

## NEWS



Ruth Klein, national director of advocacy and the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith, has been appointed a citizenship judge for Greater Toronto by Citizenship Minister Jason Kenney in Ottawa.

OTTAWA

## Klein named citizenship judge

Ruth Klein is leaving her position as B'nai Brith Canada's national director of advocacy and the League for Human Rights to accept a prestigious federal appointment as a citizenship judge for the Greater Toronto Area.

"Ruth has been a great force for B'nai Brith Canada since she joined us almost 15 years ago," said Eric Bissell, president of B'nai Brith. "It's a great move for her. It will be a loss for B'nai Brith, but we are proud that, when people do move on, they are able to use the invaluable experience they've gained with us

to continue to do important work."

Klein, who has a Masters degree in law, is a chartered mediator specializing in addressing cultural diversity within community, workplace and health care dispute resolution. She is a published author and editor, a public speaker and has served on a range of community advisory boards. She was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012 and has been recognized for her anti-racism work and human rights advocacy.

"Ruth has made her mark in B'nai Brith Canada and in the Jewish community," said Allan

Adel, national chair, League for Human Rights. "Her contribution to both has been exceptional."

David Matas, senior legal counsel for B'nai Brith Canada, said Klein "pays attention to detail. She's able to work with everybody and she gets the issues in principle." In addition, she is "forceful in her views."

Marvin Kurz, national legal counsel, League for Human Rights, added, "She is smart, fair, capable and thoughtful. She has excellent analytical skills and excellent people skills, all of which make her ideal for the job.... The government should be congratulated for an excellent ap-

pointment."

Frank Dimant, CEO, B'nai Brith Canada, said, "Ruth is a wonderful colleague, a superb team player and has always demonstrated wisdom, dedication and excellent leadership. She will be sorely missed."

Klein will start her new position on May 27. Citizenship judges are responsible for making decisions on citizenship applications, presiding over citizenship ceremonies and administering the oath of citizenship to new citizens. They are appointed by the Governor-in-Council on the recommendation of the citizenship, immigration and multiculturalism minister.

## March of the Living, marching towards life

I recently joined on the March of the Living Young Adult delegation as the trip rabbi. When people ask "How was it?" I am still having a difficult time answering. I usually make some hand gesture to indicate "big," but that's just a way of avoiding the conversation.



**Rabbi David Pardo**  
HOUSE  
CONVERSATIONS

What is the answer? Horrendous, remarkable, depressing, inspirational, maddening, and mesmerizing, for starters.

I'd like to share with you just one experience to help understand my hand gesture.

We visited Auschwitz Birkenau, also known as Auschwitz II, the day before the March, the camp my bubbe survived. It was cold and gray and unbelievably huge. So much of the camp, including the barracks and restored railway wagon, remained intact, standing witnesses to horror. The vast expanse was silent, leaving one to imagine the sights and sounds that haunt this place. The feeling on the way out was despair and despondency.

We revisited Birkenau the next day, but this was different. Birkenau was the endpoint for the March of the Living, a force of 11,000 Jews who came to commit themselves to remembering the past and building the future.

Imagine, a sea of blue jackets and Israeli flags, stretching as far forward and as far backward as the eye can see. Jews of every stripe and colour, every nationality, political persuasion, and even religious proclivities, from every corner of the globe, united only by the fact they consider themselves Jews. Imagine arriving at the same cold, dark gate standing to welcome celebrants of Judaism and of life. Imagine the power of the speech delivered by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, former chief rabbi of Israel and youngest survivor

of Buchenwald, or of Rav Aluf Benny Gantz, chief of general staff of the state of Israel, or of Frank Lowy, international philanthropist and a man who only learned five years ago how his father died in the Holocaust: he was beaten to death for holding on to his tefillin.

The entire March and the ceremony were electrifying, but that was not the high point for me. The high point for me, ironically, came the moment after the ceremony was complete.

After all the pomp was done, Chazzen Shimon Farkas banged on his podium and unceremoniously announced, "Mincha!" and just like that, thousands of Jews assumed their place in prayer, and began praying the afternoon service. No announcement, no formalities or special honours. It was just assumed; this many Jews all together, this must be the thing to do.

Can you begin to imagine, getting into the mind of a prisoner of Auschwitz Birkenau, believing every day is her last, believing she is witnessing the end of the Jewish people, standing in the darkest part of Hell. Now try to tell her that 70 years from now, thousands of Jews will meet in this place and pray mincha, among them a chief rabbi, the chief of staff, dozens of decorated Israeli soldiers and policemen, and even her own grandson. Unimaginable.

There is a temptation, when confronting tragedy of enormous magnitude, to simply despair: to sit down and grieve. It is now that I recall the message of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ז"ל in his response to the Holocaust. The question we must ask ourselves in not "why," because there is no answer. The question is "what." What is our response? What do we do now? What will we choose to build? Hitler wanted to annihilate not only Jews, but Judaism itself. What will you do about that?

So, how was my trip? I'll only know when I can show what I've down with the experience.

Rabbi David Pardo is the educational director of the House. To plan out your "what," email him at [david@thehousetoronto.com](mailto:david@thehousetoronto.com).

TORONTO

## Toiletry drive collects for families in need

United Chesed and volunteers gathered recently in the Annex to divide hundreds of toiletry items into packages to be distributed to low-income families in the Toronto Jewish community.

The items, including toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant and other essentials, were donated over the past two months as part of United Chesed's first toiletry drive.

After food, toiletries are arguably the most pressing recurrent household expense, and those who go without

them face serious health risks.

United Chesed's toiletry drive was launched in February in collaboration with the Annex Shul Purim Party. Party guests were encouraged to bring donations and by the end of the evening the large box at the door was full. Steady donations over the next eight weeks lead to an additional 38 boxes of items being collected, for a total of 50 boxes.

The packaging event was held at the apartment of United Chesed volunteers and helped raise awareness about United

Chesed in the young Annex Jewish community.

"I was very grateful for the opportunity to be involved with the toiletry drive," said Aaron Rotenberg, a volunteer who hosted and helped organize the packaging event. "United Chesed provided a way to concretely give resources and time in a way that I knew would directly be benefitting others. I was really overwhelmed by the amount of items that were donated. Seeing people's generosity was inspiring and humbling for me."



## JPL receives survivor's memoir

Dana Szeffan Bell recently presented the Jewish Public Library (JPL) in Montreal with a copy of her memoir *Danusia: The Story of a Child Survivor*. The memoir will become part of the JPL's extensive collection of Holocaust memoirs, one of the largest and most recognized in Canada. From left: Barry Pascal, Dana Szeffan Bell, Eric Bissell, president, B'nai Brith Canada, and William Bell, partner, Bell Pascal Financial Services.