

# Editorial

## Thoughts on the National Council of Jewish Women

New Jersey is filled with Jewish organizations. There are so many of them it's a surprise that the keyboards of those of us who work in the Jewish world don't constantly need the J keys replaced. Everything is Jsomething, somethingJ, or someJthing.

Even with all these groups, though, we should be sure to remember the National Council of Jewish Women. It's been chugging along since the late 19th century – not the 20th century, mind you, but the 19th. Its origin story is that its founder, Hannah Solomon, who was part of the Jewish community in Chicago, was asked to gather a group of women to help create the Chicago World's Fair, the 1893 Colombian Exposition. (Talk about origin stories – that's the fair that provided the background for “The Devil in the White City.”)

Ms. Solomon was enraged when she learned that the support she and the women she'd enticed into the project were expected to undertake such vital tasks as provide coffee for the important people – the men. So she and those other women took their very real organizing skills and passion for social justice and channeled them into the formation of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Since then, the group has worked for progressive causes, when they were in fashion and when they were not. It's soldiered through all sorts of changes in politics, cultural assumptions, and demographics.

Here, there are groups in northern New Jersey and Rockland County; they've consolidated over the years, but they're still going.

The Bergen County section just gave us some sad news. Its co-president, Jane Abraham of Teaneck, died on March 13. It's the first time that the section has had to cope with the death of a sitting president.

Ms. Abraham had a long career, both as an employee and a volunteer; she worked at UJA-Federation of New York, and then, once she retired, she devoted herself to advocacy through the NCJW. She also worked with Age-Friendly Teaneck and Bergen Reads. “She was an exceptionally talented organizer, analyzer, clarifier, and speaker, and a masterful leader who inspired and motivated,” the NCJW said in a statement marking and mourning her death.

I was not lucky enough to have known Ms. Abraham, but when I read about her, I recognize her, and the NCJW she advocated and worked for, as one of those intellectually sturdy, stalwart women, those way-pre-social-media women, who put their heads down and fought for what they believed in. Women who came of age right after the war, and then were young parents during the Vietnam era, who were faced with social injustice and enormous turmoil and the rethinking of everything they had known, with wild excitement and upheaval and possibility and fear.

The women who gravitated toward NCJW kept their sense of injustice and of possibility alive, and I am grateful to them. They actually did help change the world.

We mourn the death of Jane Abraham and hope for the continued life of the National Council of Jewish Women. —JP



Jane Abraham

TRUTH REGARDLESS OF CONSEQUENCES

## The truth about my friendship with Cory Booker

An article that ran last week in the Jewish Standard, for whom I have been extremely proud to serve as a columnist for more than a decade, said that my 25-year friendship with Cory Booker “had foundered.” I must dispute this characterization.

My friendship has not foundered. It was betrayed.

It was betrayed by a friend who was as close to me as a brother, whom my people embraced as a son, but who decided to vote to fund a government that was calling for our annihilation. It was betrayed by a friend whom I introduced to Elie Wiesel, who quotes the great Holocaust survivor at every turn, but who chose to close his eyes to

Iran's promise to perpetrate a second holocaust. And it was betrayed by a politician to whom the Jewish community gave incalculable support for his promises to support Israel only to see him condemn the embassy move to Jerusalem and vote in committee against a bill that would stop payments to Palestinian terrorists for murdering Jews.

I will always love Cory as the man who became my closest friend. But I cannot overlook his stunning unfaithfulness to the Jewish people at a time when anti-Semitism is rising throughout the world.

The person who has suffered the most

from this betrayal is Cory himself. From the time he was 22 years old, I would look him in the eye and tell him he would be president of the United States one day. I was sure that when he one day announced his candidacy, it would be an earthquake. Instead, the announcement came and went, this past February, to barely a ripple. And the reason? America is sick of politicians. And Cory's betrayal of Israel for political gain was seen for what it was: an honest, good, and forthright man suddenly becoming a politician.

Cory announced on Sunday that his presidential campaign had raised a bit over \$5 million in the first quarter of the year. The sums raised by other candidates underline his underperformance: Bernie Sanders said he raised \$18.2 million; Kamala Harris raised more than \$12 million, and Beto O'Rourke raised \$9.4 million. Even Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, out-raised Cory with \$7 million in disclosed donations.

This news was for me especially sad. I was, in all likelihood, the first person besides family who ever told Cory that he would rise to the highest office in the land. He was only 22 years old, but his formidable potential was undeniable. For years, I lauded his warmth, his morals, and his abilities – garnering support from across the country for the city councilman, then for the mayor, and



Rabbi Shmuley Boteach

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach is the author of 32 books, including his most recent, “Lust for Love.” He was a rabbi at Oxford University, and Cory Booker was his student president. Follow him on Twitter @RabbiShmuley.

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