

The Canadian Jewish News

**ALEXANDRA
LULKA
ROTMAN**
on standing up
for Jewish issues
at Toronto's
public school
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The Toronto Board of Rabbis calls on Benjamin's funeral home owners to 'uphold their sacred responsibilities' after complaints

/ Ellin Bessner

The organization representing Toronto's rabbis has broken its silence on the allegations against the Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel funeral home operators, concerning years of "inappropriate" business practices and at least five investigations by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario.

The rabbis issued a written statement to The CJN on Friday, Sept. 2.

The statement, which was unsigned, was sent from the president, Rabbi Yael Splansky, of Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple. A copy is also being sent to Michael Benjamin, the head of the Benjamin funeral home group, Rabbi Splansky said.

The rabbis urged Benjamin's and all funeral homes serving the community to "uphold their sacred responsibilities, maintain a sacred trust, and treat mourners with fairness, compassion and transparency."

Benjamin's owns two of the Jewish funeral homes in the Toronto area, while Steeles Memorial Chapel, which is also a privately owned company, owns the third.

The rabbis noted the "critical role" which Benjamin's has played for the Jewish community in the past century for bereaved families. However, the rabbis wrote that they are "deeply concerned" about the allegations against the company, and about the rulings issued by the provincial funeral industry watchdog.

Benjamin's has been in the headlines for over a month, after a grieving Toronto couple—Raziel and Jeanne Zisman—came forward about their legal battles launched after they learned the Benjamin Foundation deducted 10 percent of the charitable donations made in their late son Liam Zisman's name, for administration fees.

The BAO ruled in late July that the fees are to be restored, and all the money transferred immediately to the family's two designated charities: Chai Lifeline Canada and Camp Quality. The registrar's decision pointed out that the Zismans were not told up front about the fees, during the family's virtual arrangements meeting on the day their son died in early January of 2022.

Although they did sign the contract via email, authorizing the donation money to be channeled through the Benjamin Foundation, the Zismans insist they were too distraught at the time to read the document carefully. Plus, they did not need the Foundation's services, since they already told Benjamin's which charities should be on their son's funeral notice.

The Benjamin Foundation was created 40 years ago to provide a place for mourners to park charitable donations, until a plan can be made on what to do with the money. Several of the Ben-

jamin family members are directors of the Foundation, with day-to-day operations carried out by an executive director and office staff.

The funeral home has appealed the BAO's ruling to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, arguing the licensing body has no jurisdiction over the Foundation, because it is a separate entity and not part of the funeral services provided.

In the meantime, Benjamin's has agreed to make a series of changes to how its Foundation and related businesses operate. Most significantly, while the case is before the courts, as The CJN has reported, it will temporarily suspend the longstanding practice of charging 10 percent in administration fees on donations through the Foundation, for current and future funerals.

However, Benjamin's is pushing back on the BAO's other ruling on the same matter which was issued Aug. 10: by January 2023, Benjamin's was ordered to refund all the money taken for administration fees by the Foundation during the past six years, dating back to 2016, and send the proceeds directly to the affected charities. This could amount to \$200,000, and impact hundreds of families' memorial funds.

In a statement, the Zismans say the funeral home has been holding on to the donations in their son's name for eight months, and is refusing to comply with the BAO's ruling on July 28 to release all the funds immediately to the family's designated two charities.

"Every single dollar donated in Liam Jacob's memory continues to languish in the Foundation's bank account," Raziel Zisman writes. "That is sacred money... it does not belong to Benjamin's."

Until now, the organization representing Toronto rabbis has chosen to stay out of the discussion about Benjamin's practices. This is despite many rabbis confiding privately that they have been critical of the funeral home's methods for a long time.

However, some said they could not speak out due to how many rabbis rely on the fees they earn when they are called in to officiate at funerals for people who do not belong to synagogues. The standard rates for payment in 2022 are \$900 for a complete chapel service with burial, and \$750 for either a graveside or a chapel service. ■

A pair of Conservative synagogues in north Toronto have called off their merger talks

/ Alex Rose

A potential merger between Toronto's Beth David and Beth Tikvah Synagogue is no longer being pondered.

The two Conservative synagogues, which are both located in the city's North York district, began discussing the prospect in 2021. These conversations were publicly kept under wraps until

the story was reported by The CJN.

The attempt was abandoned because Beth Tikvah's leadership did not believe they would reach the two-thirds membership majority required to go through with it, said Douglas Millstone, the president of Beth Tikvah. (He declined to comment further.)

Currently, morning and evening weekday services for Beth Tikvah members and guests are held at Adath Israel Synagogue, along with an online streaming option. But the Beth Tikvah website is also promoting that events can now be booked for 2024 at its longtime building.

The prospect of a merger was first introduced because of many similarities between the shuls, said Andy Pascoe, president of Beth David.

"We were facing similar challenges, we have a lot in common in terms of our history and our membership and our halachic practice, and that through a merger, we would have a unique opportunity to build a more robust and stable egalitarian, conservative community in Toronto."

Pascoe also said the process of investigating the merger was positive and collaborative. The two shuls identified key issues to address including ritual matters, programming and staffing, facilities, finances and governance.

They created joint steering committees and working groups and provided regular updates to their respective boards and members. An interim report, published in June 2022, laid out solutions to all of these key areas.

While the merger didn't work out in the end, it still provided valuable information and potential inspiration for the shuls going forward.

"We both did extensive consultations with our communities and we developed a shared vision for what a... merged egalitarian conservative community would be able to achieve in Toronto. And that's certainly something that adds a lot of learnings and support for other opportunities we might pursue soon," Pascoe said.

Beth Tikvah was founded in 1964 as Shaarei Tikvah. It changed its name two years later after merging with the Bayview Synagogue Association. Over the past decade, its membership has declined from 1,100 family members to around 900.

Its website relates that in April 2017, "with a clear and resounding voice," members voted to become egalitarian.

Beth David merged with B'nai Israel Congregation in 1960 and with Beth Am Congregation in 1977. Its formal name is Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am.

The synagogue became egalitarian in May 2013, permitting women to lead services and be counted in a minyan. It tallies an estimated 750 family members.

Last fall, the Beth Emeth Bais Yehuda Synagogue—which is also located in North York—announced it was engaged in "strategic cooperation discussions" with Adath Israel, prior to the recent move by Beth Tikvah to re-direct its own weekday attendees there. ■

Alex Rose is a Toronto-based news reporter for The CJN.

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A worldwide search is on for Holocaust survivors to testify at a war crimes trial as time runs out

/Lila Sarick

A global search is now underway for witnesses to participate in what will likely be one of the last Holocaust-era war crime trials.

The accused, who is identified by German law as N.N., volunteered for service with the SS and served as a guard at Ravensbrück concentration camp from April 1943 to March 1945. Ravensbrück was known as a woman's camp, although it also had a section for men.

About 20 witnesses around the world have been identified so far, said Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center office in Jerusalem and coordinator of Nazi war crimes research.

German law gives survivors who were in the camp at the same time as the defendant, or next of kin of someone who was murdered in the camp, the right to make a statement to the court.

"Just yesterday, I got a phone call about a survivor in Uruguay who is 99 years old and her sister who is 96, and they are both in good mental states," Zuroff said in an interview from Jerusalem, about the search for potential witnesses.

Survivors can testify online and do not need to travel to Germany for the trial.

What is worrying, however, is the advanced age of both the defendant and the survivors.

Doctors with expertise in geriatrics examine the defendants and are not "fooled" by those who are "posing as ill people who are incapable of being brought to justice," Zuroff said.

N.N., who is 98, has already been examined by a medical expert and has been classified as fit to stand trial, for two to three hours a day, twice a week, according to a memo from retired Judge Thomas Walther, who has volunteered to represent witnesses in the case.

The trial is expected to begin in early October 2023, Walther wrote.

Zuroff is hopeful that the case will proceed. In June, Joseph Schuetz, who was a guard at Sachsenhausen camp, was convicted of complicity in war crimes at the age of 101.

At the time, Zuroff was told that another eight cases, including the Ravensbrück one, were being investigated by Germany.

The difficulty is that once a case is identified as credible by a central German office, it is shifted to local prosecutors who can find reasons to delay until it is too late, Zuroff said.

"I jokingly say I'm the only Jew in the world who prays for the good health of the Nazis, but only those who can be brought to justice."

The trials are important to educate people who may have

only heard about Auschwitz, he added.

“It’s important to understand the scope of the Holocaust, the horrors that these people suffered in these camps that weren’t well-known.”

German law changed 14 years ago, so that the prosecution no longer needs to prove that a specific crime was committed against a specific individual and was motivated by racial hate, a standard that was “practically impossible,” Zuroff said.

Now individuals are tried solely based on the fact that they served in a concentration or death camp during a specified time.

Witnesses do not need to remember a particular guard, but must only prove that they were in a camp during those dates and were the victims of crimes against humanity, said Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, director of policy for Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center in Canada.

“The witnesses will testify to starvation of inmates, beating of inmates, the abuse of inmates, the murder of inmates, medical testing of inmates whether or not it directly involved the guard or not,” she said.

In Canada, about 30 or 40 people have responded to the call for witnesses, which was only issued about a week ago. So far, two people who are eligible to participate have been identified.

“We’ve had a huge number of responses but most were ‘my mother was there, my grandfather was there... but those people are no longer with us.’”

“I have people contacting me saying ‘my mother was at the camp but I don’t even know if I even want to bring this to her,’” she said. “This is a very fraught and emotional process that we have to go through with every family that decides to participate.”

Identifying the best witnesses in these cases is challenging, Kirzner-Roberts said. She was responsible for finding Canadians who could participate in the Sachsenhausen trial and spoke to about 1,000 people before finding two people whose credibility could stand up in court.

In some cases, people were in the camp during the right dates, but had no documents. At liberation, the Nazis burned many of their records, making it difficult for inmates to prove they were in the camp.

In a subcamp of Sachsenhausen, as in many camps at war’s end, fleeing Nazi guards committed mass murder, but because

there were no death records it has been very hard for families to find justice, she said.

“It’s been much more challenging that I would have imagined to find people eligible to participate, under the rather narrow confines of what is possible under German law.

“The whole thing is so shameful, that we’re forcing people in their 90s to testify because these people should have faced trial decades and decades ago, but here we are.” ■

Lila Sarick is news editor of The CJN.

The mission that’s motivating Alexandra Lulka Rotman to seek re-election as a Toronto public school trustee—even after she felt exasperated by antisemitism in 2021

/ Ellin Bessner

Alexandra Lulka Rotman has been keeping a low profile for the past nine months, following the attention she received for a public fight over antisemitism at Canada’s largest public school board.

But now she’s back to knocking on doors, with the hopes of continuing as a Toronto public school trustee, in the riding of York Centre.

It’s a part-time elected position which the Toronto Montessori Jewish Day School teacher has held since winning a 2016 byelection to replace Howard Kaplan, who died of an autoimmune disorder.

She was then re-elected in 2018—which means winning the

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municipal vote on Oct. 22, 2022, would bring four more years in this position.

“My voice needs to stay at the table right now and I’m not ready to walk away,” the 32-year-old Lulka Rotman told *The CJN Daily*, in her first interview since the December ordeal.

It was only last fall that she narrowly avoided official censure from her colleagues on the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), in the kind of story that encapsulates the current challenges with how issues surrounding Israel—and Jewish people in general—are dealt with.

During the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Hamas, she used social media to sound the alarm over resource material distributed to staff by a pro-Palestinian employee of the school board.

Some of the pages contained links to terrorist groups promoting suicide bombings against Israelis—among other clearly problematic passages.

But instead of thanking her for flagging the material, which had not been vetted prior to distribution, the TDSB’s equity office hired an outside consultant to investigate whether Lulka Rotman violated the code of conduct.

Their final report agreed the material was antisemitic. But it also declared the Jewish trustee to be racist and Islamophobic, because she didn’t praise the acceptable parts of the resource package.

“I remember receiving the materials, a 50-page document with all of these links,” she said during an interview at home, in Toronto’s traditionally Jewish neighbourhood of Bathurst Manor. “And I sat on that couch and I read through them and I cried, because the concept that these really horrible things could be used as teaching resources in the classroom, it was heartbreaking.”

Lulka Rotman was subsequently not permitted to vote at the December 2021 board meeting, where her censure was defeated by 10 trustees overriding the seven who wanted it upheld. She was limited to giving a brief statement via Zoom, and then stayed publicly silent about what the process was like, and what it cost her and the rest of her family.

After the toxic events of this past school year, Lulka Rotman wasn’t sure she wanted to run for another term.

But after a quiet summer growing cherry tomatoes and spending time with her toddler daughter, and enjoying a second pregnancy—the baby is due in November—Lulka Rotman decided she couldn’t walk away from the battle to make Toronto’s public schools a safer and more welcoming place for Jewish families, and Jewish teachers.

“I’ve realized that my work isn’t finished,” she said. “There’s too much work that still needs to be done at the board to make

sure that we are properly integrating antisemitism into our anti-racism work and that our community needs to have a strong voice at the table for that to happen.”

And while she’d already signed up to run in early August, more motivation arrived with the discovery that one of eight challengers on the Ward 5 ballot is someone with a history and reputation of making the kind of remarks she’s talking about.

Nick Balaskas was fired from his lab technician job at York University in 2016 for posting antisemitic and anti-Israel comments on his Facebook page, including some supporting Holocaust denial. He most recently ran in the Ontario provincial election for the Ontario Party.

On a more personal level, Lulka Rotman admits that her time in the spotlight was difficult to live through. She never expected the kind of hatred and vitriol that she received for speaking out.

Going to therapy also helped when she was under a gag order not to publicly discuss the case. The equity investigator’s final report being made public gave her more freedom to talk.

And, given the number of international viewers for the TDSB meeting about the censure in December, there’s plenty of interest in hearing what she has to say.

Lulka Rotman’s family has several connections to Jewish communal life: the Queen’s University graduate went through the CJPAC program that trains young people to be active in politics. Her own Twitter account notes that she’s a “proud Israel advocate.”

Meanwhile, her husband, Alexander Rotman, worked in federal and provincial politics prior to his current role of countering antisemitism and hate at the UJA of Greater Toronto. And her uncle, Mauricio Lulka, is executive director of the Jewish community in Mexico.

The ward in which she’s running also has a large Jewish population. York Centre used to be home to many Holocaust survivors. It houses the campus of TanenbaumCHAT—the Jewish high school from which Lulka Rotman graduated in 2008—and several synagogues.

Which is why she’s decided to focus her campaign on making the city’s public schools safe for Jewish students and staff, even as the riding is becoming more diverse overall.

“This was an incident that was targeted against the Jewish community. But it doesn’t only affect the Jewish community. I think it affects everyone, because all minorities need to feel safe, and they come for us first, but it doesn’t stop there.”

If she’s re-elected, Lulka Rotman intends to push the board to live up to its commitments regarding Judaism and antisemitism. The TDSB’s director of education pledged in December to order new teaching modules on Judaism and Jewish cul-

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ture, which would then be delivered as professional development courses.

But she feels there's still much to be done.

One problem is how to respond best to the growing incidents of anti-Jewish graffiti, Hitler salutes and Holocaust denial showing up in the classrooms.

Such a case occurred in February 2022 at the Charles H. Best Junior Middle School, which is in her ward. The situation was compounded by confusion when the board went public without considering the wishes of the student's family.

While the TDSB's current response is to dispatch Holocaust educator Michelle Glied-Goldstein to conduct human rights training, Lulka Rotman believes that may not be the only solution to improving a climate of anxiety. Her hope is that discussion of the Shoah be accompanied with lessons about the other layers of Jewish identity and culture.

She praises the impact of recent programs like student walking tours of Kensington Market, through a partnership with the Ontario Jewish Archives. There was also a Holocaust book and film studied in grades 4 through 8.

And, for next spring, the TDSB's Jewish Heritage Committee is planning a special program to coincide with the 90th anniversary of the Christie Pits Riot.

Due to her advanced pregnancy, and the demands of juggling both her duties as a trustee and her day job, Lulka Rotman knows this new campaign for re-election will be somewhat scaled back compared to last time around.

But she's also scored endorsements from Conservative MP Melissa Lantsman, former finance minister Joe Oliver, Liberal MPs Ya'ara Saks and Anthony Housefather, and former foreign affairs minister John Baird. (Her husband worked with them all on Parliament Hill.) Plus, she did some door-knocking alongside Toronto Mayor John Tory and Councillor James Pasternak.

She also takes comfort in knowing that some new faces will be elected to the 22 seats around the board of trustees come October. So, if she wins, she may not have to work with the trustees who voted to censure her.

And while some Jewish groups trumpeted Lulka Rotman's 10-7 vote as a resounding victory, she didn't see it in the same way. And still doesn't.

"This wasn't really about what happened to me at the end of the day. This was about the fact that the systemic antisemitism within the higher levels of the board—I'm not talking about what happens in the classrooms—I'm talking about centrally, within our human rights office, within our equity department, the systemic antisemitism is so entrenched that, whether or not I was censured, it doesn't change that."

The next challenge is how to fight against the equity, diversity and inclusion cohorts that view Jews and Zionists as white supremacists and colonial oppressors, rather than a minority that also faces racism.

"We need to figure out how to break that pattern—because, in my six years at the board, I personally have experienced more antisemitism than I have before.

"That's the systemic antisemitism that really scares me." ■

Ellin Bessner is chief correspondent of *The CJA Daily*.

Obituary: Helen Wolfe, 69, lived life to its fullest despite her disability

/ Ron Csillag

People who knew Helen Wolfe tended to use the same words to describe her.

A teacher, writer, advocate and world traveler who had a life-long physical disability that required the use of crutches, a scooter or wheelchair, Wolfe not only did not allow obstacles to get in her way, she seemed to relish toppling them.

"She grew up in a time when people with disabilities were segregated and of whom little was expected," her death notice stated. "From childhood, she had a fierce determination to live life to the fullest. Helen upended social norms and surmounted obstacles which stood in her way."

Wolfe died of cancer in Toronto on Aug. 17. She was 69.

She was born in Toronto on July 16, 1953 with spina bifida, a birth defect that occurs when the spine and spinal cord don't form properly. Her Polish-born parents arrived in Canada in 1951. Her mother, Toby, had survived Auschwitz, while her father, Josef, had been interned in several ghettos. In his new home, her father became a manufacturer of felt.

Helen had numerous operations before the age of 10 to try and improve her condition, sometimes at discounts in the days before OHIP. Her mother nicknamed her "chocolate eyes" for her voracious consumption of the sweet, which often covered her face, while in hospital.

Despite her hardships, even at a young age, "she always wanted to learn and she was always a fighter," related her sister, Margie Wolfe.

Helen attended Sunny View Public School for physically and developmentally disabled children.

"It was segregated. That's the way it was. The system at the time did not allow for children with disabilities to participate in the regular school system," her sister said.

But Helen was widely admired, becoming Miss Easter Seals for a calendar, photographed sitting on the knee of Toronto Maple Leaf Red Kelly. Still, she knew at an early age that she wanted to break free of stereotypes that clung to, and held back, people with disabilities.

In the mid-1970s, she graduated with an honours degree in English from the University of Toronto, then enrolled in teachers' college, where the principal immediately urged her to quit because she would never get a job.

"A lot of Helen's life was about proving she could do as much as most people," Margie Wolfe said.

It took her some time to gain traction in the profession. After a long stint supply teaching, she spent 37 years teaching, mostly English as a second language to new immigrants and refugees at three schools in the Toronto District School Board. "She was very beloved. One student named his daughter after her," her sister recalled.

"She had a keen sense of social justice. When she was young-

er, she fought for her own individual rights. As she matured, she recognized that her issues were problems that we as a society should deal with.”

Edward Rice, chair of the Canadians with Disabilities sub-committee of B’nai Brith Canada’s League for Human Rights, knew Wolfe for about 38 years, first meeting her when the National Council of Jewish Women formed a group for young Jewish adults with disabilities.

The purpose of the group was to get Jews with disabilities integrated into the community. Part of its mandate was to press synagogues—successfully, it turned out—to become more accessible and help mark b’nai mitzvot for those who couldn’t when they were younger.

“Helen was instrumental in encouraging these young adults to participate,” Rice recalled. “She was an integral part (of) outreach and peer support.”

He recalled Wolfe as having “boundless energy, fierce determination, and always wanting to lend a helping hand. Her own disability was never an obstacle or consideration for the projects she brought to fruition.”

She kept her pen busy as well, authoring 37 teachers’ guides, including two for the March of the Living—one for the book *Witness: Passing the Torch of Holocaust Memory to New Generations*, and one for the documentary *Blind Love: A Holocaust Journey Through Poland with Man’s Best Friend*.

She also wrote three books. *Terrific Women Teachers* (2011) profiled 10 inspirational female educators, including Maria

Montessori, founder of the eponymous method of self-directed learning, and Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller’s “miracle worker.”

Unstoppable, Women With Disabilities, released a year ago, looked at 10 other women with physical and mental health challenges, some from birth and some who became disabled later in life, but all determined to make the world a better place, not just for themselves, but for those who followed them.

Her last book is slated for posthumous publication next March. *World Changers* will comprise biographies of women from around the world who have done things that have transcended the norm.

Throughout, Wolfe travelled widely, to Australia, New Zealand, China and Alaska. She whitewater rafted in Alberta and ascended Masada (via cable car).

She was an avid theatregoer and passionate member of her choir group, the Choralairs. She began training at a gym at age 49.

Wolfe “had a big life,” her sister eulogized. “She had to fight for every bit of it. Nothing was easy.”

At the same time, “she had this amazing desire to know and experience more.”

Wolfe is survived by her sister, Margie, cousins in Israel, and a large community of loving friends. ■

Ron Csillag is the reporter emeritus for The CJN.

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The mysterious fate of one of Argentina's 'disappeared' gets illuminated in a retired academic's new book

/ Janice Arnold

Marc Raboy was easing into retirement in 2018 after a long academic career at McGill, when his partner suggested a trip to Argentina where she might practise her newly learned Spanish.

The South American country had always held a latent curiosity for Raboy as his paternal grandfather spent a year there in the early 20th century after emigrating from the Ukrainian village of Zhabokrych before later coming to Canada.

Raboy had known his grandfather, but never asked about his brief time in Argentina. Were other distant relatives still there? It simply was never discussed.

Before their trip, Raboy on a whim Googled "Raboy Argentina." Raboy is an uncommon name, likely because it means "pockmarked" in Russian, and has several variations.

Raboy was astonished by what turned up: a young woman named Alicia Raboy was among the tens of thousands of resisters to the brutal military regime who "disappeared" in the 1970s in Argentina.

What had begun a pleasant vacation and a casual genealogical interest suddenly became the impetus for an in-depth investigation. The result is Raboy's new book *Looking For Alicia: The Unfinished Life of an Argentinian Rebel*, published by House of Anansi Press in Canada and Oxford University Press internationally.

On June 17, 1976, Alicia, her partner Francisco "Paco" Urondo and their infant daughter Angela were ambushed by security forces in remote Mendoza.

Urondo, a well-known charismatic poet and journalist, was murdered in view of witnesses. Alicia and the 11-month-old child were taken to a detention centre. Urondo at least was accorded the dignity of having his body returned to his family and is remembered to this day as a heroic cultural figure.

The much younger Alicia became a "footnote to Paco's story," said Raboy. She was not seen or heard from again; her remains were never found and, in all the intervening years, no information has been uncovered. She is forgotten by all but her older brother Gabriel and Angela who, Raboy discovered, have not relented in their search for answers.

It can be assumed she was tortured unspeakably. Women and Jews were subjected to especially horrendous treatment, said Raboy, from a repressive regime which justified itself as defending "Western Christian civilization."

Jews were disproportionately victimized. Although they represented about one percent of the population, 10-15 percent of the disappeared—a deliberate tactic to spread terror among the population—were Jewish, Raboy said.

To his mind, the crackdown was nothing less than a campaign of "extermination" of political dissidents. Highlighting Alicia's story is Raboy's way of putting a face to the up to 30,000 victims.

Besides sharing a name, Raboy was struck by other parallels between himself and Alicia. They were born within a month of each other in 1948, had four Jewish immigrant grandparents from the Russian empire, and were swept up in the politically turbulent 1960s.

"When I heard in the 1970s what was happening in Argentina, I

wondered if I had been born there would I have been among the many young people fighting the dictatorship," said Raboy.

Born into a middle-class family, Alicia had shown an independent spirit from an early age. While studying engineering at the University of Buenos Aires, she became involved in student politics.

Her resistance to the junta would not be limited to merely denouncing it. She joined the Montoneros, an armed urban guerrilla group that became the leading resistance movement, working as a journalist for its influential newspaper *Noticias*.

There is no evidence she took up arms herself; when she was abducted in Mendoza she was running a Montoneros daycare centre. "I was struck by how similar our lives were up to a point, although mine, of course, was far less perilous," said Raboy.

He began his working life as a journalist, first with the *McGill Daily* and then the *Montreal Star*. He gravitated to left-wing politics and community organizing. Unusual among anglophones, he sympathized with Quebec's rising nationalist movement. After a sojourn in Europe, he tried his hand unsuccessfully in Montreal municipal politics.

Raboy then settled into academic life. He completed a 37-year career as Beaverbrook Professor Emeritus in McGill University's department of art history and communications studies.

No stranger to biography, Raboy is the author of the 2016 *Marconi: The Man Who Networked the World*, an 870-page work that was a finalist for a Governor General's Literary Award.

After Raboy's initial 2018 visit to Argentina, he returned twice, spending a total of about five months there before the pandemic ended travel. He learned Spanish in the process and received valuable assistance from Stanley Diamond, president of the Montreal Jewish Genealogical Society, in his groundwork.

Alicia's brother Gabriel Raboy and daughter Angela became close collaborators in the quest, which since the book's publication carries on. Angela is one of only about 130 of the over 500 children of apprehended militants to have her identity restored after being adopted and her parents' histories were erased.

In 2011, four by then elderly former police officers were convicted in the death of Urondo and the "illegal deprivation of liberty" of Alicia, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

"We keep hoping that someone will still come forward and say they remember her, that they were in the next cell to Alicia at the detention centre or that new DNA samples from mass graves being discovered will identify her remains," Raboy said.

"For readers, I hope they take away, besides the particulars of Alicia's story, a warning to be vigilant about what is going on today with the rise of right-wing populism. This is not a fairy tale from the past, but a caution that human rights, the rule of law, and respect for differences should not be taken for granted," he said. "Let's not underestimate the kind of evil out there."

And are the Argentinian Raboys long-lost relatives? The reader will find out, but more important than blood kinship for Marc Raboy is the irreparable bond he has forged with them. ■

Janice Arnold has been reporting for The CJNI from