – whom I could call a liar without fear of being sued for defamation.

Another liar on the list is Nongqawuse, the 15-year-old "prophetess" who had a vision in 1856 that the ancestors had appeared to her and told her the amaXhosa must slaughter their cattle and destroy their crops and grain stores. If they did this, there would be an era of prosperity.

The Xhosa slaughtered hundreds of thousands of cattle and burnt their crops. By the end of the following year, tens of thousands had died from starvation.

Coming in at number two is Carl Niehaus, who, even in our notoriously shameless country takes *chutzipah* to Himalayan heights. With all his lies, the one that captured the nation's imagination was killing off his poor mother multiple times. When it comes to

angle, looking through the prism of lies to see how untruths made – and sometimes unmade – the country. I hope it will be a fun way to learn about our past, and remind them of forgotten moments in our history.

What do you believe is the impact of lies on our psyche? Should we believe anything people say? If so, why? If not, why not?

It impacts on our trust. While doing research for this book, I came to realise that we all lie – little lies, weird lies, white lies, unconscious lies, big lies, colossal lies. We lie to our foes and our friends, we lie to authority, we lie to our colleagues and our family. We lie to the internet: "I have read and understood the terms of service". We lie to get out of trouble. We lie for fun. We lie for no reason at all.

I think what's important is to take what people are saying with a healthy dose of scepticism, to question everything and everyone. I also think it's important not to lie to ourselves. Finding the truth requires humility – this will allow us to accept that our truth isn't necessarily *the* truth; and truth can exist beyond our truth – and that's the truth.

Writing in a light hearted and comical way isn't easy for a journalist. How did you make this genre work for you?

Journalists don't have to be so serious all the time. They can approach stories with humour and a light touch, making them readable and relatable. I try to achieve this by integrating my experiences, using satire, and playing with words. (I love a good pun.)

What's next for you in the book writing arena?

Perhaps it's time to turn to fiction – that's a novel idea – and write a book about how South African decuplets were kidnapped by a tech billionaire as part of his diabolical plan to take over the world. Wait a minute ... maybe that's not fiction.

• Jonathan Ancer's book launch will be at the Gardens Community Centre on Sunday 21 July at 14:30 for 15:00. RSVP to events@sajewishmuseum.co.za

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Olympian-sized Jewish contingent takes to Paris

JACOB GURVIS – JTA

The 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris starts next week, running from 26 July to 11 August. Dozens of Jewish athletes will be among the estimated 10 500 competitors representing roughly 200 countries in 329 events across 32 sports. The United States' delegation features nearly 600 athletes, while Israel will have nearly 90 competitors, one of its biggest delegations ever.

Here are some of the Jewish and Israeli athletes to watch.

When it comes to floor exercise, the artistic gymnastics competition, few are as accomplished as Ukrainian-born Israeli Olympian **Artem Dolgopyat**. The 27-year-old has won gold medals in that event in recent years at the Olympics; the World Championships; the European Championships; and the Maccabiah Games.

Dolgopyat was born in what is now Dnipro, Ukraine, and by the time his family moved to Israel when he was 12, he was already a two-time Ukrainian national champion for his age group. He trained at the acclaimed Maccabi Tel Aviv Sports Club in his adopted home, and went on to become the Israeli national champion in the floor exercise.

At the Tokyo Olympics, Dolgopyat earned Israel's second-ever gold medal, and first in gymnastics. Fellow Israeli Linoy Ashram won gold in rhythmic gymnastics days later.

Amit Elor, whose parents are Israeli, is making her Olympics debut with the US wrestling team. She's the youngest female wrestler in history to represent the US at the Games.

At only 20, Elor is already a two-time world champion. She has also won gold medals at the 2023 Pan American Championships; the 2022 and 2023 U23 World Championships; and at three consecutive Junior World Championships from 2021 to 2023.

Elor's 2022 World Championship win, which came when she was 18, made her the youngest senior world champion in US history. She ranks number one in the US in the 68kg weight class, the group in which she will compete in Paris.

Australian **Jessica Fox**, who is regarded as the greatest individual paddler of all time, is back for her fourth Olympics, where she'll seek to build on her collection of medals – one gold, one silver, and two bronze.

Fox, 30, won her Olympic gold in the canoe slalom in the Tokyo Games, becoming the first-ever woman to win gold in the event. Fox had been among the athletes pushing for the canoe slalom event to be opened to women, which happened in Tokyo.

Fox's Jewish mother and coach, Myriam Jerusalem, won bronze in the K-1 (single kayak) slalom competition for France at the 1996 Olympics. Her father, Richard Fox, paddled for Britain at the 1992 Olympics. Her younger sister, Noemi, 27, is making her Olympics debut in the women's kayak cross event, which is being held for the first time in Paris.

Fencing has quietly become a sport dominated by Jewish athletes in recent years, a trend led by Los Angeles native **Nick Itkin**, ranked as the number two men's foil fencer in the world. He was previously number one.

Itkin, 24, won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics to go along with a number of other recent medals and championships at major international fencing tournaments, as well as two NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) titles. After winning a silver medal at the 2023 World Fencing Championships, Itkin became the first US man and third US fencer overall to win individual medals at back-to-back world championships.

Itkin is joined on the US fencing team by Eli Dershwitz, the number three-ranked sabre fencer in the world and a two-time Olympian, who won gold at the 2023 World Championships in sabre, becoming the first American man to do so. Dershwitz, 28, is the grandson of Holocaust survivors and a two-time Maccabiah Games gold medalist.

On the women's side, Maia Weintraub, the number-13-ranked woman foil fencer in the world, is a two-time US national champion with several gold medals at fencing World Cups; the 2019 European Maccabi

Games; and in the NCAA. Weintraub, 21, was an alternate at the Tokyo Olympics.

And for Israel, Yuval Freilich, 29, who won a gold medal at the 2024 Epee Grand Prix event in Qatar, is the country's first fencer to qualify for the Olympics since 2008.

Ada Korkhin was first introduced to air pistol shooting by her Israeli father, Yakov, when she was nine years old. A decade later, the 19-year-old is headed to Paris to represent the US in the 25-meter pistol event.

Korkhin won a team gold medal in that event at the 2024 Championship of the Americas Games in Buenos Aires; and silver medals at the 2002 USA Shooting Pistol National Championships as well as the 2022 USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Championships.



Australian Jessica Fox at the ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup in June 2024



Canadian Sam Schachter at the Norceca Beach Volleyball Tournament in June 2024

Diana Svertsov, 19; Adar Friedmann, 17; and Shani Bakanov, 18.

Another Israeli female gymnast to keep an eye on is Lihie Raz, 20, the 2019 Israeli national champion who won a bronze medal at the 2020 European Championships and competed in the Tokyo Olympics in artistic gymnastics.

Israel is competing in Olympic soccer (officially called football) for the first time since 1976. The Israeli men's national team clinched its spot in Paris at the UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) European U-21 Championship, where it lost to England in the semifinals.

Israel has had some promising results on the pitch recently. Its under-20 team captured third place in the FIFA U-20 World Cup in Argentina last year, beating South Korea, Uzbekistan, Japan, and powerhouse Brazil on its Cinderella run.

Daniel Peretz, 24, a goalkeeper with Bayern Munich in Germany's top-tier Bundesliga, headlines an 18-player team that also features Liel Abada, who plays for Charlotte FC in Major League Soccer, as well as players from professional soccer leagues in Israel, Ukraine, Belgium, and Austria.

Born and raised in a small village in western Kenya, **Lonah Chemtai Salpeter** moved to Israel in 2008 and

became a citizen in 2016 after marrying her running coach, Israeli native Dan Salpeter.

Salpeter is a decorated runner with numerous international titles under her belt. The 35-year-old won a gold medal in the 10 000m event at the 2018 European Athletics Championships and a bronze in the same event in 2022. She won a bronze medal in marathon at the 2022 World Athletics Championships, and has won medals in three major international marathons: gold at the 2020 Tokyo Marathon; silver at the 2022 New York City Marathon; and bronze at the 2023 Boston Marathon. Salpeter's Tokyo Marathon time – 2:17:45 – counts as her personal best, the Israeli record and, at the time, the sixth-fastest marathon time by a female runner in history. Paris will be Salpeter's third Olympics.

Ontario native **Sam Schachter** returns to the Olympics, where he and his Jewish beach volleyball teammate Josh Binstock competed in 2016. The Jewish duo won a silver medal with Canada's indoor volleyball team at the 2013 Maccabiah Games, before becoming the Canadian national champions the following year. They also paired up at the 2015 Pan American Games and the 2018 Commonwealth Games, where they won silver.

Schachter, 34, and his teammate, Daniel Dearing, also won silver at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Schachter has coached volleyball at multiple Canadian universities.

Martial artist **Avishag Semberg** is entering her second Olympics, where she will compete in the women's taekwondo 49kg category. Semberg won a bronze medal in that event at the Tokyo Olympics, capturing Israel's 10th all-time medal, and making Semberg, then 19, the youngest-ever Israeli Olympic medalist.

Semberg, now 22, was born and raised in Gedera, Israel, and began taekwondo lessons at the age of six. She has won numerous gold and silver medals at international competitions, including silver at the 2022 European Championships.

Adam Mara'ana is the first Arab Israeli to represent Israel in the Olympics since 1976, where he will compete in 100m backstroke, an event in which he matched the Israeli record earlier this year. Mara'ana, 21, a Haifa native, is the son of a Jewish mother and an Arab Muslim father.

Two more Israeli swimmers to watch: Gal Cohen Groumi, who competed in the Tokyo Olympics and helped set an Israeli record in the 4 x 100m medley relay, and Matan Roditi. Groumi, 22, whose uncle was also an Israeli Olympic swimmer, has won gold medals at the 2024 European Championships; the 2022 Maccabiah Games; and the 2018 European Junior Championships. Roditi, a marathon swimmer, placed fourth in the 2020 Olympics, the closest Israel has come to scoring a medal in Olympic swimming. Roditi, 25, has set Israeli national records in numerous swimming events.

Australian racewalker **Jemima Montag** returns to the Olympics for the second time, where she will seek to improve on her sixth-place finish in the women's 20km racewalk event.

Montag, 26, is a two-time gold medalist at the Commonwealth Games and a silver medalist at the 2023 World Athletics Championships. She also holds Australia's record in the 20km racewalk. Montag was named Australia's Outstanding Jewish Junior Sportswoman of the Year in 2013 at the age of 15.

Six of Israel's 13 Olympic medals have come in judo, including the first-ever medals Israel won at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. As Israel has grown into a judo powerhouse, **Sagi Muki** has become one of its brightest stars.

Muki, 32, is a world champion and two-time European champion, and he was part of the Israeli team that won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics. He has also won several judo grands prix and grand slams.

Two-time Olympic bronze medalist Or "Ori" Sasson retired in 2022, but several of Muki's other teammates from the judo mixed team at the last Olympics will return in 2024: Tohar Butbul; Raz Hershko; Inbar Lanir; Timna Nelson-Levy; Peter Paltchik; Shira Rishony; Gili Sharir; and Baruch Shmailov, plus newcomers Yam Wolczak; Gefen Primo; and Maya Goshen.

Expectations are high for Israel's gymnasts, who in the past have earned two of Israel's three Olympic gold medals. **Romi Paritzki**, 20, is the captain of Israel's rhythmic gymnastics team, which is coming off its first-ever gold medals at the 2023 Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships. The team also won gold at the 2022 Rhythmic Gymnastics European Championships hosted in Tel Aviv.

Paritzki is joined on the team by Ofir Shaham, 19;

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Just say 'no' to nappy pants

The social media post didn't go as she would have liked. Because although "get ready with me" reels are all the rage, no-one wants to see what you're planning to wear on your visit to Auschwitz. Even if it's a short black dress paired with understated white sandals.

Which is why former *Bachelor* contestant and current "influencer" Anna Redman deleted the post and issued an apology for her insensitivity. She might have been correct to handle it as she did, but the reality is that it wasn't a difficult mistake to make given that virtual dressing has become the norm of so-called influencers.

What's perplexing is that even with all the influencers dressing up, the impact seems to be negligible in the real world. Which is dressing down whenever possible.

A recent article in the *Huffington Post* decried the dress sense of Americans abroad. The Japanese commentator had little understanding as to why many women would tour his country in yoga gear even though it was clear they had no intention of visiting a studio. Or getting close to a mat. American men all looked the same in chinos, a golf shirt, a New York Yankees cap, and sneakers. Either that or in long baggy shorts that hadn't been fashionable.

Since ever.

It's not just Americans. South Africans are hardly Parisian in their style, and whereas our larger men might wear Jeep on their beer barrelled chests, our women also have a penchant for gym clothes.

Style is also community specific, which is why it's thankfully only in the Johannesburg Jewish community that one is likely to bear witness to the ugliness known as "nappy pants". Women claim to love them, and will even compliment others on theirs. Whether this comes from a deep-rooted desire to eliminate the competition or genuine confusion isn't clear. But what's clear is that in the history of this unsightly trend, I will stake my reputation on the fact that no man has ever considered them to be flattering. And if they say that they are, they either live in perpetual fear or are bold-faced liars. Never to be trusted.

Because nothing good has ever come from "nappy pants".

No-one should be travelling through an airport in anything that looks like pajamas.

Or gym clothes. Because as fleecy as it might feel, it looks ridiculous. And passport control and customs aren't slumber party venues. It might be worth noting that the one hour and

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



50-minute trip from Johannesburg to Cape Town doesn't require emergency comfort wear, and that most of us can manage that experience dressed as adults.

Blame the COVID-19 pandemic and remote working. Blame the heat or the cold or influencers. Blame your friends, who said that the Jeep T shirt is cool (it's not). But at the end of the day, how we present ourselves counts. It governs how people relate to us and how they perceive us. Particularly true of first impressions that form a lasting impression that are enormously difficult to shift.

This shouldn't be confusing. In case it is, perhaps remember the following: gym clothes are for gym. Pajamas are for bed. And "nappy pants", much like Crocs, are for the dustbin. Not for the indigent and the homeless. Not for those less fortunate. Because, considering their experience, they have already suffered enough.

French ambassador condemns Hamas terror

David Martinon, the French ambassador to South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi, made it clear at the local celebration of Bastille Day on Friday, 12 July, that he and France "condemned the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October, during which 42 French citizens were murdered".

Martinon told his audience at the French Embassy in Pretoria that France "continues to demand a ceasefire in Gaza to help halt the bombings, and the release of all hostages, including the French ones".

He said his country also continued to demand humanitarian access to Gaza. "France has supported the admission of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations (UN), and we think now the time has come to take action with a view to resolving the conflict on the basis of the two-state solution," he said.

"While recognising the right of Israel to self-defence, France will continue, as it did for the past 45 years, to support the cause of a Palestinian state," Martinon said. He referred to 1982, when then President



French ambassador David Martinon

Francois Mitterrand spoke at the Knesset, advocating for the self-determination of the Palestinian people.

"France has always supported the solution defined by UN resolutions with the creation of an independent, viable, and democratic Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside Israel."

Martinon said that it was because France had this belief that it operated the French school in Ramallah, and the French Cultural Institute in Gaza until the death of four Palestinian employees of the French government during a bombing there.

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