



DO'IKAYT

דאָיקײַט

Hereness

Essays and a Song

Inspired by the Jewish Labor Bund's practice of  
Being Here - Where We Live

Arbeter Ring/Workers Circle of Northern California

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## **All We Have Is Here and All There Is Is Now: Do'ikayt in the Time of Trump**

By Elaine Leeder

Recently there has been a spate of information on an old Yiddish term "*Do'ikayt*." The term, meaning "hereness" comes from a Jewish organization in Poland, Russia and Lithuania that was politically and culturally active during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Jewish Labor Bund was once an organization with far reaching influence on life for diasporic Jews. It found favor in opposition to the concept of Zionism, which also came into popularity at around the same time. The idea of *do'ikayt* meant that one would work where one lived, rather than create a new place "there" like Zionism advocated. The Bund offered a vision of secular Jewish cultural autonomy that did not rely on the nationalism for which Zionism argued. Instead, it advocated an internationalism, where we can be for ourselves, but also be fighting for everyone else at the same time. It also had a vision for a Jewish cultural autonomy that could be harnessed where one lived at the exact time one was living, not waiting for a future utopia or an eventual Jewish state.

At a time when leftists of all stripes are faced with the hard realities of the election of Donald J. Trump and a return to more conservative and right-wing values, there is much to be learned from the Bundists who were our forebearers. Also, at a time when many leftist Jews are concerned about the right-wing leanings and genocide being committed by Israel (and often in our names), perhaps the actions of earlier Jewish and Yiddish activists have lessons from which to learn. We have seen a sanitization of our Jewish culture, one in which, because of assimilation the qualities of what it means to be Jewish are fraught with confusion, embarrassment and downright fear. As antisemitism is on the rise Jews are deeply concerned with their own safety, but also the safety of others whose positions are equally marginalized. I am curious as to how some of the ideas that the Bundists presented, lived and hoped for might have relevance for those of us seeking guidance and a path forward during a time of great despair.

### HERENESS

The idea of hereness is a very concrete and doable concept. In essence it means that where one is, is where one works, lives, and undertakes engagement with those around us. Where some might argue for a distant future utopia, those who believe in *do'ikayt* believe we must be rooted and active where we live, active in our local politics and civic life. The argument is also that we as Jews must work with and be rooted in our Jewish culture. We seem to have forgotten our activist roots and about those who dedicated their lives to social justice and a beautiful and free world. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Yiddish was spoken and Ashkenazi culture was dominant among Jewish immigrants to the United States. Now the Hebraization of the language and Israeli culture have helped us lose some of the values and beauty of our Eastern European origins. For those who come from an Eastern European background, our teachers tell us how to cope with the stress of Trump's presidency and how we might survive our own despair and fear. Perhaps the ideas of the Bund have not been lost to history, they merely must be reclaimed and embraced with contemporary spins and relevance.

### WHAT DID BUNDISTS DO?

Jack Jacobs, a noted scholar on the Bund, has written, "In the face of great violence and suppression, the Bund was committed to serving the cultural needs of their community. These cultural strategies of base-building made an impact. They brought people out to the polls and into the streets. The Bund was able to shift culture towards their socialist goals through outreach and community. But we cannot forget their existence, as a highly successful, broad-based Jewish anti-Zionist Socialist movement, as a movement rooted in solidarity."

Through grassroots community organizing, like building a children's movement, youth movements, physical education, self-help groups and running candidates for local elections, the Bund built a wide base of support, numbering as many as 100,000 members in Poland by 1938. It was against the idea of assimilation, remaining a secular Jewish organization for its entire existence, particularly by representing workers, Jewish labor organizations, artisans and intelligentsia. The emphasis was on building culture, not a state or a separate place. Often facing opposition from the governments where they operated, Bundists nonetheless continued to publish

newspapers, pamphlets, run candidates and oppose those who chose to move to Israel who they believed were engaging in “escapism.”

#### CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE BUND

Since January 2025, when President Trump was inaugurated and began implementing Project 2025, he began his sweeping changes to economic and social policies, and federal agencies. He has already done enormous damage by gutting USAID. He has taken control the DOJ, FBI, FCC, and FTC, begun dismantling the Department of Education, transferring or terminating its programs. The National Institute of Health has lost independence, halting embryonic stem cell research, while environmental regulations are now favoring fossil fuels. Medicare and Medicaid are threatened, and abortion is now explicitly rejected as health care; contraception access has been targeted through the Comstock Act. Thousands of federal workers have been terminated and he has removed legal protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, terminated diversity programs, begun mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, has considered deploying the military domestically, and is now actively moving toward speedy capital punishment. He has given power to Elon Musk, who advocates for right wing ideology and actions. It is frightening to see what has been done in such a short time. It will take years to undo the damage they have already done.

Given the seriousness of these changes, perhaps what the Bund did in Europe is worth considering now.

Although some might disagree with this approach, one young Jewish activist, Miranda Sullivan, recently wrote, “I think North American Jews can do anti-occupation work in their very communities — just think of how much money our temples, youth groups, and community organizations give to Israel each year that could go towards Palestinian activists.” She goes on to say that our cultures care for people, not wealth or property and with that in mind there is much to be done right now, given the emphasis on the growth of capitalism under Trump. Further, she argues that we can reclaim our culture from the depths of Zionism. *Do'ikayt* makes her want to connect with the Yiddish revivalists, the Bundists, the anti-Zionists, and the dreamers. She loves the celebration of Eastern European culture. In this world it can feel lonely with capitalism and Zionism as dominant voices. She argues that Jewishness can be a comfort and a guide in re-rooting ourselves to our cultures that have been sanitized, and our Jewishness can be in itself a friend. We just have to reach out to find that connection with that Jewishness we crave.

Judaism is a religion and a culture, and as such, there is not *one* Jewish people, but *many* Jewish peoples. *Do'ikayt* entails celebrating those differences, and not allowing either Zionism or what the state of Israel is doing to define who we are. Of course, some conflate the two; however, we know that many US Jews have a diversity of opinion on the current Middle East situation. What can each of us who disagrees with the war do locally? Should we speak out in our communities, write to our congresspeople, send money to Palestinian support programs, educate our neighbors about where we stand on the Israel/Palestinian situation? All of those things need doing and I believe they are the current manifestations of *do'ikayt*. When it comes to the climate/environmental crisis, can we do local organizing? Recently where I live in a rural area in California many Jewish local activists worked on saving family farms which were threatened by an attempted new law.

What else can we do here and now? How do we fight the Trump agenda in our daily lives? We can put our bodies in front of the buses that will be brought in to deport undocumented workers. We can support trans people by protecting them in our communities and offering them emotional and financial support. We can turn our synagogues into sanctuary settings or take undocumented families into our homes to protect them from ICE. We can work in our local medical clinics providing decent care to those who have not had the opportunity to receive such treatment. We can fight for reproductive rights and the right of women to control their own bodies by supporting clinics and doctors who provide such services. It is better than putting our heads in the sand and hope that it all goes away. These seem like better ideas than moving to a “promised land” only to find that the promise has been lost.

Each of us must find the answers for ourselves. However, we need to do so in community, with like-minded people with whom we can be in dialogue. But we also must talk with those who do not agree with our positions. Do we reach out to those who voted for Trump, can we make connections with those from whom we are disaffected?

*Do'ikayt* can provide a map for us as to how we might proceed during this fraught time. It does not tell us exactly what to do, but it tells us how to do it. Do your work here and do it now, since all we have is the here and the now. We must do something, and we must do it now. It will help us with the feelings of helplessness and give us tools for future work, all of it necessary at this time, in the here and the now.



Rally of the Jewish Labor Bund in Russia, 1917

## Do'ikayt through Yiddish Song

*Ale Brider* (All Brothers) is a rousing Yiddish community-solidarity folk song, originally adapted from a poem by Morris Winchevsky. In true *do'ikayt* tradition, it has inspired many updates over the years to spotlight local political and cultural developments. This 2024 update by Josh Waletzky and Laura Rosenberg was created to mark the inaugural season of the KLEZCADIA Festival in Victoria BC, Canada. Sheet music and historical information are available at the Workers Circle/Arbeter Ring's Mlotek Yiddish song archive: <https://yiddishsongs.org/ale-brider/>.

Un mir zaynen ale brider – oy, oy, ale brider,  
Un mir zingen sheyne lider – oy, oy, oy.  
Un mir haltn zikh in eynem – oy, oy, zikh in eynem,  
Ale minem, ale shkheynem – oy, oy, oy.  
Oy, oy, oy, oy-oy-oy...

And we all are brothers,  
And we sing beautiful songs.  
And we stick together,  
All kinds, all genders, all neighbors.

Un mir zaynen ale shvester – oy, oy, ale shvester,  
Azoy vi rokhl, rus un ester – oy, oy, oy.  
Un mir zaynen freylekh munter – oy, oy, freylekh  
munter,  
Zingen lider, tantsn unter – oy, oy, oy.  
Oy, oy, oy, oy-oy-oy...

And we all are sisters,  
Just like Rachel, Ruth and Esther.  
And we are happy and joyous,  
Singing songs and dancing along.

Un mir zaynen ale eynik – oy, oy, ale eynik,  
Tsi mir zaynen fil tsi veynik – oy, oy, oy.  
Un mir shteyen do tsuzamen – oy, oy, do tsuzamen,  
Khotsh mir filn andere tamen – oy, oy, oy.  
Oy, oy, oy, oy-oy-oy...

And we all are united,  
Whether we are many or few.  
And we all stand here together,  
Though we have different tastes.

Frum un fray fareynikt ale – oy, oy, fareynikt ale,  
Vi a beygl mit a byale – oy, oy, oy.  
Vi dos fendl mitn tepl – oy, oy, mitn tepl,  
Vi der honik mitn epl – oy, oy, oy.  
Oy, oy, oy, oy-oy-oy...

Religious and secular all united,  
Like a bagel with a biale.  
Like the pot with the pan,  
Like apple with honey.



"Light for Our Democracy" assembly co-sponsored by League of Women Voters, Black Voters Matter, the Workers Circle, the American Association of People with Disabilities, National Organization for Women, American Federation of Teachers, Southern Poverty Law Center, Common Cause, National Council of Jewish Women, and others downtown in San Francisco during the President's State of the Union speech, March 4, 2025. Photo by Art Persyko.

## **Do'ikayt in Oakland: Putting the Pieces Together**

By Sarah Norr

Last fall, I organized a Sukkot celebration for Jewish families who support a ceasefire. While preparing for the event, I learned for the first time about lulav: wands made of myrtle, willow, and palm, used by our ancestors to pray for rain in the fall. Summoning rain felt exactly right in Oakland, California in October—the hills were crackling brown, the specter of wildfires looming. Because I'd spent the COVID era running a pandemic forest school, I recognized the plants used in lulav and knew where to find them on my city's land: willow in Sausal Creek, low-hanging palm fronds around San Antonio Park, myrtle right on my block in Fruitvale. My rabbi friend told me that most American Jews use lulav shipped from Israel, wrapped in plastic. But we took our kids right down into the creek bed to harvest willow branches, and tied them into wands ourselves. I watched my 7-year-old gather the fresh cuttings in her hands and wave them in the four directions, to the sky, and to the dry earth.

All this was very far from the workers' movements of Eastern Europe a century ago. But it was my own practice of *do'ikayt*, or hereness—a word I had just heard for the first time.

I wasn't always the kind of person who got excited about ancient prayer rituals. Growing up, I never went to Hebrew school or synagogue. But I was raised with a strong sense of Jewish social justice values. My parents had been active in the New Left, and during the Second Intifada, they got involved with Palestine solidarity work. My dad and I were human rights observers in the West Bank together.

Though I held Hanukkah and Passover celebrations with friends, I didn't feel at home in Jewish spaces when I was young—because I wasn't religious, and because of most Jewish organizations' support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine. I did spend many years as a labor organizer, working alongside immigrant workers to win fair wages and working conditions—the same struggles Jewish immigrants faced a century ago.

More recently, as a parent, I tried to give my child a positive sense of her heritage—even though I didn't quite know where I belonged in the Jewish world. Then came the war in Gaza. I was haunted by the deaths of tens of thousands of children. I organized a Families for Ceasefire group to engage children and their parents in emergency action for peace. But I was horrified to see “progressive” Jewish groups in my community staying silent through this moral crisis. My child's hippy-Jewish day camp maintained a “don't mention Gaza” policy to avoid “creating division in the community”—then fired a counselor for wearing a watermelon earring. Enforced silence in the face of genocide was not at all my understanding of progressive Jewish values, and I wondered how we had strayed so far from our roots.

I had a revelation at a camp Shabbat one Friday last summer. I was watching the kids perform “Jewish folk songs”—in Hebrew. I realized that none of these could truly be the folk songs of our great-grandparents, who spoke Yiddish in their daily lives. I started noticing how much of what we know as Jewish culture today isn't actually a preservation of my ancestors' culture, the Ashkenazi culture that Hitler tried to wipe out. It's a language and culture created from scratch as part of the modern political project of Zionism. For years I've read articles about indigenous language preservation, but until that summer, I never put the pieces together: \*I\* am an heir to a dying language and culture!

I started imagining that, instead of putting endless resources toward Israel and its wars, the American Jewish community had focused on supporting Jewish scholars and cultural workers who were fleeing Europe—and then preserving and passing on their language, culture, and radical politics. How much richness would we have access to now if we hadn't let our culture die out because our resources were going overseas?

This led me to learn about the history of the Jewish Labor Bund and the idea of *do'ikayt*. In my understanding, *do'ikayt* means fighting for justice alongside the non-Jewish people of the places we live—rather than believing that our true homeland is elsewhere. I see this applying very clearly to the current moment. As American Jews,

we face a stark choice. We can build an anti-fascist movement alongside the people being persecuted just as our ancestors were—immigrants, trans people, student protestors. Or we can prioritize Israel’s interests to the point of allying ourselves with the fascists themselves (see the Anti-Defamation League defending a literal Nazi salute at a presidential inauguration!).

To me, a 21<sup>st</sup>-century understanding of *do'ikayt* also means connecting with—and protecting—the land we live on. If I consider California my true home, I should know the plants that grow here, and fight to preserve its forests and protect those who work its land. As a parent, I’ve tried to find ways to root our family life in the cycles of nature. I’ve been delighted to find that my own cultural tradition offers many tools for this—like my homemade lulav—if we look to hereness instead of Zionism.

Today I think a lot about how we can prepare our kids for the world of ecological collapse and ascendant fascism they are inheriting. *Do'ikayt* is the gift I want to pass on to my child. As she finds her own place in a terrifying world, I want her to know the stories and songs of her ancestors, who fought for freedom and justice wherever they found themselves. I want her to work alongside people of all backgrounds and cultures to build communities of resistance. And I want her to connect deeply with the land she lives on, and draw strength from that connection to protect and restore the natural world.



Workers Circle and If Not Now Taschlich Memorial Ceremony remembering all those who died in Israel and Palestine, held at Ocean Beach in San Francisco, October 7, 2024. Photo by Florentina Mocanu-Schendel.

## **Am I Too Late to Join the Bund?**

by Joel Schechter

As I watch and lament the recent war in the Mideast, as I wonder what I can do about the threats Israel faces and the deaths facing hundreds of thousands displaced Gazans and Lebanese in 2025, I also have been reading the history of the Jewish Labor Bund. This history's warnings about the future that we have now reached, and the Bund's promotion of *do'ikayt*, are worth revisiting today.

My interest in the Bund and its predictions began when I looked at the delightful new book, *The Bund: A Graphic History of Jewish Labour Resistance*, written by Sharon Rudahl, illustrated by Michael Kluckner, and edited, with a great afterword by Paul Buhle.

As this beautifully illustrated book — and other commendable earlier volumes on the Bund by Jack Jacobs, Frank Wolff, and David Slucki — will tell you, the Jewish Labor Bund began in 1897 in Russian-occupied Vilna, Lithuania. Initially meeting illegally, its founders resisted tsarist oppression and bans on unions through underground publications, secret meetings and calls for resistance. While the Yiddish-speaking Bundists favored socialist programs, they broke away from Lenin and his Bolshevik Party in 1903, and ceased to exist as a Russian political party in the 1920s.

The Bund found greater support in other countries, particularly in Poland between world wars, where it thrived with its own schools, health clinics, cultural programs, elected representatives, and self-defense units. Before one exemplary Bundist, Bernard Goldstein, became the leader of a self-defense unit in Poland, he survived Russian imprisonment in Siberia. Later he worked with the Polish underground resisting fascism in World War II, participated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and ended up living in the United States.

Goldstein's decades of activism and resistance to fascism exemplify a practice the Bundists termed *do'ikayt*, which translates from Yiddish into "hereness." Bundists like Bernard Goldstein and Pati Kremer (both of whom are given special attention in the new graphic history) struggled for human rights and resisted oppression here and now, wherever they lived. They didn't have to seek a Zionist homeland in Palestine when they could fight for peace and freedom in Eastern Europe or (if they migrated, as many other Bundists did) in the Americas, France, the UK, and Australia.

*Do'ikayt* still offers a viable alternative to Zionism, and its practice can be detected in the American actions of If Not Now and Jewish Voice for Peace, groups that called for a ceasefire in Gaza and for an end to the occupation of Palestinian land as soon as the latest war began there in 2023. They called on the United States (their country, here and now) to halt its shipment of weapons to Israel and not fuel further destruction. Naomi Klein in her book *Doppelganger* sees these two American groups as descendants of the Jewish Labor Bund. Those of us who question recent White House directives against diversity, equity, inclusion, climate crisis reduction, medical care for those who need it, also may benefit from an understanding of *do'ikayt* in struggles to preserve civil liberties, reproductive rights, and human rights here and now in the United States.

The Jewish Labor Bund had tremendous support and societal impact in Poland between wars. After heroic resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto and in partisan militias during World War II, although the Bund survived as an organization, many of its members did not. War and death camps destroyed its European base. Through transnational migration (documented by Frank Wolff in his commendable book, *Yiddish Revolutionaries in Migration*), Bundist approaches to culture and politics continued to influence programs elsewhere, notably in American branches of the Arbeter Ring/Workers Circle and the Australian branch of the Jewish Labor Bund, which survives in Melbourne. A Bundist-like commitment to socialism can be seen in Democratic Socialists of America, although Jewish and Yiddish-speaking backgrounds have been assimilated into a more diverse collection of American socialists. (Some members of DSA's predecessor organizations actually were Bundists.)

It's good news that groups of socialists and Jewish activists have taken on struggles that the Jewish Labor Bund

initiated. The practice of *do'ikayt*, combined with socialist community-building and the culture and literature of *yidishkayt* (Jewishness) that enveloped the Bund's work, remain inspiring, and may help some of us address current crises in Gaza, Israel, and America. *Do'ikayt*, never limited to a particular time or place (although always practiced in a particular time and place), is a word now appearing on American tee-shirts and tattoos, I am told; but it also can be made more visible through renewed practice of resistance to war and injustice.

One example of this renewal: I was born too late to join the historic Bund projects in Poland, but not too late to reconsider some of their proposals for peace in the Middle East. A statement on Palestine issued by surviving Bundists who met at an international conference in 1948 resolved that the "Palestine question can only be solved on a basis of democracy and justice," and that (in David Slucki's paraphrase in his book on the Bund) "freedom and equal rights for all the inhabitants of the land was the only solution. A government of the minority (Jews) over the majority (Arabs) was not an option, and cooperation was the key to ensuring security for Jews in Palestine; therefore, Zionist goals of a separate Jewish state needed to be abandoned. The resolution called for independence of Palestine, with recognition of the local Jewish population as equally invested stakeholders in governing the country. A Jewish state ... could only lead to perpetual war with the local Arab population and the surrounding Arab states." (Philosopher Hannah Arendt was saying almost the same thing in essays she wrote about Zionism in the late Forties, before she wrote about the origins of totalitarianism.)

The Bund's advocacy of a federation that would allow Arabs and Jews national and cultural autonomy within the same territory was not accepted by the powers that ruled the region in 1948, and probably won't be accepted now. But the 1948 prediction of continuous war as the alternative to coexistence seems all too prophetic today. Could some variation of the Bund's plan for a shared state ever have been implemented? Since Prime Minister Netanyahu has vociferously rejected a two-state solution, might the Bund's one-state solution be the only post-war alternative? To explore these questions further, I recommend that the uninitiated start by reading Buhle and Rudahl's *The Bund* (the graphic history book available from AK Press in the USA), then go on to other books that discuss the Bund's history and practices. At the very least you will know more about what has been lost, possibly what can be recovered from the Bund's achievements in Yiddish culture, socialism and anti-fascism.

It turns out it is not too late to become a member of the Bund. One branch that survives in Melbourne, Australia accepts international members. There's also a new International Jewish Labor Bund forming right now in the United States (Website: JewishBund.org). I have signed up, although previously, as a member of the Arbeter Ring/Workers Circle of Northern California, I already saw myself as a Bundist descendant, one reason I want our Workers Circle group to spread the word about *do'ikayt* in this publication. But I also welcome the Melbourne Bund's position on some issues, notably one recent statement on the Gaza war that almost could have been issued by the Bund in 1948: "Israel must articulate a path towards a just, lasting, and secure future for Israelis and Palestinians alike based on the principle that all people in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank have a right to self-determination and freedom from oppression and violence."

Even without joining the Bund, it's not too late to practice *do'ikayt* and struggle for justice here, now, wherever we are.





Workers Circle of Northern California banner held by Joel Schechter and Diana Scott at the UC Berkeley student encampment. April, 2024. Photo by Art Persyko.

### ***DO'IKAYT* - Which kind will we practice?**

**By Diana Scott**

Weeks after Hamas's deadly October 7th attack on Israel's southern border, the head of the national Workers Circle, the 125-year-old progressive, secular Jewish-American organization with roots in the Yiddish labor movement, publicly invoked *do'ikayt* (here-ness) to a reporter as the reason for the organization's official silence on Israel's scorched-earth retaliatory response. As social justice activists, she said, the group's focus was on U.S. policies "here" -- within U.S. borders.

The Workers Circle (known as Workmen's Circle for its first 120 years), was formerly a fraternal organization; it completed its transition from a decentralized, branch-engaged, representative democratic structure to a 501 (c) (3) non-profit in 2010. The now-centralized organization subsequently discontinued its earlier practice of inviting elected branch delegates to its national bi-annual conventions to adopt resolutions on a wide range of social justice issues.

As a newly elected Northern California branch delegate, I was a member of the Resolutions Committee that drafted and adopted the last set of these resolutions in 2008, at the Circle's last convention at its summer camp in upstate New York, a much-beloved place in Workers Circle lore. (Print copies of these resolutions were never distributed -- "lost in the transition" to a non-profit -- but retrievable via the Internet Archive's "Wayback Machine.")

A group's non-profit status – as well as staffing level -- confers certain restraints on its political activism, lest it affect its tax designation, but leaves some legal latitude as to interpretation. In this instance, the *do'ikayt* or "here-ness" the national group espouses in its educational outreach and legislative advocacy for social justice now aligns with a more generic mission tailored to "demand democracy" and "fight fascism" at home, i.e. within our national borders. It may be useful, though, to reconsider what *do'ikayt* meant to its original practitioners in the Bund, who hardly used the term until after World War II.

According to historical accounts, the *do'ikayt* of the leftist Eastern European Jewish Labor Bund in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – including their role in the failed 1905 attempt to overthrow Russia's czar -- was fundamentally different from what "here-ness" meant to the post-Holocaust branches and new ones currently forming.

The Bund espoused democratic socialist solidarity - albeit not always reciprocated - with other political groups whose values it shared, as its mantra remained "Where we live is our country." Founded secretly near Vilna, in the same year the Zionist movement first convened in Switzerland, the Bund stood for democratic Marxism and Jewish ethnic cultural autonomy, and against the "there-ness" of the Zionist utopian vision. (Escaping repression after the failed 1905 Russian revolution, many Bundist immigrants to the U.S. joined the Workmen's Circle, known in Yiddish as the *Arbeter Ring*.) After the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks rejected autonomy, so Bund party headquarters relocated from Russia to Warsaw. For the Bund, "here-ness"/*do'ikayt* was tied to claiming the right of Jewish self-governing leaders to remain on their ancestral lands, to organize where they lived, not build a Utopia elsewhere. And Bundist values – as embodied in the 1905 anthem, *Di Shvue* (lyrics by ethnographer, novelist, and playwright S. An-sky) -- pledged loyalty under the stars' gaze and 'til death, to each other and the Bund: its Jewish socialist political organizing, self-defense, public services, and secular Ashkenazi Yiddish language and culture (*yiddishkayt*).

Interestingly, the term *do'ikayt* seldom appeared in Bundist literature until after WWII, according to Madeleine Cohen's research on "literary *do'ikayt*" like An-sky's novella, *In shtrom (In the Stream)*, where "here" is embodied rather than stated. Contrary to the older notion of landless wandering Jew, or "rootless cosmopolitan," An-sky was explicit in his fictional depiction of revolutionary organizing, says Cohen, tying it graphically to "lived Jewish space": liberatory outdoor places like public parks (echoes of Occupy!), away from drab factories and impoverished homes. She cites a Bundist who observed that *do'ikayt* was national but not nationalistic. Yiddish language and physical proximity, along with Jewish ethical/social justice values, were the glue that held Bundists together.

Later, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Bundists used the term *do'ikayt* more frequently to describe one component of their movement, as they urged Jews in DP (Displaced Persons) camps to rebuild their destroyed communities in Eastern Europe rather than migrate – to Israel, the US, Australia, or other welcoming lands. On December 30, 2023, the Melbourne Bund, founded in 1928, in keeping with its values and ideological focus on "*frayhayt, glaykhhayt* and *gerekh tikayt* (freedom, equality and justice)," concluded in a blog statement condemning Hamas's Oct. 7 attack: "The path to a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians is not found through the policy of settler expansion and Jewish messianic terrorist violence against Palestinians in the West Bank nor terrorist acts in Israel by Hamas and its supporters. This approach is a prescription for a permanent status quo of suffering that will further degrade Israeli democracy and only entrench the power of the most intransigent Palestinian and Israeli parties."

As older and younger Jewish Americans today look to the Bund -- historical and contemporary -- rather than to Israel for political inspiration, identity, and strategies, what version of “here-ness” will new local branches of the reviving International Jewish Labor Bund practice? In a time that calls for fighting fascism in the U.S. and worldwide, we’re not going anywhere – nor limiting our vision to national or ethnic borders. **Bonding** (root of “Bund”) sometimes in physical spaces (conferences, workshops, rallies, benefits), and more often in cyberspaces (think podcasts, panels, breakout rooms), we enact/embod/express our *do'ikayt* in 21<sup>st</sup> century ways. Here are some of mine:

-- Continuing to learn and spread knowledge of the Jewish Bund and left Jewish history prior to 1948, mostly excluded from Jewish Studies in private and public schools, and subsumed by Jewish assimilation into New Deal politics;

-- Rejecting the Israel-centric (IHRA\*) definition/litmus test of “antisemitism” used by Jewish-American Zionist organizations and Christian evangelicals to silence criticism of Israel; and asserting publicly that criticism of Israel is not in itself antisemitic and that conflation of the two won’t stop antisemitic attacks. (National Workers Circle rejected the IHRA definition as a key reason it left the centrist Council of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations in 2023.);

-- Aligning organizationally and individually, as a Jewish American, with groups non-violently protesting U.S. support of U.S.-Israel’s military alliance and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people and culture in Gaza and the West Bank;

-- Studying Yiddish and encouraging Yiddish literacy for historical research based on primary documents, including newspapers, literature, and personal and political writings now widely available online, to rebuild Jewish American identity;

-- Singing Bundist, Yiddish folk, and new klezmer songs\*\* that preserve and transmit Yiddish/Bundist values and experience (our inheritance/*yerushe* of lived Jewish experience) to sustain the cultural legacy of our ancestors in the diaspora;

-- Supporting justice for Palestinians and other vulnerable groups – self-determination and physical rebuilding of their lives and culture - being destroyed or threatened by the U.S. supplying or withholding weapons in violation of our own and/or international law;

-- living up to the Workers Circle’s early socialist aspiration of creating “*a shenere un besere velt far ale*” – a better, more beautiful world for everyone, here and elsewhere. Our new Workers Circle/Arbeter Ring of Northern California banner demands “CEASEFIRE NOW – Never Again for Anyone!”

\*International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, now disavowed by its author, Kenneth S. Stern.

\*\*Among them new musical offerings by Yiddishists for Palestine.

## Contributors

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Sarah Norr, an organizer, educator, musician, artist, and mom living in Oakland, California, worked as a labor and community organizer with UNITE HERE and the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy. In 2014, Sarah co-founded BoomShake Music, an Oakland-based organization.

Laura Rosenberg is the founding director of KLEZCADIA – A Safer Shtetl for Klezmer Music and Yiddish Culture (klezcadia.org) and a board member of KlezCalifornia and of Arbeter Ring/Workers Circle Branch 1054.

Joel Schechter is a member of the Workers Circle of Northern California and the new International Jewish Labor Bund, and author of the books *Radical Yiddish*, *Messiahs of 1933*, *Eighteenth-Century Brechtians*, *The Congress of Clowns*, and *Satire*. A different version of the essay here appeared online in *Alte*.

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