

The Canadian Jewish News



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ERNA PARIS (1938-2022)

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'Heil Hitler' salutes, swastikas and Holocaust COVID incidents reported at two Toronto public schools

/ Ellin Bessner

Officials from two public schools in heavily Jewish neighbourhoods in Toronto have sent letters home to families reporting "upsetting and unacceptable" incidents of antisemitism against Jewish students last week.

According to the Toronto District School Board, two separate cases happened at Charles H. Best Junior Middle School, on Wilmington Avenue in Bathurst Manor.

A Grade 8 student was targeted with "a simulation of the Nazi salute or the 'Heil Hitler' salute," said Shari Schwartz-Maltz, a spokesperson for the TDSB, adding this happened in the school yard. That incident is still under investigation, but sources say it was two students making the gesture in class.

The second one also happened in a classroom, she said, and involved the construction of a swastika made out of small blocks, which was done in front of the same Jewish student. Sources say another student intervened and took the shape apart.

In both these cases, the students involved are facing consequences, but Schwartz-Maltz declined to explain what that specifically entailed, preferring to focus on using Holocaust education and training as the solution.

"What's more important than consequences is teaching them why it was wrong," she said. "You can consequence them all you want, but if you don't explain to them what it is that you did and the impact it had on those kids and everybody else that was exposed to it, then what have you done?"

Ledbury Park Elementary and Middle School

The principal has apologized for the incidents, in a letter sent home to students, according to Global News.

"This is very upsetting and unacceptable," wrote Elever Baker, the principal. "We take great pride in our school as a welcoming, safe, and inclusive place and this has always been our message to students."

Meanwhile, at the Ledbury Park Elementary and Middle School on Falkirk Street, in Lawrence Manor, families received a strikingly similarly-worded letter Tuesday informing them of an antisemitic incident involving a teacher.

According to letter sent by the interim principal, Serge Parravano, and obtained by The CJN, a teacher likened the COVID-19 vaccination passport mandates to Jews being forced to wear the Yellow Star during the Holocaust. The teacher has been removed from the school, he told the parents, and is now on home assignment, pending an investigation.

"This is very upsetting and unacceptable," Parravano wrote. "We acknowledge and regret the harm this incident caused to members of our school community and to our shared school climate."

In both schools, the administration is calling in resources from the TDSB's Equity department as well as outside training. At Ledbury, Holocaust educator Michelle Glied Goldstein will be brought in to share her late father's story and hold workshops.

One to three incidents per week: TDSB

The timing of the trio of incidents comes just a week after International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Thursday Jan. 27, when thousands of Toronto public school students in Grades 4 to 8 took part in special educational programming. This included a unit where the animated film *The Tattooed Torah* was screened.

They also come in the aftermath of a new study released Jan. 26 by Liberation75 that found over 90 percent of Canadian students wanted more education to learn about the Holocaust.

Truckers' convoy part of the problem: TDSB

Schwartz-Maltz, who is also chair of the TDSB's Jewish Heritage Committee made up of Jewish teachers and trustees, said the timing of these latest cases wasn't a surprise.

The truckers' convoy protests in Ottawa and other parts of the country have flooded social media and news coverage with Nazi symbols, she said. Other images have shown signs likening vaccine mandates with the restrictions that Nazis imposed on European Jews at that time.

"When you watch television news, as we've been doing lately, and you watch the demonstrations, you see people unfurling flags with Nazi insignia. It normalizes it, right?" she said "Kids watch news, kids watch social media. So if it's normal, if it's normal in downtown Toronto, why can't I use it?"

In most cases, "nine times out of ten," Schwartz-Maltz pointed out, the spike in antisemitism incidents which the school board has been seeing this year, can be explained as ignorance, rather than intentional hatred.

"I would like to emphasize that it happens a lot. We are seeing swastikas at our schools pretty much weekly," she said.

Ontario funding for training and security

The incidents come in the wake of a series of recent announcements by the Ontario government aimed at curbing rising antisemitism in the province.

- \$148,000 for the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center in Canada to create bilingual classroom resources, including workshops and webinars for parents and students.
- \$150,000 for a similar project aimed at students in Grades 5 to 8 that will focus also on gaming and social media antisemitism. This funding will go to The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA).
- \$25 million for security and staff training costs at religious places of worship, including synagogues.

The incidents at Charles Best and Ledbury Park are even more upsetting to Michael Levitt, president of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center in Toronto, because of their geography. Both took place in very heavily Jewish areas.

"It's hard to believe that this is 2022, in Toronto, in Canada

and in this case, in a neighbourhood, Bathurst Manor, that is home to Toronto and Canada's Holocaust survivor community, and the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem's Holocaust Remembrance Memorial. I mean, it's so disturbing," Levitt said, referring to the striking structure erected in 1991 in Earl Bales Park.

Despite all the work his group has been doing on Holocaust education and antiracism training in schools, "obviously, we need more."

"And there needs to be a continuation and a commitment from TDSB and I guess school boards across Ontario and across the country to be addressing and to be training staff on how to identify these situations and how to hold students or whomever is responsible accountable, and also how to support the students that are being targeted by this hate," Levitt said.

TDSB moving to keep promises on antisemitism

The TDSB has been mired in controversy for the past nine months over its handling of the case involving a staff member, Javier Davila, who sent antisemitic and anti-Israel educational material to teachers during the May 2021 war between Israel and Hamas. In November 2021, the TDSB narrowly voted not to censure a Jewish trustee, Alexandra Lulka, for sounding the alarm about the contents of some of Davila's material, on her social media platforms.

The TDSB's director of education has pledged to do better to make Jewish students and teachers feel safe, and to move on existing pledges to bring in training throughout the system about antisemitism. Similar efforts are underway to combat Islamophobia.

Last Friday, Feb. 4, the board's application process closed on an initiative to hire some facilitators from the Jewish community to create training modules on Understanding Judaism and Jewish Culture. Teachers throughout the board will be provided with live modules, as well as self-directed modules of 25 hours in length.

"The TDSB is focusing on a number of areas to address antisemitism as well as other forms of discrimination," explained Ryan Bird, a TDSB spokesman, calling it "a first step".

The modules will be done under the auspices of the Board's Human Rights Office.

Trustee Shelley Laskin (Ward 8) called it "a real tangible sign" of the progress she has been pushing for within the board, especially to get tools and training to recognize antisemitism when it happens.

"That's why professional learning is so important for our educators who don't have a lot of experience with Jewish culture," Laskin said.

For the last few months, a staff member from The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs has been seconded to the TDSB's equity section, to lend a hand.

"These most recent incidents underscore the need for impactful antisemitism education for middle school students," said Noah Shack, a CIJA vice president in Toronto, in a news release. "The incidents reported at Charles H. Best Junior Middle School are absolutely unacceptable and represent just the latest examples of antisemitism manifesting in schools across the GTA and throughout the province." ■

Ellin Bessner is host of *The CJN Daily*.

Alberta man who published 'lurid' antisemitic works should face jail time, says B'nai Brith Canada

/ Steve Arnold

B'nai Brith Canada wants the newest charges against an Alberta man who had previously pleaded guilty to promoting hatred and a firearms violation upgraded to hate crimes.

Right now, Loki Hulgaard, of Medicine Hat, is charged only with breaching the terms of a conditional sentence.

In 2020, as part of a plea deal to settle charges of promoting hatred and a firearms licence violation, Hulgaard was ordered not to publish anti-Jewish material online.

That agreement settled charges he had tried to pass money stamped with antisemitic messages. The sentence included court-ordered counselling, probation, house arrest and orders to stay away from churches and a store where he tried to pass money stamped with antisemitic phrases such as Zionist Occupation Government.

At the time of his arrest, he was also found to have four firearms, two with their serial numbers filed off, 1,200 rounds of ammunition and three over-capacity magazines.

In July, police in Medicine Hat, charged Hulgaard with violating the terms of his probation, accusing him of publishing new material through a far-right American website. The new documents carry titles such as *Jewish White Genocide*, *Who Is the Jew?: The Jew Identifier Document* and an autobiography entitled *How (((They))) Ruined My Life: Autobiography of Loki Hulgaard*.

In a news release Feb. 3, B'nai Brith described those materials as "some of the worst anti-Jewish hate literature ever produced in Canada, repeatedly calling for the extermination of all Jews, illustrated by lurid graphics."

The only fit sanction, B'nai Brith said, is jail time.

"We appreciate the diligent work of Medicine Hat Police on the Loki Hulgaard file," said Michael Mostyn, CEO of B'nai Brith Canada. "However, this is not a case about breaching a conditional sentence order. This is one of the worst cases of antisemitic propaganda we have ever seen in Canada.

"If the Canadian justice system cannot deliver real consequences for committed hatemongers, then it will fail to deter acts of violence against Jews and other communities."

In a later email exchange, B'nai Brith stated, "In our view, hate crimes charges are required in order to send a strong signal that Canada will not tolerate calls for genocide against Jews."

The new charges, it added, raise the chance of jail time for "an extremely dangerous and toxic combination" of hate and access to weapons.

At his first trial, the *Medicine Hat News* reported Hulgaard told

the court he was stockpiling weapons against a coming race war. He described federal gun control laws as a way to “prevent the white population from defending themselves from terrorists.”

Although Hulgaard pleaded guilty in that case, he later issued a public statement on the newspaper’s website accusing his lawyer “who is Jewish and a Freemason” of using “gaslighting and strong-arm tactics” to get him to agree to an unjust settlement.

Hulgaard was previously known as Brendan Stanley Dell. ■

Steve Arnold was a longtime business reporter from the *Hamilton Spectator* who now contributes regularly to The CJN.

Bill named for little Keira Kagan that would expand judges’ education on domestic violence tabled in the House of Commons

/ Lila Sarick

A private member’s bill, informally called Keira’s Law, that would expand judicial education to include seminars on “intimate partner violence and coercive control” was introduced in the House of Commons Feb. 7.

The inspiration for the bill was Keira Kagan, a four-year-old from Thornhill, Ont., who was found dead, along with her father, Feb. 9, 2020, at the base of an escarpment in Rattlesnake Point Conservation Area, in Milton, Ont. Her father, Robin Brown, had said he was taking the child, a kindergarten student at Bialik Hebrew Day School, hiking.

Keira’s mother, Jennifer Kagan, and Brown were involved in a long and bitter legal battle over Keira’s custody and safety. In 2019, Jewish Family and Child Services became involved in the case, following an incident in which police were called to Jennifer Kagan’s home. The same year, a court reduced Brown’s access to Keira.

Ten days before Keira’s death, her mother had asked the judge to suspend Brown’s visits or impose supervised access. The judge, Canadian Press reported at the time, said that the mother’s motion was “serious” but not urgent because Jewish Family and Child Services was investigating and “had eyes and ears on the ground.” JF&CS was to have reported back to the court on Feb. 20, 2020.

Kagan, a palliative care doctor, has since become an advocate for judicial reform and protection of women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

“Had the judges had the education and training, it certainly would have made a very considerable difference for Keira,” Kagan said in an interview.

The timing of the bill, tabled in the House of Commons exactly two years from the date she last saw her daughter alive, was especially poignant, Kagan said.

“It’s obviously bittersweet, but we feel hopeful with this piece of legislation.

“Our daughter is gone but we’re hopeful it will be one step toward making a difference for women and children in these situations.”

Kagan hopes once the federal legislation is passed, provincial courts will follow suit and introduce similar education for provincially appointed judges.

“We’re hoping this is just a step and a start.”

“My husband and I are looking for other changes around how domestic violence is handled throughout the entire family court system,” she said. “Anyone who deals with women and children needs to have an understanding of these patterns of behaviour, because it is part of a broader picture.”

York Centre MP Ya’ara Saks was one of three Liberal MPs, along with Anju Dhillon and Pam Damoff, who worked on the bill. Not long after she was first elected in 2020, Saks said she was approached by advocates for women’s rights, who shared Keira’s story.

The bill, C-233, would expand judicial education, which already covers topics such as sexual assault law and social context, to include coercive control and domestic violence.

Coercive control can include stalking, isolation, violation of privacy, financial control or gaslighting, Saks said. In many cases, coercive control has been a warning signal of impending intimate partner violence, she said.

“We’ve seen time and again that judges, and in some cases social workers, don’t know how to manage it or know the warning signs of it, so education is critical,” Saks said in an interview with The CJN.

“There’s been a resistance at times to address what exactly is stalking, what exactly is isolation or other forms of coercive control ... This is an opportunity to make sure that we all know the warning signs, and that judges know how to implement and effect protections for victims while they’re going through the system.”

Incidents of domestic abuse have increased greatly during COVID, making the bill especially timely, Saks said.

The bill would also amend the Criminal Code to require a justice to consider whether an accused charged with intimate partner violence should wear an electronic monitoring device, before making a release order.

The bill now goes to the Committee on the Status of Women for discussion and debate, Saks said. ■

Lila Sarick is news editor of The CJN.

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A trip retracing the journey from Ethiopia to Israel aims to raise \$10-million for scholarships for the Beta Israel community

/ Janice Arnold

One year from now, Montreal entrepreneur Jonathan Goodman plans to be in Ethiopia symbolically retracing the journey thousands of Jews braved to fulfill their dream of reaching Israel.

Goodman hopes at least 50 to 100 Jews from the Diaspora and Israel—philanthropists and activists—join him in this homage to the refugees airlifted in the 1991 rescue mission known as Operation Solomon.

Most importantly, this five-day pilgrimage is intended to raise awareness that more than 30 years later the Beta Israel—Jews of Ethiopian origin—remain socially and economically disadvantaged, and the generation born in Israel is little better off.

Goodman doesn't mince words: he calls it racism.

The pharmaceutical executive is planning "Walk in Their Shoes" with his sister who lives in Israel, Shawna Goodman Sone, chair of the board of the Morris and Rosalind Goodman Family Foundation, established by their parents.

The siblings aim to raise a minimum US\$10 million to create scholarships enabling Israelis of Ethiopian descent to get a higher education at the country's top institutions: Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University (TAU).

After flying from Tel Aviv to Addis Ababa, the preliminary itinerary of Walk in Their Shoes has participants heading to Gondar, the area most Jews lived in and still do.

Participants will visit the nearby villages of Ambober and Wolleka, from which many Jews began their arduous trek to Sudan. Ambober is also near Mount Sigd where Jews gathered for the holiday when they prayed for their return to Jerusalem.

Visits will be made to synagogues that have been restored and the Jewish cemetery where some who died on their way to Sudan are buried.

Some regions of Ethiopia are currently embroiled in a violent civil war. Goodman says the trip will avoid areas of conflict.

Participants will hear from those who survived the journey and from those still living in Ethiopia, as well as the young Israeli-born. Ideally, Ethiopians who have been waiting for years to join relatives in Israel will be aboard the flight back to Tel Aviv.

Ethiopians are over-represented in the criminal judicial system, and most still live in poorer regions, few in urban centres

and certainly not Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. Studying in those cities will lead to "slow and steady desegregation," Goodman said.

"I realize not all these facts are the result of racism, but have no doubt that racism played a role in creating this reality."

Goodman contends there has been a failure of the responsibility to help the 160,000 Israeli Ethiopians integrate into Israeli society and the approximately 10,000 that remain in Ethiopia wanting to make aliyah.

"We continue to deny Beta Israel, our Ethiopian brothers and sisters, the value of their history. And we have failed to set them up for sustainable success and, over time, create more equity in Israeli society," he said.

"According to a 2019 national census, Israelis of Ethiopian background have an income 35 percent lower than the average Israeli. Only 8 percent of men have an academic degree compared to 29 percent in the rest of Israeli male population," said Goodman. "When they do successfully complete higher education, they earn about 25 percent less than the average Jewish Israeli."

Sone, who has lived in Israel seven years and has three children, was "shocked" that the history and culture of the Ethiopians is not taught in schools. Changing the narrative that this community is a problem into a proud and integral part of the Jewish story is at the root of this long-term effort.

Young Ethiopians absorb the negative attitude. Sone spoke of meeting a woman who worked in a Hebrew University cafeteria and could simply not imagine herself being a student there.

The "Changemakers" who have so far joined Goodman come from the United States, United Kingdom and Israel, as well as Canada. Among them are: Elisha Wiesel (son of the late Elie Wiesel); Israeli solar power entrepreneur Yossi Abramowitz; Yaffa Tegegne, a Montreal lawyer and daughter of the late Baruch Tegegne, one of the first Ethiopians in Israel who clandestinely led others out; Shlomo Berihun, an Ethiopian-Israeli activist; and Natou Suissa, Federation CJA chief development officer.

Since the campaign was launched a year ago, a significant change has occurred, Goodman noted: Hebrew University and TAU are open to its objectives and have appointed deans of diversity.

At present, only 378 Ethiopians attend these two universities combined, or 0.6 percent of the total student body. The figure is only slightly higher at other universities.

The Changemakers want to raise \$10 million by the end of next year, with the first three-year scholarships awarded in 2023-2024. About 240 students will each receive \$15,000 per year for tuition, living expenses and coaching/job placement. All faculties are eligible with special consideration given to those pursuing Ethiopian studies.

Anyone wishing to join Walk in Their Shoes may contact Goodman at jgoodman@knighttx.com ■

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These two Montrealers are spearheading a million-dollar contest for the best Israeli solution to the climate crisis

/ Janice Arnold

Two Montreal businessmen have a vision that Israel can become a global leader in the fight against climate change.

Friends Jeff Hart and Jonathan Goodman are the initiators of an annual US\$1-million prize to be awarded to a not-for-profit Israeli researcher or organization with the most promising idea for reversing what the two men believe could be a catastrophe for their children and grandchildren.

The Climate Solutions Prize (CSP), described as the largest incentive prize in Israeli history, will be officially launched in Israel on March 1 at a gathering of the country's experts in green technology and in the presence of President Isaac Herzog. The inaugural prize is to be presented this fall.

Hart, CSP's executive chair who conceived the project, and Goodman, its campaign chair, tapped Jewish National Fund Canada (JNF), with its 120-year history of environmental stewardship as the obvious charitable partner.

Goodman said close to \$3.75 million has been raised toward the \$8-million goal set by JNF's Quebec Region, including \$1 million from an unidentified Montrealer and \$500,000 from his own Morris and Rosalind Family Foundation.

This sum includes a 25 percent matching commitment from Keren Kayemet, JNF in Israel.

Specifically, the prize will recognize breakthroughs in greenhouse gas emission reduction and removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. A panel from JNF, Keren Kayemet and the Peres Centre for Peace and Innovation will select the semi-finalists and an international scientific and business jury will decide the winner or winners, which may be up to four, sharing the million dollars.

The prize ceremony will be the highlight of the Climate Innovation Festival in October.

"This is literally tikun olam, fulfilling the Jewish mandate to repair the world, a way for Israel to become a global hub for green tech that it will share and a source of pride for the Jewish people, especially young people whose No. 1 concern is the climate crisis," said Hart, the father of sons aged 20 and 15.

"It's my belief that if anyone can make miracles happen, it's the State of Israel."

Goodman said it was his 17-year-old son Noah who convinced him that this battle has to take precedence over other philanthropic endeavors because Earth's survival is at stake.

Noah is on the CSP youth committee which also includes Israeli-born, Montreal-raised Leehi Yona, a PhD candidate in en-

vironment and climate policy at Stanford University.

"This is an opportunity for them to marry their love of Israel with their desire to make change," said Goodman.

CSP's advisory panel consists of Stephen Bronfman, long involved in the David Suzuki Foundation; Yossi Abramowitz, a pioneer in Israel's solar power industry; and former Formula 1 world champion Nico Rosberg, co-founder of the Greentech Festival held annually in Berlin.

Former Montreal mayor Denis Coderre is chair of the CSP Governors' Circle fundraising division.

Israel comes relatively late to green tech, not for lack of ingenuity, but rather financial incentive, noted Goodman. Israel excels in digital, medical and financial technology because they attract greater investment.

As JNF is a charity, the CSP must be bestowed in the non-profit sector, such as universities, research institutes or incubation centres, said Goodman, but this initiative should spur more private funding in green tech.

Another CSP partner, Start-up Nation Central, which connects Israeli entrepreneurs with businesses and governments abroad, has pledged to raise funds for a similar prize for companies' development of climate solutions.

It was important to Goodman and Hart to include a companion prize in Quebec, which has a strong commitment to renewable energy and a thriving tech sector.

Goodman is founder and executive chair of Knight Therapeutics Inc. and Hart is president of Victoria Park Medispa.

Hart was encouraged by his recent meeting with MNA Benoit Charette, whose official title is, significantly, Minister of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change. "He's very aligned with our idea that this could be a catalyst to make a difference, of bringing science and business together."

Hart and Goodman hope the CSP Quebec prize, to be awarded in November, may foster more collaboration with Israel, which benefits both economies.

While the CSP is spearheaded by Montreal, JNF chapters across Canada have come on board and interest has been expressed by JNF supporters in Australia and Europe, they added. ■

Janice Arnold has reported for The CJN from Montreal since 1976.

Obituary: Erna Paris probed historical memory and passion for truth

/ Ron Csillag

Erna Paris, whose deeply thoughtful books and articles probed collective memory, trauma, injustice, and the mythologizing of history, died at her Toronto home on Feb. 3 of cancer. She was 83.

Among her best-known works were *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History*, which looked at how countries confront their violent pasts and reinvent themselves—or are condemned to fail. “Why is it,” Paris once pondered, “that many countries can’t lay the past to rest?”

The volume examined the United States and its ghosts of slavery; South Africa and its attempts to heal the divisions of apartheid; Japan, France, and Germany and the unresolved trauma of Hiroshima and the Holocaust; and the former Yugoslavia, where Paris exposed “the cynical shaping of historical memory,” as her website describes.

The CJN lauded the book for “intelligently examining [memory] within the context of national remembrance.”

The work won several awards, including the Dorothy Shoichet Prize for History at the 2001 Canadian Jewish Book Awards. The Literary Review of Canada named it among “The 100 Most Important Canadian Books Ever Written.”

Paris’s *Unhealed Wounds: France and the Klaus Barbie Affair*, released in 1986, examined the then still-raw rifts opened by the extradition to France of Barbie, dubbed the “Butcher of Lyon,” to face war crimes charges. True to its title, the book indeed drew the curtain back on France’s dark war-era record. It was “far above the endlessly rewarmed arguments over exactly who in France was a collaborator and who a Resistance hero,” pronounced the New York Times.

Michael Marrus, a University of Toronto historian and expert on wartime France, called the book courageous.

Paris’s first book, in 1980, was *Jews: An Account of their Experience in Canada*, which examined the earliest Jewish settlers to this country and the discrimination they faced; 1995’s *The End of Days: Tolerance, Tyranny and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, about how Spain transformed from a multicultural, pluralistic society into a tyranny that expelled Jews and launched the Inquisition; and *The Sun Climbs Slow* (2008), an investigation into the United States’ refusal to acknowledge the International Criminal Court’s jurisdiction.

In all, she authored seven well-received books and hundreds of articles. She won at least a dozen national and international prizes for her books, journalism, and radio documentaries, and was a frequent contributor to the opinion page of the *Globe and Mail*.

Among her plaudits was a National Magazine Awards gold medal in 1983 for a searing article the year before, “Canada’s Jews and the Summer of Lebanon,” published in *Quest Magazine*.

In 2016, Paris was appointed to the Order of Canada. The citation called her “one of Canada’s leading human rights commentators and activists” who “has never hesitated to address sensitive issues in order to explore the roots of intolerance.”

Paris’s website says *Long Shadows* inspired a 2002 resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives to create a monument to American slaves on the Washington Mall, and the apology in 2018 from Canada’s Parliament to survivors of residential schools.

In 2013, Paris became a vice-president of the Canadian Civil

Liberties Association.

She was an “intelligent (and) circumspect, commentator and scholar on diverse subjects,” and was “a mainstay on the Jewish Canadian cultural scene,” said Canadian historian Frank Bialystok.

Born Erna Newman on May 6, 1938 in Toronto, she was the oldest child of Jules and Christine Newman. The family attended Holy Blossom Temple, where young Erna studied with Rabbi Emil Fackenheim, a renowned Holocaust scholar.

After earning a BA from the University of Toronto in philosophy and English, Paris moved to France for several years, where she continued her studies at the Sorbonne. She began her writing career in the 1970s as a magazine journalist and radio broadcaster and documentarian.

According to her death notice, she “devoted her writing life to understanding what sustains pluralistic, tolerant societies, and why they sometimes succumb to intolerance—or worse. These investigations fuelled her lifelong commitment to justice, historical accountability, and the protection of vulnerable communities wherever they may be.”

In her encounters with the war-era history of Europe, Paris found few examples of denial or outright lies.

“That’s the least sophisticated technique,” she said in a magazine interview in 2001. “The next common technique is mythologizing, creating a heroic story or mythologizing the past, the way the French did, and the French had very good reasons for doing that.”

The French, she went on, mythologize the Resistance. “The truth was that when the Germans occupied France, in collaboration with the government, most of the French—98 per cent—supported the (Vichy) government that collaborated with the Nazis. We know that historically from the research now. One per cent of the population fought in the active Resistance.”

Paris said the “biggest surprise” in researching *Long Shadows* was “how strongly people will fight to have their story known, and how many generations they will continue fighting, and how crucial this is in the body of a nation; that the truth be told—the depth of the passion, even generations afterwards, when justice hasn’t been done.”

Whether Paris wrote about the legacy of the Nazis, the International Criminal Court, or how the Inquisition happened in Spain after centuries of co-operation between Muslims and Jews, “she was always searching out our common humanity,” her literary agent, Michael Levine, told Canadian Press. “The underlying theme of her life was social justice.”

As recently as last September, Paris, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, lambasted federal leaders for their acceptance of Quebec’s “discriminatory” Bill 21, which prohibits the display of religious symbols by public-sector workers in the workplace, saying leaders’ acquiescence is “dangerous for Canada as a whole.”

Paris leaves her husband, Thomas Robinson; children Michelle and Roland; siblings Jill Solnicki and Peter Newman; and grandchildren Julia, Simon and Jacqueline. ■

Ron Csillag has written obituaries and more for The CJN since 1984.

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Jewish-Canadians in the Spanish Civil War as viewed by historian Michael Petrou

In July 1937, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the Cunard-White Star liner *Alaunia*, Maurice Constant, a former student at the University of Toronto, wrote a letter to Helen Dunsay, a woman he had met while working at a Hashomer Hatzair Zionist youth camp in upstate New York, with an elaborate plan.

The Civil War in Spain had been raging for the past year, pitting a left-wing Republican government against an insurrection led by General Francisco Franco, and backed with men and weapons by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. When André Malraux, the French author and an organizer of the republic's small air force, came to speak at the University of Toronto's Hart House Theatre in March that year, Constant was captivated by his lecture in the cavernous, smoke-filled hall, and by his cool nonchalance as afterward he stood outside, smoking in the university grounds with a beautiful blonde French woman by his side. "He had a certain character," Constant recalled years later. "The reason I admired this guy, that he was my idea of a model, he was an intellectual and a man of action. And that was my model."

Constant decided he had to get to Spain. But his goal, he told Dunsay, was not to fight, but to report on the war covertly, so as not to provoke deadly retaliation from government spies. "I have contracted to smuggle that most precious of commodities, uncensored stories, out of the Iberian Peninsula," he wrote. Constant planned to disguise stories in his letters to her that she would then be tasked with assembling, typing, and forwarding to a Toronto newspaper. He would indicate which parts of his letter were meant for publication by coded signals, such as how he dotted his 'i's and 'j's. It would be a lot of work, he said, but he hoped she would feel rewarded by its unusual nature. "I don't know whether the observation will flatter you, but one reason I am telling you all this is because I judged you as unromantic enough (in the better sense of the word) not to make a fuss over the apparent mystery [of] it all."

Constant made it to Spain and there abandoned his plans to merely observe the war. "I soon found out that the only thing worth writing about is the struggle, that the only point from which the struggle may be properly viewed is the front line, and that the only real understanding of the front line is obtained by the soldier," he wrote in a September letter to Dunsay in which he explained that he had joined the International Brigades.

By taking that step, Constant became one of some 1,600 Canadians, including at least 44 Jews, to fight in Spain. Jews were over-represented among volunteers from many of the contributing countries. Estimates vary, but out of 35,000 to 40,000 volunteers who joined the International Brigades or other militias and units that fought on the anti-Fascist side of the war, Jews

accounted for at least 3,500, and perhaps many more. They included about 20 percent of Polish volunteers, 20 percent of British volunteers, and one-third of American ones. The Jewish-Canadian contingent was much smaller, but it was still slightly disproportionate. Jews made up about 1.5 percent of Canada's population in 1931; they comprised about 3 percent of all Canadian volunteers.

It is tempting to incorporate the story of Jewish-Canadians in Spain within a larger narrative positing that so many Jews volunteered to fight Fascism in Spain because, as Jews, they were uniquely aware of its danger and uniquely motivated to confront it. Everything that came after the Spanish Civil War, culminating in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and the killing pits of Ukraine, confirms the clarity of such foresight. And given the awesome scale of the tragedy Jews suffered at the hands of Fascists during World War II, their resistance to Fascism in Spain was important to their collective identity in the years that followed.

But the story of Jews in the Spanish Civil War has been shaped by hindsight that was not available to young Jews contemplating joining the International Brigades in 1936 or 1937. Even Maurice Constant's personal story is less straightforward than it appears initially, including his identity as a Jew.

"It also occurs to me that you may not recognize the name," Constant wrote toward the end of his letter from the ocean liner, "it's a far cry from Maurice Constant to Moshe Cohen. Just now it seems to symbolize a very distant period, full of incomprehensibilities." It is unclear whether Moshe Cohen was the name Constant was given at birth, or whether it was simply how he was known among campers at Hashomer Hatzair. Constant's children, who were unaware of his Jewish heritage until many years later, only heard of Moshe Cohen when they were given copies of Constant's letters to Dunsay, discovered following her death more than seventy years after they were written. Despite Constant's youthful involvement with Hashomer Hatzair, he had rejected religion as a boy and refused to have a bar mitzvah.

Other volunteers were religious or more steeped in their Jewish identity. But that does not mean they went to Spain primarily because they were Jews. The decision made by Jewish-Canadians to fight in the Spanish Civil War was influenced by many factors, including a belief that Fascism posed a particular threat to Jews, and that their participation was an opportunity to combat it. There is little evidence however, that this was the dominant motive for most of them. Jewish-Canadians who fought in Spain were also radicalized by the general political climate in Canada during the Great Depression, which intensified the discrimination and marginalization they faced as Jews in Canada. It also contributed to pushing many Canadian Jews toward Communism and the Communist Party of Canada, which championed the Spanish cause. The past, however, never stands still in the minds of the present. And if being Jewish had only a little to do with why many Jewish-Canadians fought in Spain, it would come to matter more for those who looked back on the participation of Jewish-Canadians in the war years later. ■

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