

## Editorial/comment

### Ashkenazi windowbreakings examples of ongoing North End violence

On Sunday, May 14, Don Marks summed up in the *Winnipeg Free Press* what's happened to Winnipeg's old North End.

In the early 1900s, he notes, Jewish and Ukrainian immigrants settled in that collection of neighborhoods immediately north of the CPR tracks. "Some North End entrepreneurs raised investment capital and crated business on Selkirk Avenue and Main Street which created employment and wealth for their community...They bought nice little houses along Flora and Pritchard and Mountain avenues and planted gardens."

By the 1960s and 1970s, however, they were replaced by the "bus people", Marks adds. "Aboriginal people fleeing the poverty and despair of the reserve came to the big city, looking for hope and opportunity."

"The biggest problem was the disparity in employment, income and available capital between the Indians and the rest of the North End population..."

Problems of "violence, drugs, prostitution and the like dominate our news coverage of the North End now."

Three rounds of windowbreaking at the Ashkenazi Synagogue earlier this month are glaring evidence of the ongoing North End violence.

What's particularly chilling is a police detective's report, after he interviewed nearby neighbors about that vandalism: At least one witness heard windows being smashed, and claims to have seen "girls" fleeing the synagogue after hurling rocks at it. But that witness did nothing in response.

How could that happen? Alan Yusim, executive director of B'nai Brith Canada's Midwest Region, guesses it's because residents of such a neighborhood may fear retaliation, if they inform police.

It's important to underscore, as Shelley Faintuch, Jewish Federation of Winnipeg's community relations director did in Winnipeg's Jewish weekly May 10, that there's no hard evidence members of a specific racial group were involved.

It's also heartening that Ashkenazi Synagogue officials are taking measures to increase that synagogue's security. It's sad, however, that according to a synagogue official, most main floor windows in the beautiful, light-filled main sanctuary, a jewel of synagogue architecture, are to be boarded up.

Some day, perhaps, neighbors of that 58-year-old Burrows Avenue shul will have the courage to call police, if, God forbid, he or she witnesses vandals striking there again. That's what being a good neighbor is really about, isn't it?

### Dry Bones



drybonesblog.com

### Opponents of withdrawal from Gaza Strip, West Bank fight on

Palestinians see pullouts as proof terrorism pays, critics claim

Most of the balconies in our neighborhood were festooned with national flags on Israel Independence Day. But one flag stood out from the others.

Hanging from it were a dozen orange ribbons, which the residents of that particular apartment had sown onto their flag as a demonstration of their belief that the



Orange banners signified opposition to the Gaza Strip withdrawal last year. Those opposed to further withdrawals now attach orange ribbons to their Israeli flags.

ans as proof that terrorism pays, and so they embarked upon the first intifada. Now, with the withdrawal from Gaza, they are raining rockets on Ashkelon. Can you imagine," she asked rhetorically, "what will happen if we withdraw from Judea and Samaria?"

There are other opponents of the present government's policy on territorial issues that would, in certain circumstances, support limited withdrawals in order to guarantee the Jewish character of the Jewish state. "But first," a Bar-Ilan professor told me, "we must evaluate the consequences of the pullback from Gaza. The first thing I do after one scientific experiment and before I embark upon a second one, is to evaluate the results of the first one. We haven't done that, as a country, where Gaza is concerned."

The professor in question has his own clear views on the issue. He points out that many of the settlers forced out of the strip are still with-

out proper housing and jobs. "And if, as Olmert proposes, tens of thousands of Jews were to be expelled from the territories, the problem would be multiplied many times over."

Although this man thinks that the Arab-supplied population figures for Judea and Samaria are very exaggerated, he does not deny, as do some people on the right, that there is a demographic problem to be faced. But he feels that borders can be drawn that will ensure Israel's control of strategically vital hill areas and water sources, while including very few Arabs. In the meantime, in any case, he sees no point in Israel unilaterally deciding on borders that no one, not even the United States, will recognize. "We'll be worse off strategically and no more legitimate in the world's eyes than we are today," he declares.

Can the convergence plan be defeated in the Knesset? He believes that it can; if the opposition is united and forces a serious public debate on the issue.

There are other voices, not necessarily of right-wingers, who call for the Olmert plan to be put on the back burner in the meantime. They include respected *Ha'aretz* columnist Ari Shavit, who warns that his fellow countrymen are so preoccupied with other matters that they don't realize that the first item on the national agenda must be the threat of an Iranian A-bomb. The only man who can stop them from producing one is George Bush. Continuing with the convergence scheme will, Shavit argues, present him with more problems - in addition to Iran and Iraq. "Israel's role now," Shavit declares, is to keep a low profile, stick to the road map, deal with the illegal outposts and not draw any unusual attention to itself. It must help Western public opinion to understand the inevitable and also prepare Israeli public opinion for the unavoidable. Only after the hum of the Iranian uranium-enriching centrifuges is silenced will it be possible to seriously deal with the systematic uprooting of settlements."

The writer lives in Rehovot, Israel.

## Comment

First person

### For one activist, Darfur stories underscore need for urgent action

By JIM REMSEN

PHILADELPHIA (JTA) - "It looks like Arabic... only upside down." Suad Mansour and Amira Tibin's eyes danced: They had never seen Hebrew before. Both are from Darfur, Muslim-born expatriates from that agonized war zone of Sudan. They are well-educated and articulate, but utterly new to Judaism.

As they stood in the synagogue lobby, clad in traditional Sudanese wraps and headscarves, they cocked their heads and remarked on the oddly familiar lettering on the wall. Smiling, they moved on. I was escorting the two women one day in early April as we paid visits to two churches and an elegant Reform temple in suburban Philadelphia. The congregations were among five that had agreed to host communitywide talks that our grassroots Darfur Alert Coalition was organizing.

We were making courtesy calls to assess the various sanctuaries, meet the clergy and impress on people the urgency of the African crisis. The purpose of the speaking tour was to let American audiences hear directly from Darfuri activists. These visits would give the hosts an advance taste of that. At the same time, for the bridge-building to be durable, we all had to be open to learning from one another.

In that spirit, Suad and Amira were thrilled to leaf through the prayerbooks and be invited onto the temple's bimah for an impromptu primer on the Torah. As the administrator opened the ark and unrolled the magnificent scroll, the two women tiptoed up and watched silently. When he held up the pointer for them, a silver yad, Amira exclaimed, "Yad! Of course, the hand! Yad means hand in Arabic, too."

It was a precious encounter. I glowed with thoughts of Suad and Amira returning home to tell their families about their insights into Judaism, and about the warm welcome the staff had given them.

Receptions of this sort are immeasurably important. Beneath their cultural reserve, Darfuris in the diaspora suffer in despair over the genocide that has devastated their homeland and claimed so many of their extended family members. Feeling forsaken by the world and nearly invisible to the American public around them, they are crying out for action as best they can, and are greatly comforted by expressions of support.

This was driven home to me during the drive to our next stop that day, an African-American mega-church in Philadelphia. I was traveling with Suad. Being relatively new to the Darfur coalition, I didn't know her well and began asking about her family. Eyes cast downward in the Sudanese custom, Suad began a grim recitation.

Her family's ancestral village is no more, incinerated at the hands of the Janjaweed, the government-backed Arab militia. Her father was imprisoned for killing a marauder who tried to plunder their home. One of her uncles has gone mute, traumatized by the horrors he witnessed. Three of her older sisters are living in displaced persons camps, struggling to keep their families safe.

Unlike her sisters, Suad left village life years earlier to attend university. She became an accomplished administrator, creating a program to train and empower women displaced by the



Refugees in Darfur, Sudan: The U.S. Jewish community has been out front, on their behalf.

recent war in southern Sudan. As relief organizations began to honor her and fund her work, she was targeted by government security forces and fled the country. Stunned by her account, I urged Suad to tell it to the church pastor to underscore the significance of the talk he'd be

hosting.

In his office, Suad solemnly repeated her testimony and implored his help. Tears broke through her dignity. She daubed them on her wrap. Later, I apologized to Amira that she had not had time to address the pastor as well.

Amira told me she has a brother in Darfur who has been missing for two years. He was pressed into the military, and the family fears the worst. Her husband's ancestral village was destroyed, and one of his young cousins died when the Janjaweed tossed him into a burning building. "But it's OK," Amira said, her eyes burning. "Another time. We all have stories like that."

I couldn't help thinking what an unlikely midwife I was to be bringing these various communities together. As a recently retired religion editor, I do have good connections in both religion and media circles. After attending a powerful talk on Darfur and hearing a call for help in organizing a multi-city speaking tour, I had decided to volunteer my services, figuring I could use my connections to get good venues and good press. It paid off for Suad, Amira and others in the coalition.

Beyond that, though, it's an odd coupling. I'm a WASP with absolutely no family experience of persecution, let alone genocide. Jews and Darfuris have an automatic affinity, but my ancestors, being a mix of New Amsterdam Dutchmen and Protestant Brits, were historically on the side of persecutors.

I married a Jew, and have become a fellow traveler with Darfuri expatriates. I seem to be drawn to work along the borders. As I run head-on into the sufferings of Darfur, I am bowed.

People with histories of enduring persecution perhaps have developed defence mechanisms to strengthen themselves and cope; I have not. I felt this full-force when, in the middle of the Darfur speaking tour, I took a night off to attend our synagogue's interfaith Freedom Seder. Knowing of my Darfur work, the rabbi asked me to make a few comments about the Darfur crisis as a case of modern-day oppression. I could barely speak.

Facing a roomful of friendly Jews and black Baptists, I was overwhelmed. I struggled to tell them how 500 Darfuris - four times our seder crowd - are dying every day. How women and children are not collateral damage but targets. How, at one of our talks, cell phones rang as Darfuris in the room received reports from home of fresh atrocities.

My pained, lip-quivering performance drove home for me just how much the Darfuris, for (Cont. on page 9. See "Darfur".)

## LETTERS

### Thanks for concert review

Many thanks for your kind and sensitive review ("Concert of Sid Robinovitch music dazzling", May 17 Jewish Post & News). I especially appreciated your insight about how it is often a feature of my music to combine the melodious with the dissonant. We are trying to put together a CD of this material, and hopefully it won't be too long in coming out.

SID ROBINOVITCH  
Winnipeg

### Saturday "Y" will strengthen community

With all respect to Harold Buchwald, who is without doubt one of the most respected leaders for my generation of Winnipeg Jews, I must comment on his article regarding the opening of the Asper Campus on Saturdays ("Rady Centre must reinforce Jewish identity", May 17 Jewish Post & News.)

Growing up in '50s and '60s Winnipeg, the highlight for hundreds of Jewish youth were the Saturday events at the old YMHA on Hargrave Street. Every Saturday through the school year (except major holidays) consisted of clubs, floor hockey, swimming, a "hamburger or hot dog special" served by Rosie at Mr. Krindel's restaurant, and once a month in Juvenile B (age 11 and 12) there was the "social" where the South End boys could chase North End girls and North End boys chase the South End girls.

The Saturday Y allowed greater socialization between Jewish youth and created close relationships that I still have over 40 years later. It was the first "bridge" for us between the North End and South End communities. With Mr. Buchwald's concern about intermarriage and other concerns of the Jewish community, I must argue that a Saturday "Y" will strengthen the community by having the Jewish youth having fun together on their most free day.

NATHAN JACOBSON  
Toronto-Tel Aviv  
(always a Winnipegger)

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"I came here in 1966. There were no broken windows then."

- Saul Spitz, treasurer of Ashkenazi Synagogue, surveying damage vandals caused to the synagogue this month. See story starting at top left of page 1.

"Philanthropy, for women, is a path to power..."

- Susan Weidman Schneider, a Jewish feminist/journalist and former Winnipegger, speaking here about how women can fulfill goals through charitable giving. See story at top of page 2.

"Thanks to Chabad, I never lost hope."

- Sheldon Zamick, a Jewish Winnipeg businessman, speaking about how Winnipeg's Chabad Lubavitch helped him cope with a serious illness several years ago. See story on page 7.

"It's a great honor for me to be here."

- Eitan Rubinstein, an Israeli-born and trained doctor who will head a proposed new HIV/AIDS treatment program for Manitobans. See Myron Love's "Our Little Shtetl" feature on page 8.

**THE JEWISH POST & NEWS**  
Published Wednesdays, 47 times a year. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs. Canada Subscriptions in Canada \$41.04 per year. Subscriptions outside Canada \$100.00 per year in Cdn. funds or \$75.00 per year in U.S. funds. Member of Jewish Telegraphic Agency, New York, World Zionist Press Service, Jerusalem. The Jewish Post & News is not responsible for the kashrut of any products or establishments advertised or publicized in this newspaper, or in inserts included in this newspaper. Opinions expressed in letters to the editor, or articles by contributing writers are not necessarily endorsed by The Jewish Post & News.

The Jewish Post Ltd. Publisher  
Matt Bellan Editor  
Bernie Bellan Business Manager  
Office at 113 Hutchings St. Wpg. MB, R2X 2V4  
Please send all mail to above address  
Phone: 694-3332 Fax: 694-3916  
E-mail: jewishp@mts.net  
Sales: Robbie Mazo 334-4948 Percy Golubchuk 589-0802

Publications Agreement No. 40047412  
Publications Assistance Program Registration No. 08971  
Postage paid at Winnipeg ISSN 0836-6063