

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

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FEBRUARY 29, 2024

## John Avlon pivots from punditry to politics

*The centrist commentator is now testing whether his views will sell in a swing Long Island district*

By Matthew Kassel

John Avlon, a former longtime editor and CNN commentator, has recently found himself in an unfamiliar role as he sits for interviews to discuss his new campaign to flip a Republican-held swing seat on Long Island.

The moderate Democrat, who jumped into the primary in New York's 1st Congressional District last week, has long been involved in politics, albeit mostly

behind the scenes. Early in his career, he served as a speechwriter for then-New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and more recently helped to launch the centrist group No Labels, with which he is no longer affiliated.

But even as Avlon acknowledges that there is "a natural tension between journalism and politics," the first-time candidate says that he has "always believed they should be complementary," citing

Teddy Roosevelt's work as a columnist for *The Outlook* magazine after he served as president.

"That's a great tradition that I don't mind helping to rekindle," Avlon, 51, said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* this week. "You should be involved in both because you care about the country, you care about your community, you want to engage in the civic conversation, you want to make it

smarter — and you want to offer solutions.”

In his quest to unseat Rep. Nick LaLota (R-NY), a vulnerable freshman Republican in Suffolk County whose district covers a large swath of eastern Long Island, Avlon claims the incumbent is “too far” and “too right,” while accusing him of embracing former President Donald Trump and rejecting bipartisan legislation “because he’s not interested in solving problems.”

“The core of my message is that we need to build the broadest possible coalition to defeat Donald Trump, defend our democracy and win back the House from his MAGA minions,” said Avlon, who has long been an outspoken critic of Trump. “The border security bill with attached funding for Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan is a perfect example of that,” he added, calling GOP efforts to block the aid “a total dereliction of duty.”

Avlon, a self-described policy “wonk,” was eager to delve into what he described as “common-sense” Democratic proposals, such as restoring state and local tax deductions, expanding child tax credits and mitigating climate change, among other things. “My rule when I was a columnist,” said Avlon, who helped revive *The Daily Beast* before joining CNN in 2018 as an anchor and political analyst, “was I didn’t want to criticize unless I had a solution.”

**“When you see a community and a country as viciously attacked by such a horrific and barbaric act of terrorism as Oct. 7 was, there’s no room for neutrality,” said Avlon.**

In conversations with voters, he said he has also learned that Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza is a “top area of concern,” an issue he approaches with characteristic pragmatism. “We need to focus on the underlying principles so that we can depolarize this issue while being true to our values and any sense of perspective,” he said, calling himself “very strongly pro-Israel.”

“I’m strongly pro-Israel for a lot of reasons having to do with democracy, the fact that they’re one of America’s closest allies in the world, and there’s an enormous number of connections between our two countries and particularly our communities here in New York and on eastern Long

Island,” Avlon said.

But having lived through Sept. 11 “up close,” he clarified, “when you see a community and a country as viciously attacked by such a horrific and barbaric act of terrorism as Oct. 7 was, there’s no room for neutrality.”

“The fact that there was an impulse to blame the victims, that we saw antisemitism seeping out in college campuses and protests, it’s something that should concern us and it should be a wake-up call,” said Avlon, who has raised concerns about rising antisemitism in his CNN commentary. “You don’t blame the victim in the wake of a terrorist attack. You help the people who’ve been attacked.”

Speaking with JI a day before some Democratic voters in Michigan cast their ballots for “uncommitted” to protest President Joe Biden’s support for Israel, Avlon, who saw the effort as ultimately misguided, lamented that Israel had not always been “as polarizing as it is today.”

The former journalist credited that shift, in part, to critics of Israel who “forget that being pro-Israel is not synonymous with supporting” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his policies. “That’s made it a more partisan, polarizing issue than it should be or has to be or has historically been,” he said.

A longtime observer of Israeli politics who counts Yitzhak Rabin as one of his “great heroes,” Avlon describes himself as a “Benny Gantz-Yair Lapid kind of guy,” invoking two prominent Israeli leaders on the center-left. “Those are my politics,” Avlon said, noting that he was “inspired by” mass protests in Israel opposing Netanyahu’s judicial overhaul that took place before Hamas’ attacks.

Despite his reservations with Netanyahu and his far-right government, however, Avlon insisted that “now is the time to rally around Israel and around democracy,” arguing that “there is absolutely no scenario we’ve seen where the Palestinian people are well-served by a Hamas-led government, which is supporting terrorism and itself as a proxy force.”

**“I think you need to be consistent with your principles and that itself is clarifying. If know who you are, if you**

**know what you believe and if you have a record to show it, if you’re rooted in American history, which is one of my loves as an author and historian, I think that provides a lot of clarity in otherwise chaotic and confusing times — and that’s what I’ll draw on,” Avlon said.**

Even as Democratic lawmakers have increasingly grown divided over the war, Avlon said his own models for approaching the conflict are Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA) and Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-NY), two leading progressives who have unequivocally backed Israel as the war has continued. “I really think that Fetterman and Torres have set exactly the right tone,” he said. “It’s just enormously important to keep your moral compass clear.”

“That’s the way we need to shake up our politics,” he said, proposing a centrist framework for confronting what he characterized as rising illiberalism on the left and right. “I think you need to be consistent with your principles and that itself is clarifying. If know who you are, if you know what you believe and if you have a record to show it, if you’re rooted in American history, which is one of my loves as an author and historian, I think that provides a lot of clarity in otherwise chaotic and confusing times — and that’s what I’ll draw on.”

Before he can challenge LaLota in November, Avlon must first advance past the primary, where his top rival, Nancy Goroff, a Jewish Democrat backed by the left-leaning Israel advocacy group J Street, had been seen as a front-runner, having raised just over \$600,000 last quarter.

The primary field narrowed on Wednesday, when former state Sen. Jim Gaughran announced he was dropping out of the race and endorsed Avlon, whom he called “the only Democrat” capable of building a “winning coalition of Long Island families from the heart of Huntington to the tip of Montauk.”

Still, Avlon is likely to face attacks from opponents in both parties over his past ties to Republicans as well as his relatively limited history in the district. In 2017, he purchased a home in Sag Harbor with his wife, Margaret Hoover, a conservative talk show host.

The day he announced his campaign last week, Republicans were ready to pounce, calling Avlon a “Manhattan elitist” and a “smug liberal hack,” among other jabs.

To Avlon, however, such taunts have been validating. “I think they’re scared because they hadn’t expected that they’d have a competitive race on their hands,”

he told JI. “But they know if I work hard enough and I’m lucky enough to win the nomination, that they’ll have a real race on their hands, and they weren’t betting that.”

While Avlon is a familiar face to some voters in the district, thanks to his frequent TV appearances and long career in media, he said there is growing energy behind

his campaign because his message is resonating.

“Some people know me from Bill Maher, they know me from CNN, maybe they’ve read my books,” he said. “I’d like to think that’s a part of it. But I think they’re excited about the prospect, and that in turn invigorates me.” ♦

FEBRUARY 27, 2024

## After four months of war, how much of Gaza’s terror tunnel network remains?

*IDF says its aim is not to destroy all of the estimated 300 miles of tunnels built by Hamas, but to take out key points that render the underground network unusable and weaken the group’s operational and tactical advantage*

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By Ruth Marks Eglash

As Israeli troops push southward through the Gaza Strip, there are almost daily reports of new tunnel shafts, lavish bunkers, subterranean weapons factories and storage facilities being discovered. Yet recent estimates by Israeli and U.S. officials suggest that only a small fraction of the vast and intricate underground system built beneath the Palestinian enclave by the Hamas terror group has so far been demolished.

Last week, at the Munich Security Conference, Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told reporters that Israel had only been able to secure a “stunningly small” amount of the tunnels that Hamas fighters are using in

Gaza. His comments followed a *Wall Street Journal* report last month quoting U.S. and Israeli intelligence sources as saying that between 20%-40% of the tunnels that snake below the Strip had been “damaged or rendered inoperable” since the start of the fighting, sparked by Hamas’ brutal terror attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

While the IDF is certainly detecting and even mapping a growing portion of what observers believe could be more than 300 miles of underground passageways – roughly half the New York City subway system – it is not clear exactly how much progress has made in eliminating the threat posed by this elaborate subterranean network, which Israelis often refer to as the

“Gaza metro.”

IDF spokesman Lt. Col. (res.) Peter Lerner told *Jewish Insider* this week that no formal assessment had been made public of how much of Hamas’ tunnel system had been destroyed or neutralized, emphasizing instead that the goal was quality over quantity.

“The magnitude is less important than what actually is the makeup of that magnitude,” he explained, highlighting that the army was focused more on “dismantling key components of the tunnel infrastructure that gives [Hamas] a tactical and operational advantage.”

In northern Gaza, Lerner described how underground command-and-control

centers used by the terror group had been obliterated, forcing Hamas' fighters above ground, while further south, in the city of Khan Younis, the detection of hideouts utilized by senior Hamas leaders, including Oct. 7 mastermind Yahya Sinwar, as well as cells where Israeli hostages were held, have left the terror group "in a constant state of threat and pursuit."

He also said that the IDF had targeted rocket launchers, weapons storage and manufacturing facilities hidden below ground, reducing the overall number of rockets being fired into Israel significantly over the past few weeks.

"It is all part of an organism," Lerner said. "We are cutting it down slice by slice, location by location, which handicaps Hamas' ability to operate freely."

Identifying the mileage of the tunnel system, the spokesman clarified, was more to show the "effort and expense of Hamas' industry of building its terror tunnel network, which was designed to give them that tactical and operational advantage and, in some places, even a strategic advance."

"Dismantling that capability means that all of its efforts and all of the money that went into this project is basically wasted," Lerner added. "It also means that they are less competent in both their ability and conduct."

Israel has been grappling with the threat posed by Hamas tunnels since the late 1990s, when Gaza was still under full Israeli military control and Israeli civilians lived in the Strip. As early as 1999, incidents of Palestinian terrorists using underground passageways to infiltrate army bases

and even communities were reported. In addition, at that time, Israel was aware that numerous tunnels snaking beneath the Strip's border with Egypt were being used to smuggle goods and weaponry into the territory.

By the mid-2000s, cross-border tunnels were also detected beneath Gaza's perimeter with Israel. In 2006, an attack tunnel was used in the kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. In 2014, Israel's previous major war with Hamas, the terror group used tunnels to infiltrate civilian communities in southern Israel and attack Israeli forces battling inside the Strip.

Following that war, Israel focused its efforts on developing technology that could detect additional cross-border attack tunnels and spent millions of dollars on an advanced underground barrier designed to block the threat of future infiltrations. The military also began training some of its elite units in the art of underground fighting.

Still, over the past four months of fighting, the IDF has appeared surprised at discovering the extent of the elaborate, multimillion-dollar labyrinth built by Hamas – a system that Palestinians refer to as "lower Gaza."

Daphne Richemond-Barak, author of the 2017 book *Underground Warfare* and a professor at Reichman University in Herzliya, told JI that taking the fight underground was not only a tactical advantage for Hamas but also a carefully planned "strategic asset."

"Above ground, Israel has superiority over Hamas, but underground it is a level playing field that even gives Hamas an

upper hand because they know the layout of the tunnel network," she said, adding that, "The most significant mistake Israel has made is to see this [the tunnels] as a tactical asset and not as a strategic asset."

"I would say it is absolutely and completely necessary for Israel to destroy all the tunnels and not just neutralize them," Richemond-Barak said. "Neutralizing them is just a temporary measure, while a destruction is a hard kill that leads to the collapse of its structure – its walls and its ceiling, making it totally unusable."

"We have heard the IDF claiming many times that they destroyed the opening of a tunnel, but that doesn't mean anything," she continued. "The opening is only the point where the tunnel meets the surface; what needs to happen to eliminate the threat is for the tunnel itself to be destroyed – what's the point of destroying the opening of the tunnel when the tunnel itself can still be used?"

Richemond-Barak pointed out that tunnels can change purpose and usage over time. While they might be utilized in one way by a certain group, they could be inherited by other factions who might adapt them and use them in a different way.

"To hear that the Israeli army views some tunnels as strategic and others as non-strategic is completely counter to how I believe tunnels should be dealt with," she concluded. "Haven't we learnt anything in the past four months? As long as there is a hole in the ground and a tunnel behind it, then it is a threat to our forces and a threat to Israel." ♦

# Jordan's queen downplays role of Oct. 7 as cause of the war in Gaza

*Rania Al Abdullah said that linking the war to the Hamas attack reflects an 'incomplete narrative' of the longer-term Israeli-Palestinian conflict*

By Marc Rod

In remarks at the Web Summit Qatar in Doha, Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan downplayed the role of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel as the cause of the current war in Gaza, arguing that this reflects an "incomplete narrative" of the longer-term Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The fact is, when one side of a conflict has been robbed of the right to tell its story, we're left with an incomplete narrative," Abdullah said in her speech. "The current iteration opens like this: 'The war began on Oct. 7.' To be sure, the brutal Oct. 7 attack opened a new and devastating chapter in the saga. But the larger story has been unfolding for more than most of our lives — 75 years in which Palestinians have not known a single day of genuine peace."

She offered condemnation for the Hamas attack, but also said it does not justify the current war in Gaza. She alleged that Palestinians have, over decades and in the current war, been systematically dehumanized and ignored, "relegated to a footnote in the narrative authored by

someone else" and "cast as terrorists and security threats, nothing more."

"Acts of war are not always as clear-cut as an airstrike, an ambush or an abduction," she said, describing the blockade of Gaza, checkpoints, separation walls, settler violence, detentions without criminal charges and "the endless indignities of life under occupation" as all forms of "violence."

"One can acknowledge that, for many, Israel's founding countered a historical injustice, while recognizing that it created another that has yet to be resolved," she added.

Abdullah called for an immediate ceasefire, an end to "the inhumane obstruction of aid delivery" and the release of "the hostages and detainees on both sides," as well as a Palestinian state "living side by side in peace with Israel."

In Israel's operations in Gaza, the queen argued, "the bar for humanity keeps falling to new lows — actions that were once unthinkable are now commonplace."

"Just look at global benchmarks of

human rights, international law, universal values of equality and justice," she continued. "Some of our most basic principles are being rewritten in real time to rationalize an irrational level of violence."

The queen's speech at the technology-focused conference centered on the role that social media has played in granting increased visibility to the impacts of the current war on Palestinians in Gaza, and for those abroad advocating for Palestinians.

Abdullah referenced claims by pro-Palestinian activists that they are being censored or suppressed by major technology platforms. Pro-Israel advocates have voiced similar concerns.

"It is hard for users to trust platforms that control their content from the shadows based on vague standards," she said.

She also spoke about "digital echo chambers," which she said lead both sides to "instinctively [center] the suffering of their own people and [minimize] the other." ♦



# New ADL poll: Antisemitism closely tied to receptivity to conspiracy theories

*The survey found that people who hold common far-left and far-right beliefs are much more likely to embrace anti-Jewish tropes*

By Haley Cohen

The two leading predictors of antisemitic belief are conspiratorial thinking and the notion that some groups in society should be more dominant than others, according to a poll by the Anti-Defamation League released on Thursday that looked at how antisemitism has changed in scope, nature and implications in the wake of unprecedented levels rising in the U.S. since Oct. 7.

The poll also found that maintaining a belief system that divides the world into “oppressors” and “oppressed” strongly correlates with antisemitism.

The survey, which polled 4,143 U.S. adults from Jan. 5-18, found that younger generations endorse more anti-Jewish views. Asked the extent to which Americans agreed with 11 different statements about antisemitic tropes used to measure anti-Jewish attitudes since 1964, as well as statements about Israel, millennial respondents agreed with the greatest number of anti-Jewish tropes on average, at 5.37. Gen Z followed closely behind at 5.01, while Gen X averaged 4.19 and Baby Boomers 3.06.

According to the data, respondents who fall in the upper quartile of conspiracy theory belief endorsed over twice as many anti-Jewish tropes, on average, as those least predisposed to conspiracy theories.

Accepting anti-Jewish rhetoric was also found to correlate significantly with “social dominance orientation,” a worldview typically associated with the far-right, which believes there are superior groups who ought to dominate lower-status groups.

The survey provided the example that “respondents who at least somewhat agreed with the statement that some groups of people are inferior to other groups were 3.6 times more likely to fall in the top quartile of anti-Jewish trope belief compared to those who did not.”

The survey also found that people who believe that the world is divided between those who are oppressed and those who are oppressors — a common belief among far-left activists — also featured elevated levels of antisemitism. They were 2.6 times more likely to endorse the largest share of antisemitic tropes.

The survey appears to confirm the so-

called horseshoe theory of antisemitism, that the far-left and the far-right are not on opposite sides of the spectrum but instead are nearly touching.

The survey also found that 27% of Americans would find it at least somewhat acceptable for a close family member to support Hamas, while 24% of Americans said they have a close friend or family member who dislikes Jews.

Jonathan Greenblatt, the CEO of the ADL, called the findings “shocking” in a statement.

“After decades of antisemitism mostly keeping to the fringes of society, it is shocking to see the number of Americans who openly hold antisemitic beliefs increase so significantly in recent years,” Greenblatt said. “And the sharp reversal, from older generations to younger generations being more likely to hold antisemitic beliefs, is a terrifying concern for our future. The need for better solutions is more urgent than ever — before this dangerous momentum keeps growing.” ♦

# Marc Rowan on publicly fighting UPenn over its handling of campus antisemitism: 'Telling the truth feels great'

*The investor and board chair of UJA-Federation of New York said the Oct. 7 attacks and ensuing rise in antisemitism have brought many Jews 'off the sidelines'*

By Judah Ari Gross

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

Marc Rowan, who chairs UJA-Federation of New York's board, said he has no regrets about leading the charge against the leadership of his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, over its handling of campus antisemitism, during an onstage interview with fellow investor David Rubenstein at the Economic Club in Washington, D.C.

Rowan said he was compelled to act after seeing that the university's administration response to antisemitism was "completely misguided." He said he was hopeful because he believes the antisemitism seen on campuses is driven by ignorance. "While we have an antisemitism problem, I don't think we're fighting antisemitism on these campuses. I think we're fighting something else. We're fighting anti-Americanism. We're fighting anti-merit. We're fighting anti-power. We're fighting really for the soul of these institutions," he said.

"We went from being the envy of the

world. Our academic institutions were the envy of the world. We produced academic excellence and amazing research and amazing students. And somehow we lost our way. That is not what we produce today."

Rowan said the responses to his activism have been mixed, but mostly positive from the wider public. "On the one hand, there clearly are members of the board of trustees who are unhappy that I went public. There are members of the faculty who are unhappy that I went public. But I got off an elevator at a hotel in Houston. And someone is looking at me and they're saying, 'Are you Mark Rowan?' And I look at them because we live in a crazy world. I took a chance and said, 'Yes.' And all they did was hug me and say thank you. And that, by and large, is what's happening," he said.

"Telling the truth feels great. You guys should all try it. It's really good. It's cleansing. It's very clarifying. And I had no idea what the reaction was going to be from our employee base, from our partners, from our Middle Eastern partners and from others. And I have to be honest. The vast,

vast majority of reaction has been incredibly positive."

Reflecting on the Jewish community's response to the Oct. 7 terror attacks, Rowan said the ensuing rise in antisemitism has brought many people into the fold. "We are, in the U.S., in the Jewish community, going through a very interesting period of time. Anyone who was on the sidelines is no longer on the sidelines," Rowan said during the nearly hour-long interview.

"The normal budget of UJA is about \$225 million a year. This year, they'll raise \$375 [million]. People are off the sidelines. The notion that we would ever see antisemitism in the United States of America is something that has hit people in the most visceral way, and they want to go and change it. The energy we're seeing, the outpouring of support from people who heretofore had not been engaged in Jewish causes is actually one of the silver linings following Oct. 7, and it'll be interesting to see how we, as people who are active in the philanthropic world, harness that energy, because there's nothing but things to do right now." ♦

# Israel, Indonesia were on track to normalize ties before Oct. 7: sources

*World's most populous Muslim nation authorized an agreement to exchange trade offices with Israel, with a signing ceremony set for October 2023*

By Lahav Harkov

Israel and Indonesia had planned to announce the establishment of diplomatic relations in October 2023, a move that was delayed by the Hamas terror attack on Israel and subsequent war in Gaza, three sources involved in the negotiations told *Jewish Insider*.

Israel's then-Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and departing Indonesian President Joko Widodo's office approved a final draft of an agreement for the Jewish state and the country with the world's largest Muslim population to exchange trade offices, as a first step towards full diplomatic relations, sources involved in the talks said.

October 2023 was a likely date for the official announcement, in conjunction with a planned meeting of the Negev Forum in the middle of the month, though November, when Widodo visited the White House, was also under consideration. Jakarta also tracked progress towards Israel-Saudi normalization, thinking that there would be less blowback if both happened within a short period, one source said.

Indonesia planned to open a trade office in Ramallah at the same time.

Andi Widjajanto, a senior adviser to Widodo, and Ronen Levy, then the director-general of the Foreign Ministry and one of the key Israeli players in the Abraham Accords, met in Jerusalem in September, along with Dan Shapiro, who at the time was the State Department's senior advisor for regional integration, to finalize the text, as seen in a photo provided by one of the sources involved in the talks. New York-

based businessman Joey Allaham played a key role in the negotiations, as well.

Though Shapiro was present and a small number of American officials were in the loop about the negotiations, Jakarta did not make any specific requests of Washington.

The countries reached a memorandum of understanding on Sept. 21 stating that the countries seek to "expand upon the Abraham Accords and promote peace, co-existence, mutual understanding, and respect among peoples of all faiths, ethnicities and nationalities."

The MOU also stated that the sides support "improving the daily lives of the Palestinian people" and a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Jakarta and Jerusalem agreed to open reciprocal liaison offices focused on developing bilateral relations, with an emphasis on economy, trade, technology, innovation and culture. In addition, the offices would be authorized to provide consular services.

Not written in the MOU, but in another document viewed by *Jewish Insider*, is an agreement that the sides would work on a mechanism to provide business visas to Indonesians and Israelis through the trade offices.

Indonesian President-Elect Prabowo Subianto, who won election earlier this month, has long supported normalization with Israel and, as defense minister, met with Israel's then-National Security Adviser Eyal Hulata. However, as the negotiations took place months before the election, Widodo

planned to finalize full normalization with Israel before he left office.

The sides also talked about removing Israel from Indonesia's visa blacklist. Currently, tens of thousands of Christian pilgrims from Indonesia visit Israel each year, but it is very difficult for Israelis who do not have a passport from another country to visit the Southeast Asian archipelago state, which includes popular tourist destination Bali.

The draft agreement came after about four months of negotiations. Israelis who have found ways to do business in Indonesia, mostly in agri-tech, as well as American Jews who work with Jakarta, played a role in bringing the countries together.

After the Gaza war began, "the sides said we need to wait, because the timing is problematic," a senior diplomatic source said.

Still, the source noted that Indonesia "did not say the agreement is off the table — it just was not the right timing."

The senior diplomatic source said that Jakarta was convinced to establish relations with Israel following the success of ties between Israel and the UAE, and that Indonesia's sizable Christian minority — about 29 million people or 10% of the population — is pro-Israel. ♦

*This story was updated at 2:30 p.m. ET to include part of the text of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries.*



# ADL, Brandeis Center file Title VI complaint against Berkeley school system for rampant antisemitism

*The complaint alleges widespread bullying and taunting against Jewish students, with minimal recourse from school officials*

By Haley Cohen

*Students chanting “kill the Jews.”*

*Students asking their Jewish classmates what “their number is,” referring to numbers tattooed on Jews during the Holocaust.*

*Teacher-promoted walk-outs in support of Hamas.*

A second-grade teacher leading a classroom activity where children wrote: “Stop Bombing Babies” on sticky notes to display in the building.

Those are some of the incidents endured by K-12 Jewish students in the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) that have sparked a Title VI complaint filed on Wednesday with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, *Jewish Insider* has learned.

The complaint alleges that the district has failed to take action against “severe and persistent” bullying and harassment of Jewish students by peers and teachers since Oct. 7.

JI has obtained a copy of the complaint, which was filed jointly by the Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law and the Anti-Defamation League. It states that Berkeley administrators have ignored parent reports, including a letter signed by 1,370 Berkeley community members to the Berkeley superintendent and Board of Education, while knowingly allowing its public schools to become hostile environments for Jewish and Israeli students.

Chiara Juster, a parent in the district for

years, recently made what she called the “uncomfortable” decision to pull her eighth-grade daughter out of the school district and homeschool instead because of “scary” antisemitism in the school district.

“She was called a ‘midget Jew,’” Juster told JI. “That just shook me in a different way than [other bullying she had faced]. It was scary.”

Juster recalled that her daughter was able to transfer to a different class, away from the student who name-called, but the situation grew worse. “That first day in the new class, she was told by a teacher that she should go to the watermelon club” — a reference to a symbol associated with Palestinian rights — “to learn the truth about Gaza.”

“The answer shouldn’t have to be moving classes,” Juster said, adding that homeschooling has been a challenge but that she doesn’t “trust the district to keep my child safe at all.”

“I think [the administration is full of] empty words,” she continued. “I hear things like ‘this is a safe and inclusive environment,’ when it’s anything but. I think the school district is trying to sweep a problem under the rug, and I don’t have a lot of hope. What I would like to see is no kid ever feel uncomfortable because of the way they were born and for the schools to protect our kids. I can’t believe I even need to say this in this day and age.”

Trish McDermott, a spokesperson for BUSD, told JI that “the district is not aware

of any families that have left the district for this reason [antisemitism].”

Since Hamas’ Oct. 7 terror attacks on Israel, antisemitism has skyrocketed on U.S. college campuses. The Department of Education is currently investigating complaints filed against Wellesley College, SUNY New Paltz, the University of Southern California, Brooklyn College and the University of Illinois. The Brandeis Center recently filed federal complaints against American University and the University of California, Berkeley over concerns about the administration’s handling of antisemitism.

But the ideology behind anti-Israel sentiments infiltrating campuses is beginning earlier than college — and has been creeping in some public K-12 schools. The complaint against BUSD comes on the heels of a Title VI investigation that was opened in Oakland and San Francisco’s K-12 school districts. At least 30 parents between the two school districts have withdrawn their children and transferred them to other districts following an educator-organized unauthorized teach-in for Gaza last month.

“California has numerous anti-discrimination laws that apply to schools but are not being enforced by the district or by anyone else,” Rachel Lerman, the Brandeis Center’s vice chair and general counsel who is overseeing the complaint, told JI. “We are hoping this investigation will reveal some of the rot that is there and will prompt [action] on the part of the district.”

Since Oct. 7, the ADL has recorded a total of 256 antisemitic incidents, ranging from swastika graffiti to physical assault, in elementary, middle and high schools alone. The data represents a 140% increase compared to the same three-month period a year prior.

James Pasch, ADL's senior director for national litigation, told JI that "there has certainly been a pattern of significant [antisemitism] in K-12 schools, particularly in California, but what we're seeing is not isolated to California. We've seen it from coast to coast."

"[The BUSD] district has certainly been [particularly] pervasive... and there's a lack of a comprehensive response from the administration to protect its Jewish students... [which is] a legal obligation," Pasch continued. "It needs to stop now." ♦

FEBRUARY 27, 2024

## 'This is that time': Hillel Int'l CEO calls for Jewish students to lean in on Israel

*CEO Adam Lehman said Jewish communities on campus were unprepared for an 'onslaught of hate' after Oct. 7*

By Gabby Deutch

ATLANTA – Among the more than 800 North American college students who gathered in Atlanta this week for an Israel-focused conference organized by Hillel International, the mood was lighthearted and joyful, even as the students shared story after story of the antisemitism and demonization they have faced on their campuses since Oct. 7.

That students are able to come together to share their pride in being Jewish and caring for Israel at a time when hostility toward Israel has become ingrained at many schools is a point of pride for Hillel International CEO Adam Lehman, who told *Jewish Insider* in an interview at the conference that the organization's "core commitment" to Zionism has never been more important.

"If there has ever been a moment in modern Jewish history when Zionist organizations need to be clear about our commitments, and make sure that we are there for Jewish students who share these beliefs — and in ways that meaningfully support the Jewish and democratic State of Israel — this is that time," said Lehman.

**"There's an enormous pressure on all Jewish organizations, including Hillel, to downgrade commitments to Israel and to step back from core values as it relates to Zionism. Jewish students, like Jewish organizations in the diaspora, are swimming in an ocean of extreme demonization of Israel," said Lehman.**

Hillel's strong and straightforward embrace of Zionism — and its delineation of clear ground rules for how campus Hillels should handle anti-Zionism — stands in contrast to some Jewish institutions, such as Reform and Conservative rabbinical schools, where the topic of Israel is largely avoided because it is viewed as divisive even among some Jews.

Hillel International does not have ownership or control over campus Hillels, but it provides crucial logistical and financial support. By reaping the benefits of the umbrella organization, campus Hillels largely opt in to the group's approach to Israel.

"There's an enormous pressure on all Jewish organizations, including Hillel,

to downgrade commitments to Israel and to step back from core values as it relates to Zionism. Jewish students, like Jewish organizations in the diaspora, are swimming in an ocean of extreme demonization of Israel," said Lehman. "We have taken that demonization, that external pressure, and actually used it to strengthen our commitments."

This position has not been embraced by everyone. Over the past decade, Hillel has had to contend with some left-wing Jews leaving the Hillel umbrella to create their own Jewish institutions that are more hospitable to anti-Zionism. On many campuses, Hillel professionals have to find a way to manage students who may have competing views on Israel and try to create space for them to coexist. But Lehman said that while Hillel would never give a platform to people opposed to the Jewish state, the movement's core goal is supporting all Jewish students.

"We truly are committed to creating space for every student, regardless of their political views as it relates to Israel, the United States or anywhere else," Lehman said. "However, at

the same time, we don't want to compromise or sacrifice our core commitments and beliefs as a Zionist organization." One priority for Hillel International, Lehman explained, is promoting dialogue within the Jewish community. The organization will be sending facilitators to several schools this spring to help jump-start those conversations.

Lehman contrasted that commitment to dialogue and inclusivity with the ethos of Students for Justice in Palestine, an anti-Israel group that on many campuses describes its work as "anti-normalization" and prohibits interactions with Zionists.

**"I do think that as a Jewish community, and as Jewish organizations supporting campuses, we've woken up post-October 7 to the unfortunate reality that the level of organization, resourcing and synchronicity of groups dedicated to the destruction of the Jewish and democratic state of Israel has surpassed what we as a community have organized to respond and address," Lehman said.**

"We are committed to outreach from Hillel and Jewish student communities to other communities on campus, including Muslim student associations and Palestinian student groups," Lehman explained. "Our objective is to promote dialogue and

understanding as part of nurturing strong Jewish life overall. For other organizations, their objective is to poison the campus climate and specifically poison it for Jewish and pro-Israel students, as part of a very clearly stated global Intifada."

The degree of well-organized animosity to Israel that erupted even a day after the Oct. 7 Hamas terror attacks, revealed that the Jewish community was unprepared for such an onslaught of hate, Lehman said. This happened even after Hillel and a whole cottage industry of campus pro-Israel groups spent more than a decade exerting untold millions of dollars on actions like fighting Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) resolutions and organizing pro-Israel students.

"I do think that as a Jewish community, and as Jewish organizations supporting campuses, we've woken up post-October 7 to the unfortunate reality that the level of organization, resourcing and synchronicity of groups dedicated to the destruction of the Jewish and democratic state of Israel has surpassed what we as a community have organized to respond and address," Lehman said. There is a need, he continued, to "better align across many organizations that are addressing pieces of the puzzle but not in a comprehensive enough way."

Hillel has in recent years made a concerted effort to educate and work with college administrators, and Lehman

pointed to this as one arena where the Jewish community has seen some success. But he pointed to two other areas where he thinks the Jewish community should focus its energy — university faculty and social media.

"Faculty are the permanent residents of campus and feel unaccountable, really, to anyone other than themselves, and have across entire disciplines of academia become uniform in their demonization of Israel," Lehman said.

As to social media, Lehman noted that "students live and swim in an ocean of social media that has become the largest cesspool of antisemitism in the history of the world. We need to both better analyze how that has come to be, but also, as a community, take seriously how to address that cesspool." It's a code no one has yet been able to crack.

During the conference, students shared stories that painted a picture of what Lehman described as "an ambient level of Israel demonization on campus that all of us just take for granted because it's everywhere." While anti-Israel sentiment existed and even thrived on some campuses prior to Oct. 7, its ubiquity and ferocity is new. Students were resigned to this new reality, even as they also sought to find ways to refute the hate they see.

"My message to Jewish students and pro-Israel students," said Lehman, "is that's not OK." ♦

# From Khan Younis to the campaign trail: IDF reservists run in local elections

*Campaigns for Tuesday's vote have been at a standstill with 688 candidates doing reserve duty, and the big issues shifted from parking to building rocket-safe rooms, candidates say*

By Lahav Harkov

When local elections are held in Israel every five years, the campaigns are usually inescapable, with posters and billboards seemingly everywhere, frequent campaign events, constant text messages to potential voters and kids on street corners and at shopping centers, handing out flyers and stickers with their parents' faces on them. The top issues often include parking spots, traffic, school amenities and bus routes — and in some cases, corruption.

A wartime campaign, however, is a much more staid affair. The top-of-mind issues have changed drastically, and the challenges are compounded for candidates who have been serving in IDF reserve duty for a significant portion of the last four months.

The elections, set to be held in 241 local authorities across most of Israel on Tuesday, were originally scheduled for Oct. 31, 2023, but had to be postponed following the Hamas terrorist attacks on Oct. 7. The Interior Ministry originally set the new date for Jan. 30, which sparked significant pushback in light of the 688 candidates whom the IDF said could not be released from reserve duty.

A weeklong dispute between Interior Minister Moshe Arbel of Shas and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, the latter of whom opposed holding the vote in January because most of his Religious Zionist Party's local council candidates and a quarter of its mayoral candidates were fighting in the war, ensued. Adding to the complications, candidates petitioned the High Court of Justice to defer the vote for a number of reasons, including that the date favored parties with few or no candidates on reserve

duty — i.e. Haredim and Arabs. A new date, Feb. 27, was reached.

Another big question ahead of this week's vote had been how to hold an election for the over 100,000 residents of towns on the borders with Lebanon and Gaza who have been evacuated from their homes since the Hamas attacks. Arbel ultimately decided to postpone those 12 local elections to November, over a year after their originally scheduled date.

Candidates who are running this week described campaigns that — like much else in Israel — are completely different than what they had been before Oct. 7, and had misgivings about holding an election during a war.

Yaron Rosenthal is running to be the head of the Gush Etzion Regional Council, leading the settlement bloc adjacent to Jerusalem that includes Kibbutz Kfar Etzion, where he grew up and resides today.

He spent most of the past four months serving in a reconnaissance platoon in the IDF Paratroopers' Brigade in Khan Younis, Gaza.

"Like many other reservists, I was called up on Oct. 7," Rosenthal told JI. "When I got there, I was told that everyone running in the elections is exempt from duty, but I said that I wouldn't leave."

"I knew I'd pay a price [in the election] because I disappeared from Gush Etzion for four months, after leading a campaign...but I agreed to pay that price because we educate our children to contribute to the collective. I cannot look my brothers, children and friends in the eye after talking about this value all my life if, in the moment of truth, I don't do it," he said.

Rosenthal returned to Gush Etzion about two weeks before the election, and said he's certain he made the right choice: "When you want to lead the public, first of all, you have to set an example."

Now that he's back on the campaign trail, Rosenthal said he is spending his time and energy trying to reach voters in Gush Etzion. He's holding small parlor meetings in people's homes rather than large campaign events that would be viewed as inappropriate in wartime.

Rosenthal was one of several reservists who petitioned the High Court against the January election date and had hoped that the vote would be pushed off even further than the final date.

"A campaign during a war is not a good thing. It damages our unity. That's why I petitioned the court," he said. "I am trying to adjust the campaign to this period, when we need to maintain our unity. I always used positive messages, but I lowered my profile, as well."

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Noa Shalom, 26, is running for a seat on Jerusalem's City Council, with the Hitorerut ("Awakening") list, meant to represent the capital's pluralistic, Zionist young people.

When the war broke out, Shalom and Hitorerut "set up the 'civilian war room' in Jerusalem, one of the biggest [volunteer efforts] in the country," she recounted to *Jewish Insider*. "We provided every kind of service — rides, supplies, food for soldiers, mental health, babysitters for families. I was one of the founders and worked very intensely for the first 10 days, and then I was called for reserve duty."

Shalom, an officer in the elite IDF Intelligence Unit 8200, returned from reserve duty last month after over two months of service. About half of the Hitorerut list did reserve duty in recent months, and some have yet to return.

“We are not out in full force,” Shalom said. “We think the idea of holding an election in this situation is wrong.”

Hitorerut, which has a history of representing a younger demographic, had a rule of positive campaigning, and has continued in that vein, seeking to send unifying messages, Shalom explained. The party’s campaign has focused on the fact that its target demographic has been an active part of the war effort, with the slogan, “The victory generation is taking responsibility.”

The slogan is also a way to broadcast to the public that the candidates are reservists without showing them in uniform, which is illegal.

“We want to represent the generation that entered the vacuum after Oct. 7...going to reserves and volunteering, holding the city together,” Shalom said. “We want to bring in new energy and be a voice for unity, for religious and secular, left and right, in Jerusalem, a city that needs it.”

While housing, economic development and jobs were major issues before the war, the party recently broadened the security chapter of its platform, Shalom said, which includes “local security, emergency preparation on the municipal level and personal safety, especially in Jerusalem where there are a lot of neighborhoods on the seam [between predominantly Israeli and Palestinian areas] and complex identities.”

Shalom noted the specific challenges for women running for office in Jerusalem, where a Haredi extremist minority is known

to deface advertisements featuring women. Images of her face have been repeatedly torn off of buses and street signs in recent weeks.

In addition, she hopes to be the first LGBTQ woman on Jerusalem’s City Council, which has only ever had one gay member, in the early 2000s: “We are not willing to accept the old situation and the lack of representation,” she said.

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The Tel Aviv mayoral race is usually one to watch, with high-profile candidates duking it out amid massive media attention – even though Mayor Ron Huldai has won every race since 1998. The former Air Force pilot, now 79, who fought in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, is projected to win again, though nearly a third of voters are still undecided.

Huldai’s major opponent is Orna Barbivai, the IDF’s first female major-general and former minister of economy, and the candidate of Opposition Leader Yair Lapid’s Yesh Atid party.

Former Israeli Consul General in New York Asaf Zamir is Huldai’s running mate, expected to return to his former job as deputy mayor if the incumbent is reelected.

Zamir, who resigned from his post in New York last year to protest the government’s judicial reform plan, agreed to Huldai’s offer for him to reenter the Tel Aviv political fray for the same reason.

“The trigger to run with Huldai was the judicial overhaul and the protests,” Zamir told JI. “There was a feeling that the inner war in Israel was putting Tel Aviv in a very important position as the central protest space and the base of the pro-democracy camp. As the most liberal city in Israel, it would be most affected [by the judicial plan].”

Since the Hamas attack, however, Zamir

says the campaign has been at a standstill.

“Until Oct. 7 I was going on podcasts, making videos, talking about parking, housing, education – that all stopped,” he said. “This is our last week [before the vote], and all we’ve done is put up posters saying ‘Tel Aviv will remain Tel Aviv,’ aka we’ll protect it...I meet people in the streets, sometimes my biggest supporters, and I know they support me, but they want to talk about other things.”

Zamir explained that “people’s priorities have shifted extremely. People are really afraid. Everyone has a brother or a cousin in Gaza. Not one person in Tel Aviv has not been personally affected by the war.”

The biggest campaign issue that he hears about from voters is “migun,” or “protection,” Zamir said, referring to adding reinforced safe rooms to protect schools and other structures from rockets in Tel Aviv, much of which was built before such measures were common.

Huldai “has had to run Tel Aviv in wartime,” Zamir said. “He put tens of millions of shekels into building safe rooms for schools, moving 125 preschools [into buildings with reinforced rooms] and hosting 25,000 families from the north and south. They needed parking tags, some wanted to be integrated into our schools, some wanted to keep their schools separate and have tailor-made systems to adapt to their curriculum – it’s been a lot of real work regarding the war.”

“Whoever isn’t doing those things is in a deficit,” Zamir said, referring to Huldai’s opponents. “I don’t envy people who have to run against us. [In a war], people stay with the existing regime as long as they’re good; people don’t have the time to think about a change.” ♦



# Father of slain IDF soldier to challenge Georgia state senator

*David Lubin got to know state Sen. Sally Harrell after his daughter Rose was killed in a terror attack. Then Harrell announced her opposition to antisemitism legislation*

By Gabby Deutch

The violence of the Israel-Hamas war hit home for the Atlanta Jewish community in November when Rose Lubin, a 21-year-old Atlanta native and a lone soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, was killed in a terror attack in Jerusalem. Her death quickly reverberated throughout Georgia, where her family still lives. In December, the Lubins' state senator, Sally Harrell, honored Rose by authoring a resolution in her memory.

But the Lubins' relationship with Harrell deteriorated after she delivered a Senate floor speech in January arguing against passage of a bill that would define antisemitism in state law in order to aid law enforcement and other public officials. The bill passed with near-unanimous support; Harrell did not cast a vote.

Now, Rose's father, a general contractor who has never been involved in politics before, has announced a primary challenge against Harrell, a Democrat. David Lubin is pitching himself as a more moderate alternative willing to listen to the district's Jewish community and take their concerns seriously at a time of mounting grief and fear.

"If she's this disconnected with a group of Jewish people that are under threat," Lubin told *Jewish Insider* on Friday, "then what is she doing with other stuff? That's where I really felt I've got to do something, not just for the Jewish community, but for other communities as well."

Lubin lives in Dunwoody, a heavily Jewish suburb of Atlanta that is currently represented by Harrell. Last year, Dunwoody residents awoke to antisemitic flyers distributed at people's homes, a problem that has occurred multiple times in recent months in Jewish areas of Atlanta.

Harrell started her January floor speech by mentioning the flyers. She also invoked Rose's memory before offering a host of reasons why she could not support the bill. First, she said she worries the bill — which utilizes the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism — impinges on Georgians' free speech. (After the bill was initially introduced in the 2023 session, its biggest critic was a Republican who took issue with IHRA designating some anti-Zionist rhetoric as antisemitic on free speech grounds. Some progressives agree.)

Her larger concern, though, appeared to be with the optics of passing a bill that defines antisemitism and not Islamophobia, even though no similar Islamophobia bill had been introduced.

"If we had two bills today, if we had this bill, HB [House Bill] 30, that defines antisemitism, and we also had a bill that defines Islamophobia, I would feel so much more at peace," Harrell said in the floor speech. "If we're going to define antisemitism in the law, then there are a lot of other groups that experience racism, that — they should also have definitions and explanations of what racism looks like." She also said that while she agrees with the IHRA definition that Holocaust denial is antisemitic, it "doesn't seem congruent" to formalize that while the state of Georgia does not provide similar protections for the teaching of slavery and anti-Black racism.

More than just a policy dispute, Lubin viewed this as a personal betrayal: He and the bill's drafters were under the impression that Harrell supported it.

"She told us she was in favor of the bill. So she didn't have to speak," said state Rep. Esther Panitch, Georgia's only Jewish state

lawmaker. "If she really had concerns, she could have just stayed silent. But it was like twisting a knife."

Harrell disputed Panitch's account, saying she never told people how she would vote on the final version of the bill. "I didn't communicate to anyone how I was going to vote on the bill because I was busy trying to figure it out myself," she said. In her floor speech, she said she struggled more with this bill than any other she has voted on in 12 years in office.

"HB 30 was a controversial bill and I heard from Jewish constituents on both sides of the issue. My concern with HB 30 was that it would chill free speech against the Israeli government and I've heard from some constituents that it already has," she told *JL*. "When you limit people's ability to speak out, it only breeds resentment and that doesn't help the Jewish community. It only causes more ill will. I always have and always will stand against antisemitism."

Panitch, as the bill's co-sponsor, was seated behind Harrell on the dais during her floor speech. She saw Harrell walk to the lectern and expected her to speak in favor of the bill.

"I'm on group chats with people watching this in the gallery, and they were like, 'What's happening?'" Panitch recounted. "I'm like, 'I don't know.' Just to hear their betrayal in real time — it was horrible."

Lubin and Panitch connected soon after Rose died, when he was looking for a way to honor issues that his daughter cared about.

"When she died on November 6, we started to look at how we could get involved to help. Because there were people that were talking to us, and we realized we had a voice and that voice was important," Lubin said. "My daughter had been in situations at

school where antisemitism had affected her, and spoken out against it. But now people were listening.”

The Lubins have several family members who live in Israel, and Lubin first took Rose to Israel when she was eight years old, a tradition he continued with three of his four other children. (His youngest, Isaac, a four-year-old, is too young. Before she died, Rose called Isaac each morning to sing *Modeh Ani*, a prayer of gratitude generally recited upon waking up.)

Rose’s desire to later move to Israel became clear on that very first trip. She excelled as a student in Atlanta, and her parents urged her to consider the full array of opportunities available to her before deciding on aliyah.

“This was a girl who had so many talents. She could write, she could dance, she could sing. She was a straight-A student. She was taking AP class and she could have done anything. She was actually on a varsity

wrestling team,” said Lubin.

“She had a very clear direction on what she wanted to do, and we supported it,” he added. “She would say to [peers], ‘We can be friends, but when I turn 18 I’m moving to Israel.’”

The decision to enter the race, as a complete newcomer, comes less than three months before Georgia’s May 21 primary.

“The people that I talked to said, ‘David, if anyone can stand up to this, it’s going to be you, with your current situation, who you are, what you stand for, what you represent, who has a chance.’ We talked about that as a family,” Lubin said. “My daughter, she lived that way every day. And it inspired me.”

So far, Lubin hasn’t articulated where he stands on other policy issues, beyond saying that he intends to “think about everybody” and approach governing “from a pragmatic standpoint.” He also argues that his campaign fits into a bigger battle against anti-Israel lawmakers.

“You can kind of connect it with the progressive movement and the Democratic Party. It is growing there. And then there’s moderate Democrats like me who go, ‘Wait, I don’t fit into that box,’” said Lubin. “Before we turn around, we’re gonna see our state legislatures that are filled with people that are against Israel, and they can change the dynamics of this country for us very quickly.”

Harrell declined to comment specifically on Lubin’s candidacy.

“I have always believed that primaries make for better candidates, so I look forward to having conversations with the people in the district,” she said. “It’s a well educated district, so those conversations should be substantive and informative.”

If elected, Lubin would be the only Jewish member of the state Senate. Besides Panitch, two other Jewish women are running for the state House this year. ♦

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

## Top Nikki Haley official: The GOP is going through ‘a midlife crisis’

*In interview with JI, Haley communications director Nachama Soloveichik sounds an alarm about the growing isolationism within the party*

By Matthew Kassel

Nikki Haley’s defiant pledge to continue her campaign after Saturday’s primary in her home state of South Carolina, where she faces a likely defeat to former President Donald Trump, was just the latest demonstration of her estrangement from the ascendant populism now dominating Republican politics.

But even as Haley’s long-shot bid for the nomination and frequent jabs at Trump stoke speculation over her future, the

former U.N. ambassador’s refusal to drop out also underscores the parallel challenges rank-and-file operatives on her struggling campaign are now confronting as the primary reaches its end.

Nachama Soloveichik, a veteran GOP strategist who serves as Haley’s communications director, is one of several like-minded Republican operatives advising the campaign, which in many ways has positioned itself in opposition to the growing neo-isolationism that is animating

the party as Trump reasserts his influence.

Her unique background, pugilistic social media personality and outsider status help illustrate the frustrations of many conservatives who remain loyal to the Republican Party even as their values have come under assault over the past eight years.

“I think the Republican Party is definitely going through a midlife crisis of some sort,” Soloveichik, 43, said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* on Wednesday. “You see really good, solid people like [retiring

Wisconsin Rep.] Mike Gallagher and [former Pennsylvania Sen.] Pat Toomey, my former boss, who are just like, ‘Peace out, I don’t want to have anything to do with this dumpster fire,’” she added. “And who can blame them?”

But while she now finds herself in an uphill battle on her first presidential campaign, Soloveichik claims she isn’t ready to concede the fight. “Listen, we get that we’re the underdog,” she said, citing a quote from Haley’s speech on Tuesday in which the former South Carolina governor likened her bid to a matchup between David and Goliath. “But she relishes being the underdog. She’s always been the underdog. She’s a fighter. She likes fighting. She believes this fight is worthwhile and that energizes her — so when she’s energized, we’re energized.”

More broadly, however, the seasoned campaign operative, on hiatus from her job as a partner with ColdSpark, a Republican consulting firm, expressed concern over the GOP’s recent turn to isolationism, particularly after a vote earlier this month in which more than half of Senate Republicans opposed aid to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, including some of the party’s most dependable foreign policy hawks.

“I have real concerns that Israel will be thrown under the bus,” said Soloveichik, reiterating a comment she posted to X, formerly Twitter, where she rarely hesitates to voice her discontent with the direction of the Republican Party. “To me, it’s like, if you don’t think Ukraine is worth helping, if you don’t think that Vladimir Putin is evil and needs to be condemned, then why is Israel so different?”

For Soloveichik, such questions are personal. The scion of a rabbinic dynasty whose great uncle is considered the founder of Modern Orthodox Judaism, Soloveichik, an Orthodox Jew, has several extended family members living in Israel, including relatives called up to fight in the ongoing war against Hamas.

But she also believes that a robust foreign policy is core to what she calls her “hardcore” conservative values, arguing that the party’s new commitment to an “America First” mindset is bound to fail, even as she

refrains from predicting just when that will be.

“It’s definitely concerning to see smart people and people who are supposed to be principled in the party just jumping on the bandwagon,” she said. “If it persists, it will eventually collapse on itself like it always does.”

“It would be nice if it would be a wake-up call for Republicans and people who actually care about what it means to be conservative,” Soloveichik said of the Republican foreign policy shift. “Will everyone just go back to going on Tucker Carlson’s YouTube or Twitter show when he comes back from Russia? I don’t know. I sure as hell don’t want to.”

Scott Jennings, a longtime adviser to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), was more positive in his assessment of the foreign policy divide now fueling tension in the GOP, which he described as a “healthy debate” that “goes back” several decades. “There is an isolationist strain running through both parties, in my opinion,” he said in an email to JI. “That view is ascendant in the GOP these days, but the more hawkish among us are still numerous.”

“I think traditional Republican hawks are an endangered species, but they’re not extinct yet,” Charlie Sykes, a conservative pundit in Milwaukee and frequent Trump critic, told JI in a phone call. “In GOP primary politics, isolationism isn’t yet an absolute litmus test but it seems like it’s heading that way.”

Still, he said, “the fight isn’t over yet, and I guess that’s the point.”

If Soloveichik is now alienated from prevailing GOP sentiment, she clarifies that she is used to feeling like something of an outsider. “I came up in the Republican Party sort of as a renegade,” she said, recalling her first campaign in 2006 against a liberal Republican incumbent in Rhode Island. “I always felt like I was fighting from the outside in.”

“I still feel like a renegade fighting against the establishment. It’s just the people who are the establishment have changed,” she continued. “Right now, it’s Trump and his minions, and the word conservative has become kind of meaningless. A lot of the

people that I remember from the old Tea Party days, they’ve all become part of Trump world. It’s a very weird place to be, but what can you do?”

Soloveichik, whose past roles include a stint at the Club for Growth and as an adviser to Toomey, relocated from Maryland to Charleston, S.C., with her husband and two children to join Haley’s longshot campaign a year ago this month.

She had been an admirer of Haley at least since her high-profile tenure as U.S. ambassador to the U.N. under Trump, where she became a close ally of the pro-Israel community. But they first met in early 2019, when Soloveichik helped launch Haley’s nonprofit, Stand for America, presaging her bid for the presidency. “I had always wanted to do a presidential campaign for a candidate I believed in,” Soloveichik told JI, calling Haley a “fighter” and a “ballbuster,” which “definitely” appealed to her.

“I like her outspokenness,” Soloveichik said of Haley. “She’s consistent. It’s not just about Israel. Like, standing up for Ukraine — that’s not personal for me, but as a principle it is very meaningful.”

Despite her aversion to Trump, Soloveichik concedes that she largely approved of his “actual foreign policy actions” while in office. “Getting out of the Iran deal. Great,” she said. “Moving the embassy to Jerusalem. Great. Standing up for Israel. Great. He even gave missiles to Ukraine. Great.”

But she maintains that because Trump is so unpredictable there is no assurance that he will continue to promote similar policies if reelected. “It’s not even clear to me what Trump believes,” she said. “We shouldn’t leave our foreign policy up to a coin toss about how Trump is feeling that day or who his 17th chief of staff happens to be. That is a pretty disquieting thing.”

Like Haley, who has claimed she has no interest in joining a second Trump administration, Soloveichik confirmed she harbors no secret hopes of working for the former president. “You want to work for people who believe in the same things that you believe, but you also want to work for just good, normal people,” she explained. “Putting aside the policy side of it, Trump

world is too chaotic. I don't think I would ever want to work in that kind of environment."

Even as Soloveichik acknowledges that Haley is facing long odds in seeking to deny Trump the nomination, she says she is "very proud" of the campaign and believes it has "exceeded people's expectations."

"When I came here, we always knew that Trump was the juggernaut," she recalled. "I said to my husband that we could be moving for three months or we could be moving for a year and a half. I don't know what this is going to look like."

From a personal standpoint, Soloveichik, who grew up in Chicago, has enjoyed her time in Charleston, home to the oldest Jewish community in the South. "There are some folks who are 10th-generation Charlestonians," she marveled. "They have been Jewish Americans living here in Charleston going back to the 1700s, while

my family was being slaughtered in Poland."

"We actually go to synagogue more here than I ever have in my entire life," Soloveichik told JI. "I was not a big synagogue person." Her husband regularly reads from the Torah, while her children "think that going to synagogue means going to play with trucks and eating lollipops," she joked. "They're going to be sorely disappointed when they grow up."

Observing Shabbat, she said, has not been too challenging this cycle since she doesn't travel with the campaign. Because the South Carolina primary is held on a Saturday, she was planning to vote early when she spoke with JI on Wednesday. "It's just par for the course," she said of the balancing act that her faith requires.

Notwithstanding her pedigree, Soloveichik, who is one of seven siblings, said that she had never felt pressure to

pursue a career tied to Judaism, noting that her parents encouraged her to pursue her own interests as long as she was "not joining the circus."

"I like to say that I'm the most conservative person in the family," she claimed, "but I think some of our brothers might take issue with that." Her brother in New Jersey, she said, "is going to be a delegate for Nikki, if she makes it."

But that's a major if at the moment, even as Haley has pledged to remain in the race. "I am with Nikki until she decides that she's done," Soloveichik said, expressing shock that most voters have sided with Trump. "I look at Nikki and I think, 'We could have this normal, real human being as our Republican nominee and president or we could have that? Like, what are we doing?'" ♦

FEBRUARY 23, 2024

## Meet Kurt Campbell, Biden's new deputy secretary of state

*The longtime foreign policy hand is a China hawk who has expressed a strong commitment to the US-Israel alliance*

By Marc Rod

**K**urt Campbell took office this month as the deputy secretary of state — the No. 2 job at the State Department — launching the foreign policy veteran into the heart of multiple global crises.

Campbell's decades-long career across several presidential administrations has taken him across the spectrum of federal government agencies, including stints at the Defense Department, State Department, Treasury, National Security Council and U.S. Navy. He's also served at a series of influential nongovernmental institutions,

including as a founder of the Center for a New American Security.

But Campbell — most recently the national security council coordinator for the Indopacific, known colloquially as the Asia czar — has, for decades, focused on Asia and the Indopacific, making him less of a known quantity to some longtime Middle East hands than some of his predecessors.

William Wechsler, the senior director of the Rafik Hariri Center & Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council, told *Jewish Insider* he first met Campbell in the

Pentagon during the Clinton administration, when Campbell was assigned to create a new Plans and Analysis group — a group that aimed to "get out of the day to day... and to look around the corners of what was coming."

Wechsler described Campbell as "one of the sharpest and smartest people that I've worked for. He's a real big thinker... Kurt likes to get deep on the portfolio."

He added that Campbell held "very traditional views about the importance of American power and the role that America

plays” and “a real commitment to long-standing American allies like Israel.” He said he’d expect Campbell to be fully supportive of President Joe Biden’s approach to Israel and other issues in the region.

During his December Senate confirmation hearing, Campbell voiced his opposition to placing conditions on U.S. aid to Israel, arguing that concerns with Israel’s military operations in Gaza were best handled in direct conversations with Israel, rather than in public. He was also optimistic about the possibilities for normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Wechsler added that, in the early 90’s, Campbell shared concerns about challenges including Iranian nuclear weapons and rising Islamic extremism, issues that the policy planning group worked to tackle.

At his confirmation hearing, Campbell expressed concerns about Iran’s activities globally, including its support for terrorist groups in the Middle East, its backing of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and its increasing ties to China.

“At probably every level, Iran is our strategic nemesis,” Campbell said. They are seeking to undermine American purpose in the region, and we must contest that purposely across the board.”

Campbell said that Iran’s increasing

provocations mean the U.S. “must be sending a military message that provocations will be met and met with stern responses.” He expressed support for isolating Iran on the world stage and working to bring U.S. allies to join the U.S.’s sanctions on the regime.

But he also defended the administration’s move to release \$6 billion to Iran for humanitarian purposes as part of a prisoner swap deal last year.

He also ruled out the possibility, “in the current environment,” of returning to the 2016 nuclear deal with Iran: “It’s just not on the table, it’s not up for discussion.” Campbell’s predecessor, Wendy Sherman, had been a chief negotiator for the original nuclear deal.

After his time with the Pentagon Plans and Analysis group, Campbell became the deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, which has become his career focus in the ensuing years; he went on to be the assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the National Security Council coordinator for the Indo-Pacific as well as founded The Asia Group, a strategic consulting group.

Wechsler said that this specialization could drive a focus on strategic competition with China in the Middle East.

“Anybody who understands China knows how important the Middle East,

and in particular, the Gulf region, is to China,” Wechsler said, “and will be having discussions with our partners in all of these countries — some very difficult conversations — to make sure that they are fully aware of the realities of... issues that are related to China.”

He noted that such work is already happening, but that Campbell “would know better than anyone” its importance.

During his confirmation hearing, Campbell described the U.S.’s efforts in the Middle East and Ukraine as “necessary” and “critically important,” but added “I believe that fundamentally, our long-term interests over the remainder of the century will play out largely in the Indopacific.”

He warned of the risks of “strategic surprise” in Asia, pledging to shore up the U.S.’s defenses and alliances in that region.

Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former Middle East peace negotiator, told JI that Campbell “is wicked smart; a master bureaucratic player; knows US foreign policy — both process and substance; and has a real sense of how to work with allies and stand up to adversaries. Knows Foggy Bottom inside and out. And has ideas to make it less foggy.” ♦



# Brandeis President Liebowitz speaks up about campus challenges in the post-Oct. 7 world

*Liebowitz talks about campus speech issues, the best ways to fight antisemitism and DEI challenges in wide-ranging interview with JI*

By Haley Cohen

Brandeis University was founded in 1948 “by the American Jewish community at a time when many elite universities were discriminating against Jews,” according to its website.

As Jewish students today at many elite universities are facing levels of discrimination on campus not seen in several generations, Ronald Liebowitz, who has served as the president of Brandeis since 2016, sat down with *Jewish Insider* to discuss this precarious moment in academia.

Liebowitz spoke of the challenges that come with leading a historically Jewish institution today and figuring out where it fits in the larger academic space. “When I go to the West Coast and talk about Brandeis, people there say ‘we’re not gonna send our kids to Brandeis, they don’t wanna study Hebrew or Talmud, they don’t wanna wear kippahs.’ And I said that’s not who we are. While on the East Coast, places like Riverdale or even Manhattan, people say ‘does Brandeis remember it’s Jewish? It’s abandoned its Jewish roots,’” Liebowitz told JI.

Liebowitz, a self-proclaimed “firm believer in free speech,” defended his decision to ban the group Students for Justice in Palestine from Brandeis’ campus in November — making Brandeis the first private university to do so since Oct. 7.

“One thing I’m also opinionated about is selective free speech and a university cannot take selective stances on when it’s OK to do what some might describe as hate speech— I call it gratuitous speech,” he said. “I look at gratuitous speech as speech that is unnecessary to advance the mission of the institution. To me the mission of the

institution is to promote the engagement of different ideas, even as difficult as they are. The SJP situation to me was one of those examples where they were simply being a mouthpiece [for Hamas], which has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S.”

Below is a curated transcript of JI’s conversation with Brandeis President Liebowitz:

**Q: In light of rising antisemitism on campuses, does your founding mission have renewed resonance?**

Part of the larger picture is understanding that Brandeis is somewhat unique within the whole realm of 3,500 or so colleges and universities in the U.S. in that it’s the only secular university founded by the American Jewish community. With that has always come certain expectations and hopes but also certain guarantees that Brandeis was not going to be a yeshiva, it was going to be a liberal arts university that respected Jewish values and its Jewish roots. That was made clear by our founding president, Abram Sachar, who wanted Brandeis to be more like a Princeton or a Swarthmore and not necessarily a religious institution. We carried with us for a long time this notion of what it means to be a Jewish founded institution when American Jewry was changing so dramatically.

At our 50th anniversary, there was a telling article in *The New York Times* that asked what’s the purpose of Brandeis now? Jews have entered all aspects of society so is there a mission for Brandeis? Fast-forward 25 years, I don’t think people are asking that

question any longer.

We have to contemporize our founding values going forward. What I found when I got here was a mixed bag, where people are not quite sure. There was a sizable contingent, including Jewish faculty members, who would ask why we have to talk about our Jewish roots and values. To me, that’s what drew me to Brandeis, the exceptional factor that made me want to come into a second presidency after doing 11 years at Middlebury College and to try to steer Brandeis into what I call threading the needle — being both a Jewish institution and very much committed to the secular nature of its founding.

It’s been a challenge but that background puts us in a very different situation than others because the feeling was that Jewish students have been privileged on this campus. There was a feeling of pride but also maybe guilt that Jews have had this privilege. To that I say for 2,000 or so years Jews were wandering around without their own place. Now that they have their own place they feel guilty about it.

**Since Oct. 7, has Brandeis seen a rise in applications for admission among Jews? Why has there been a decline in non-Jewish applicants?**

We have not seen a marked increase. Our domestic applications are flat to a little up, our international applications from China are a bit down. When we talked to admissions officers, the feeling right after Oct. 7 was that this incoming class was already set in their college applications so we weren’t going to see a big shift.

What we were advised was to look for the yield. Look for how many students chose to come to a place like Brandeis that is identified as being much more hospitable and friendly to Jewish students and that we might see come April or May when students start accepting their offers for admission. So we haven't seen a big bump in applications but we don't know what we're going to see in our yield.

[The decline in non-Jewish applicants] is mostly international. We have a large number of students from China – about 16% of our student body. We saw a decline that is attributable to a whole bunch of things, not least of which is the political environment and also the challenges of getting visas over the last three years.

**Have you explicitly branded yourself as a safe haven for Jewish students, especially in the Boston area where many elite universities have been a hotbed for antisemitism?**

Before Oct. 7, we started a branding campaign in May. The essence was to really articulate and remind folks of why Brandeis existed and what it stands for. What we found from the branding campaign was that people who had known about Brandeis benefited from these ads because what we found in the two studies we've done since I became president was there was brand confusion.

When I go to the West Coast and talk about Brandeis, people there say 'we're not gonna send our kids to Brandeis, they don't wanna study Hebrew or Talmud, they don't wanna wear kippahs.' And I said that's not who we are. While on the East Coast, places like Riverdale or even Manhattan, people say 'does Brandeis remember it's Jewish? It's abandoned its Jewish roots.'

**Brandeis also has a campaign with Robert Kraft to combat antisemitism on campus, established before Oct. 7. What has the partnership accomplished and how does the new entity differ from work being done by other established Jewish organizations?**

Robert's wife, Myra, was on the board

of trustees of Brandeis for 15 years. He's been a friend of Brandeis and we had a lot of conversations. His view of how to fight antisemitism had a slightly different slant than mine as an academic and president of a university. But we came to a meeting of the minds with his desire to have a part of this be about undergraduate and graduate students and my insistence that we do something with leadership in higher education.

Unless and until leaders of colleges understand antisemitism and be given some sort of tool kit to deal with it, all the student engagement in the world is not going to matter. We need it from the top. So we created the program last year. First, it was an undergraduate internship program that students are placed at Robert's Foundation to Combat Antisemitism, doing work for that foundation, engaging in research. That's been going on now for three semesters.

The second part is [focused on] leadership. In November, more than 100 administrators came to campus for a two-day conference here. The idea was a pilot program just for greater Boston area schools and around three weeks before the conference, we [decided] to include other institutions facing problems like Columbia and Penn. Our goal in this part of the program was not to compete with those organizations doing great work in the space, but rather to coordinate and bring together all these different groups so we can share resources with senior administrators.

We're having a second set of events this semester as well, aimed at higher education leaders. Our goal is to expand this program to K-12 leadership as well, because the feeling is once kids get to university it's almost too late.

**In November, Brandeis became the first private university to ban the group Students for Justice in Palestine. How did you come to this decision, which some say violates freedom of speech, and where do you draw the line between free speech and hate speech?**

I'm a firm believer in free speech. One thing I'm also opinionated about is selective free speech and a university cannot take selective stances on when it's ok to do what

some might describe as hate speech — I call it gratuitous speech. I look at gratuitous speech as speech that is unnecessary to advance the mission of the institution. To me the mission of the institution is to promote the engagement of different ideas, even as difficult as they are. The SJP situation to me was one of those examples where they were simply being a mouthpiece [for Hamas], which has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S.

That was important in the decision, but what was really most important was the unnecessary nature of the commentary that was being spewed, mostly on social media, aimed at Jewish students. When you're telling Jewish students there's only one solution, that has a real deep meaning. People can claim that these students didn't know what they were doing or that they were just pushing forth ideas from National SJP, but they have an impact on this campus. For free speech not to advance the educational atmosphere on campus, but rather to make it smaller and harass people, all that really led to the decision to do this.

All we were saying was you can continue to promote your views on Palestinian rights, we're not against that at all. But we're not going to fund the type of speech that's going on. You're not going to be able to use the name Brandeis to do that. You're not going to be able to take advantage of the perks, reserving space and so forth, if you use this type of language.

**Brandeis University hosted its first leadership symposium on antisemitism in higher education for university administrators for two days in November. Soon after, presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn testified before Congress and refused to say that calling for the genocide of Jews violates their university policies. What sense did the seminars at Brandeis give you on how Ivy League university leaders are addressing the issue?**

I do think they are taking it seriously but we have to acknowledge that this is a highly complex situation. This is not new, antisemitism has been going on for thousands of years. Antisemitism waxes

and wanes and also comes in new forms. This newest form of antisemitism is showing itself as anti-Zionism, which is even more complicated. The Israel factor and the ignorance surrounding Israel's history is very unfortunate.

I could get into the TikTok generation and how much students are actually learning these days on the topic but are very willing to give their opinions on the topic. I think these institutions are trying to take it very seriously, but it's tough to figure out where to get things going. It's pervasive, it was under the surface, people argue it's in the curriculum or the self-conscious. I do think that leadership of institutions are trying to address the issue but it's not so simple.

**How much can any one university president do to push against growing campus antisemitism? What needs to be done to change the university bureaucracy?**

I'm not going to underestimate the challenges. The challenges are great, even here at Brandeis where one would think [otherwise].

I have a lot of opposition on the faculty. In fact, we've had multiple faculty meetings, regular and special, where the faculty have expressed great concern and criticism that the institution was leaning too heavily one way and was not being fully objective. It's not so simple.

I think it's harder at larger institutions. Harvard is known to be a decentralized enterprise, that's historic. The board of trustees at any of these universities has to be united and in support of the president, that the president is going to make any type of leadership move. That's been the big challenge — presidents feel pulled in so many directions. I like to joke that we have nine constituencies that we think about

every day and if you could be on the good side of five of them, you're really succeeding as university president. I think that's what's going on. I'm very fortunate to have the support of my board, they've been terrific and 100% supportive.

**How big a problem is the lack of ideological diversity at universities?**

I do believe that there's a very strong bias to the left of center in university faculty. But I don't believe it necessarily translates into what goes on in the classroom as you're hearing from the biggest critics. In other words, I know colleagues at both Middlebury and Brandeis who walk that line very well. They have strong personal opinions and their political leanings might be one way, but they present material that is unbiased.

That's not saying what you're hearing about, the one-sided curriculum doesn't exist. It exists for sure, I've seen it. You look at syllabi of some classes and you question whether or not students are getting a full view of what the issues are.

In the next year at Brandeis we are reviewing what is called the core curriculum. It was up for review anyway; I'm encouraging the dean of arts and sciences to lead that conversation to ensure that our classrooms are that neutral space for students who have different opinions and can actually raise those opinions. Now our faculty might have deeply seated views of things. Eighteen to 22 year olds are just forming their opinions and so the idea that you can create and keep an open environment in the classroom is of utmost importance, especially these days.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs at colleges have come under scrutiny in light of recent events that underscore how programs designed to promote inclusion have failed to address**

**campus antisemitism and sometimes perpetuate it. There's a debate among Jewish leaders on whether to work within the current system or to dismantle the ideology altogether. What approach do you think is best?**

I think you have to separate ideology and goals. The goals of DEI are right. In the abstract, small 'd,' small 'e,' small 'i,' those goals are terrific. Who doesn't want diversity in the classroom? When I was a full time faculty member I loved having students who challenged me and also challenged other students. The equity issue is problematic in the sense that equity today is defined by equity of outcome, which I think is the wrong approach. Equality of opportunity is certainly the 'e' I would put forward.

Inclusion is belonging and you want people on campus to feel that they're part of the larger campus so they can participate in all the activities both in the classroom and outside. So I think the goals of DEI are admirable and are something we have to maintain.

The ideology of DEI, what's become of DEI, is being shown to come up short. Some groups do get left out. Intersectionality has made it impossible for those with multiple identities to fit in, Jews being the primary one. In my view, we step back and ask ourselves what aspects of DEI do we want to retain, how are they best advanced and really question whether our DEI office has served well.

The DEI division is hosting this month a conference with 25 speakers about racism, antisemitism and the whole question of where Jews fit in and why they've been left out.

So I do believe the goals are great. The ideology that has emerged in the first 15 years of DEI — cause it's not really an old organization on campuses — has unfortunately become too narrow. ♦

# Ruth Gottesman gives \$1 billion gift to make Einstein medical school tuition-free

*Gottesman is serving as chair of the board of trustees for the second time; donation is largest ever made to a U.S. medical school*

By Haley Cohen

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

Medical school students attending the Albert Einstein College of Medicine will have their tuition covered starting in August, following a \$1 billion gift from Dr. Ruth Gottesman announced on Monday. The donation is the largest made to any U.S. medical school, according to the announcement.

Gottesman, 93, is the widow of billionaire David “Sandy” Gottesman, an early investor in Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway, who died in 2022. She chairs the Einstein board of trustees.

“Each year, well over 100 students enter Albert Einstein College of Medicine in their quest for degrees in medicine and science,” Gottesman said in a statement. “They leave as superbly trained scientists and compassionate and knowledgeable physicians, with the expertise to find new ways to prevent diseases and provide the finest health care to communities here in the Bronx and all over the world. I am very

thankful to my late husband, Sandy, for leaving these funds in my care, and I feel blessed to be given the great privilege of making this gift to such a worthy cause.”

Gottesman, who has a doctorate in education from Columbia University, first joined the Einstein system in 1968, working in its Children’s Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center helping develop screening tools to diagnose learning disabilities. She served as a clinical professor in the school’s department of pediatrics and has also served in a number of leadership positions in the school. Gottesman served as chair of the Einstein board of trustees from 2007-2014 and returned to the role in 2020.

Gottesman mandated that the university keep its name, rather than have it bear her and her husband’s name. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, located in the Bronx, was formerly the medical school of Yeshiva University. It is now affiliated with both Montefiore Health System and Yeshiva University. Tuition at Einstein was previously \$59,000 annually.

“I believe we can change healthcare

history when we recognize that access is the path to excellence,” Philip Ozuah, president and CEO of Montefiore Einstein, said in a statement. “With this gift, Dr. Gottesman will fund excellence in perpetuity and secure our foundational mission of advancing human health.”

The Gottesman family, primarily through its eponymous fund, are among Yeshiva University’s biggest patrons, in addition to funding other New York Jewish schools, including Abraham Joshua Heschel School, SAR Academy in Riverdale and Solomon Schechter School of Westchester. The Gottesman Fund is also one of the primary donors toward the construction of the National Library of Israel’s new building in Jerusalem.

The donation follows a similar gift by billionaire philanthropists Kenneth and Elaine Langone of \$200 million donation to NYU Grossman Long Island School of Medicine in July 2023, which also made that institution tuition-free. ♦

# Mubadala's Al Mubarak says sovereign funds taking the lead

*Investopia conference draws thousands to Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Island, including fund managers who handle more than \$500 billion in assets*

By Kelsey Warner

*The article first appeared in The Circuit.*

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates – Kicking off the UAE's annual Investopia conference on Wednesday, Mubadala chief Khaldoon Al Mubarak pointed to the more active stance that the country's sovereign wealth funds are taking in the global investment landscape.

"Sovereign funds now have the responsibility and opportunity to go from asset allocators to enablers of global progress," the Managing Director and Group CEO of Abu Dhabi's second-largest sovereign wealth fund said. Al Mubarak noted that the emirate's sovereign funds — Mubadala, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and ADQ — are among the world's top 10 most active sovereign investors in 2023, which he said, "speaks to the momentum that is building over here."

Mubadala plans to invest more in the U.S. and has increased its long-term allocations for Asia "in line with megatrends and demographics, including "Japan, China, Korea and, of course, India," Al Mubarak said.

On the domestic front, UAE Minister of Economy Abdulla bin Touq said in his opening remarks that the ministry is working to better integrate the seven disparate emirates that make up the country. "In the UAE, each emirate has its own strength. We're now working to enable those emirates to integrate and complement each other to build economic clusters that supercharge the whole economy."

Thousands of investors have flocked to the third edition of Investopia, a marquee event for the government's "Projects of the 50" initiative, first announced in 2021. The UAE aims to build the world's most

innovative economy in collaboration with the global investment community. Funds that manage a total of more than \$500 billion in assets are attending, according to organizers.

Slated to speak during the two-day conference are Adam Goldstein, Founder and CEO of aviation startup Archer; Eric Cantor, General Manager and Vice Chairman of Moelis; Antonio González, Founder and CEO of Sunset Hospitality Group; Nathan Sheets, Global Chief Economist at Citi; Giorgio Furlani, CEO of AC Milan; Ulrike Hoffmann-Burchardi, Head of CIO Equities at UBS and Gabrielle Rubenstein, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Manna Tree. ♦