

THE CANADIAN JEWISH NEWS

CJN

An independent community newspaper serving as a forum for diverse viewpoints

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## From the Archives | Gula's Matzah



ONTARIO JEWISH ARCHIVES, BLANKENSTEIN FAMILY HERITAGE CENTRE

The opening of the Gula's Matzah Factory in 1948 on Queen Street West in Toronto, just west of Dufferin Street. It was operated by Hershcel Gula, who immigrated from Poland in 1907.

## SeeJN | Teens do tzedakah



From left, Yael Meyer, Shira Goodman and Jonny Braun assemble craft kits for children in hospitals around the world. They were among 500 Toronto-area teens who took part April 17 in J-Serve, a worldwide tzedakah initiative involving 12,000 young people in more than 100 communities in North America, Europe and Israel. J-Serve Toronto was hosted by BBYO Ontario and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, and held at the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto's south campus.

## From Yoni's Desk

## Getting the facts wrong about anti-Semitism in Canada

In an essay for the *Huffington Post* last week, writer/activist Yves Engler had the temerity to suggest that "anti-Semitism may be the most abused term in Canada today."

Engler opens by attempting to explain away pro-Hamas demonstrations at l'Université du Québec à Montréal and anti-Semitism at Concordia University, as well as York University's mural controversy and its student government's divestment campaign. This is, by the way, the same Yves Engler who was dismissed from his role as vice-president of the Concordia student union for his part in the infamous 2002 riot that forced the cancellation of a speech by Benjamin Netanyahu. In what could be a nod to his university days, Engler contends that the term anti-Semitism "is now primarily invoked to uphold Jewish/white privilege."

Then he really goes off the rails.

"Despite widespread discussion of 'anti-Semitism,' there is little discussion of Canadian Jewry's actual place in Canadian society," he continues. "Among elite business, political and professional circles Jewish representation far surpasses their slim 1.3 per cent of the Canadian population. Studies demonstrate that Canadian Jews are more likely than the general population to hold a bachelor's degree, earn above \$75,000, or be part of the billionaire class." Is the implication that anti-Semitism must not be a problem since Canadian Jews are rich? If so, he might be interested to learn that poverty is on the rise in the Canadian Jewish community (see page 13).

Engler also notes "while Canadian Jews faced discriminatory property, university and immigration restrictions into the 1950s, even the history of structural anti-Jewish prejudice should be put into proper context. Blacks, Japanese and other people of colour (not to mention indigenous peoples) have been subjected to far worse structural racism and abuse."

There's more. "Prejudice against Arabs and Muslims appears rampant in the Jewish community," he claims, though he cites no statistical evidence to back it up, and the many contributions of the Jewish community toward Syrian refugees contradict his argument. Engler also disapproves of Jewish day schools and Jewish-majority neighbourhoods – "cloistering children by ethnicity/religion," he calls it. (He even takes *The CJN* to task for calling Jews the "Chosen People.")

"Inward looking and affluent," he adds, "the Jewish community is quick to claim victimhood," before ending with an ominous warning: "Without an intervention of some sort, the Jewish community risks having future dictionaries defining 'anti-Semitism' as 'a movement for justice and equality.'"

Inconveniently for Engler, the facts belie his position. Last month, Toronto Police released a report on hate crimes in the city during 2015, and for the 10th year in a row, Jews topped the list of most targeted communities. Meanwhile, in Montreal, there has been a spate of swastika and neo-Nazi graffiti recently. And in Vancouver, a man was found guilty of promoting Jew-hatred online less than six months ago.

Perhaps Engler might have come to a different conclusion had he accurately researched the Jewish community before publishing his essay. At this point, it's probably too late for that, but it would behoove Engler to take a close look at something else – himself, in a mirror. The facts suggest he has seriously misjudged the state of anti-Semitism in Canada today. ■ — YONI