Celebrating the Jewish value of reproductive

A note from Nadine Lipman: *Nicole Fonsh is the daughter of Kip and Judi Samuels Fonsh. Judi is the daughter of the late Harold and Estelle Nasser Samuels of Waterford, and the granddaughter of the late Nathan and Bessie Nasser of New London. Harold had several businesses on State St in New London, as did the Nasser Family.*

Others may remember Nikki's uncle (and Judi's brother) Irwin Samuels, who was known as the Hot Dog Man, with his truck being a fixture throughout the region. Estelle and my mother Lillian Calmon, were sisters, and Judi is my first cousin.

By Nicole Fonsh

Repro Shabbat is organized nationally by Jews for Abortion Access, a program of the National Council of Jewish Women. It takes place annually on the Shabbat when we read *Parshat Mispatim,* which contains the verses commonly used as the foundation of Judaism's approach to reproductive health, rights, and justice.

Since the fall of Roe v Wade in 2022, many states have passed outright bans on abortion or imposed draconian limits. Right now, 58% of people who can get pregnant and are of reproductive age live in states hostile to abortion rights.

But reproductive freedom remains a Jewish value, and so we're going to celebrate it!

I want to talk about abortion funds because you may have heard more about abortion funds over the last few months. But what is an abortion fund?

Abortion funds work together at local, regional, national, and international levels, as a network of over 90 grassroots autonomous organizations that fund abortions, directly support people to get the abortions they want and need, and build power to fight for cultural and political change.

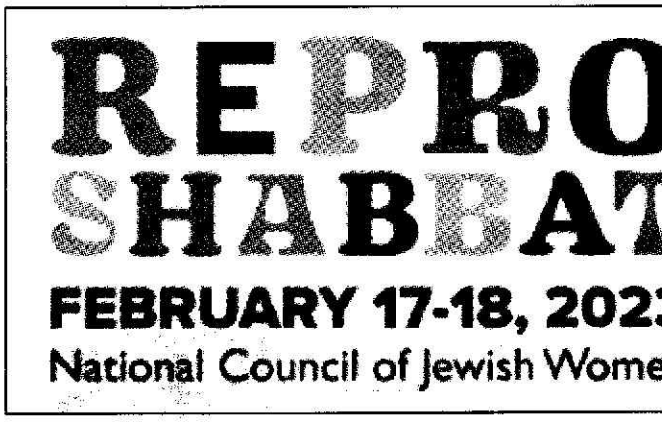
Most abortion funds use hotlines and coldlines (where callers leave a voicemail) to do "intake" with people who reach out to them for help getting their abortion. We never ask a caller to prove they need support, only gather essential information, and make sure people feel respected and valued when they call. We have decades of wisdom and experience assisting people over abortion barriers with compassion and care.

As an intake case manager volunteer for the Abortion Rights Fund of Western Mass, I monitor our warmline for a Sunday to Sunday shift. I talk to callers, gather relevant information, and based on our pledge policy, I work with them to figure out how we can best help them. I'd say the majority of our callers are from Massachusetts and the need is fairly straightforward (for me, but often not for them!) and I am easily able to support them financially from the fund. This means they have an appointment for an abortion procedure scheduled but they have some sort of financial barrier. For example, in Massachusetts, many insurance plans do not cover abortion, and out-of-pocket expenses for a medication abortion, which usually occurs in the first trimester, is in the $600-$700 range. This is hopefully to change with new legislation but in the meantime that is a considerable amount of money. It also doesn't include possible unpaid days off from work, childcare, and transportation costs. Also, abortion procedures require all of the payment on the day of the appointment.

And then there are the cases that can be much more complicated as well as emotionally and financially challenging. For folks traveling out of state (often to DC or Maryland) for abortion procedures after 20 weeks, the costs are upward of $18,000 to $20,000. And again this in addition to time off work (these procedures are multi-day), transportation, lodging, and childcare. These are at times both the hardest calls and the most joyful. Hardest because the callers are afraid of how they are going to cover these expenses and joyful because it is incredible to watch abortion fund volunteers and workers come together, not only to support and help these callers but also to support me as an intake volunteer.

There is one other important aspect of doing this work that I want to share with you. I have learned that even if this work feels a part of us, we do not show up to anything as fully formed perfect humans. We have our own lived experiences that impact how we show up and how we see the world. We have values and beliefs. And it's so important to re what those are and to dig in deeper to see how they may imp work we do in our communities.

When I attended my training to be an intake case manager New York Abortion Access fund, we ended one of the days add



our values and beliefs with a kind of questionnaire. We were a circle agree, disagree or unsure, following twenty different stat of opinion about abortion.

It wasn't a right or wrong quiz. It was a way to really und what we feel or believe in our heart. I'll read some of these today and I invite you to consider how they sit with you.

People should not get pregnant until they are emotionally an cially ready.

1. Some people have too many abortions.
2. Some people have too many children.
3. Everyone who has an abortion identifies as female.
4. It is ok to use abortion as a method of birthcontrol.
5. Parents deserve to know when their teenager intends to h an abortion.
6. Individuals always know what is best for them.





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REPRO SHABBAT
FEBRUARY 17-18, 2023
National Council of Jewish Women

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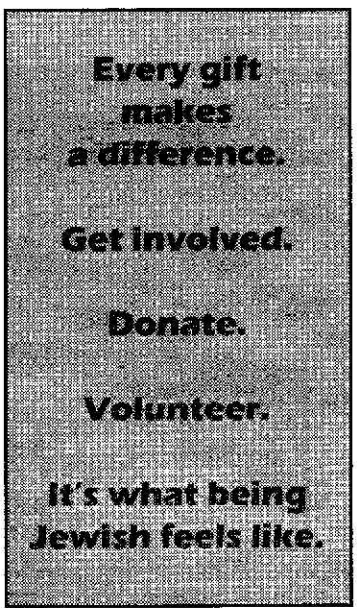
I can say that my values and beliefs truly have changed over the course of doing this work. We can continue to grow and learn and adapt. But of course, I still find myself reacting to some cases with biases I did not realize I even held. A caller was recently in touch during one of my shifts saying she had canceled her appointment and would no longer need our funding. She said the reason was because she had experienced a miscarriage. I immediately felt sad for her. And then almost as quickly wondered why that was my first reaction. Maybe it wasn't sad for her at all. Maybe that changed things for her in a way that made sense. Maybe it wasn't for me to have one feeling or another about her body and her healthcare.

I believe that truly showing up to celebrate reproductive rights also requires us to continue to do this work of recognizing the complexities of our own relationship to the issue, and committing to our continued growth, and the necessity for continued committed effort.

May we continue to celebrate the Jewish value of Reproductive Rights by working toward freedom for all.







Hadassah News



President's Message

by Karen Bloustine

Hadassah speaks out

Hadassah is a medical, educational and humanitarian organization with its flagship properties in Israel. It treats everyone without regard to race, religion, national origin, and ethnicity, in Israel and around the world. While we support Israel and its role in the centrality of Jewish life, as a Jewish and Democratic state, Hadassah takes no position for one side or another in the politics of the country. Considering those principles, it is consequential that Hadassah is speaking out now in light of the current conflict concerning Judicial Reform in Israel. Here is the message from President Rhoda Smolow and Hadassah's CEO, Naomi Adler.

Karen Bloustine, President
Eastern Connecticut Chapter of Hadassah

Message from Hadassah Leadership
February 26, 2023

Dear Members,

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, 300,000 strong, has been a supporter of the land of Israel and its people for 111 years. For over a century, Hadassah has been at the forefront of building Israel's healthcare and youth aliyah infrastructure, fostering health and well-being throughout the country. We have been closely following the current debate over judicial reform, personally meeting with leaders from all sides of this issue over the last several months to gain a deep understanding of each perspective. As a result of what we have learned from these conversations and current events, we are choosing to speak out at this time.

HADASSAH

We are gravely concerned about the rising tensions in Israel today. At Hadassah, we believe that Zionism can only flourish in a strong democratic Israel that includes checks and balances, and where individuals and groups take the necessary time to both talk and listen to one another. The destruction of the Second Temple is a reminder that we must not let our differences divide us, but rather unite us in respectful conversation. We believe President Isaac Herzog has proposed a reasonable framework to help pave a constructive way forward, and we strongly encourage all parties to immediately embrace it and work toward reforms based on consensus, compromise, and mutual understanding.

Hadassah urges the leaders of Israel to live up to her vision described by the prophets to be a "light unto the nations," and to fulfill what is in her Declaration of Independence to "... ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."

Now more than ever we must fervently pray for our beloved Israel and its people, and pledge to continue our commitment to ensuring the strength of her democracy for eternity.

With Pride, Passion, and Purpose,

Rhoda Smolow
Hadassah National President

Naomi Adler
Hadassah CEO

Getting in the Spirit - "C

March 14, 7 PM at Temp

ARE WE LANTZMEN? Ex
featuring author Lisa Br

By Sheila Horvitz

People are getting in the spirit, sharing photos, s charts of their families' histories - from Europe to Ar Pale of Settlement where they faced pogroms and oppression and from where they courageously fled to a new and promising life in America.



Photo of Hali Keele 1912-1913 in Galic

Our March 14 program will feature our discussion of Lisa Brahin's book and the history that inspired it. She will also share tips for doing your own research - leading to another interactive program where we share our families' immigration stories.

We've had wonderful submissions from Martin Rutchik, who shared the Yizkor Memorial books from his family's shtetl. Among others, we've heard from Leslie Spees, Rachel Levy, Karen Bloustine, Hali Keeler, and even a cousin of mine from Providence, Rhode Island who loves investigating family history.

Here is a taste of what we are learning. Lisa's boo story of my mother and grandmother who lived in th Ukraine - Stavischt - as Lisa's family - so I was thrilled and visualize exactly how my family fled Stavischt duri the Russian Revolution and Civil War in 1921. Our fa

Jewish Federation OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT

Prelude to our Comm
Program a

Sunday, April 16 - 2 p.m. - at

Our Stories of Liberation: Fr

By Sheila Horvitz

We are going to hear Liberation stories from childr survivors, as well as a historical discussion of Liberat Portnoff, the Elie Wiesel Associate Professor of Judaic necticut College. We will highlight the role of Ben Coop at Dachau and remember Henny Simon and her story. T capped by a Candle-Lighting and Memorial Service fea munity Rabbis.

In preparing for this program, our committee was learning about the Liberation experience. While liberati freedom were exhilarating, so many other emotions w by the survivors. Loneliness and Hope. . . how profour vivors' feelings of loneliness, grief and regret - when s loved ones perished - and how the jubilation of surviv by those powerful emotions.