



NATIONAL COUNCIL *of* **JEWISH WOMEN**

Reenergizing and Sustaining Ourselves and Our
Movement

February 16, 2021

And you shall keep the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot) for your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give according as God has blessed you. And you shall **rejoice** before God--you; and your son and your daughter; and your manservant and your maidservant; and the Levite who is inside your gates; and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow who are among you; in the place where God will choose to place [God's] name.

(Deuteronomy 16:10-11)

The rest of the Jews, those in the king's provinces, likewise mustered and fought for their lives. They disposed of their enemies... but they did not lay hands on the spoil.

That was on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar; and they rested on the fourteenth day and made it **a day of feasting and merrymaking**. That is why village Jews, who live in unwalled towns, observe the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and make it a day of merrymaking and feasting, and as a holiday and an occasion for sending gifts to one another.

Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far, charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year—the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been **transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy**. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor. (Esther 9:16-22)

“When we acknowledge that we exist in an anti-black world that is set up to ensure we do not live, to choose life and to choose to enjoy any aspect of that life is a radical act. **Amplifying black joy** is not about dismissing or creating an ‘alternative’ black narrative that ignores the realities of our collective pain; rather, it is about holding the pain and injustices we experience as black folks around the world **in tension with the joy we experience in pain’s midst**. It’s about using that **joy as an entry into understanding** the oppressive forces we navigate through as a means to imagine and create a world free of them.”

(Writer Kleaver Cruz, creator of the Black Joy Project)

NCJW Mission Statement

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

V'ahavta

by Aurora Levins Morales

Say these words when you lie down and when you rise up,
when you go out and when you return. In times of mourning
and in times of joy. Inscribe them on your doorposts,
embroider them on your garments, tattoo them on your shoulders,
teach them to your children, your neighbors, your enemies,
recite them in your sleep, here in the cruel shadow of empire:
Another world is possible.

Thus spoke the prophet Roque Dalton:
All together they have more death than we,
but all together, we have more life than they.
There is more bloody death in their hands
than we could ever wield, unless
we lay down our souls to become them,
and then we will lose everything. So instead,

imagine winning. This is your sacred task.

This is your power. Imagine

every detail of winning, the exact smell of the summer streets

in which no one has been shot, the muscles you have never

unclenched from worry, gone soft as newborn skin,

the sparkling taste of food when we know

that no one on earth is hungry, that the beggars are fed,

that the old man under the bridge and the woman

wrapping herself in thin sheets in the back seat of a car,

and the children who suck on stones,

nest under a flock of roofs that keep multiplying their shelter.

Lean with all your being towards that day

when the poor of the world shake down a rain of good fortune

out of the heavy clouds, and justice rolls down like waters.

Defend the world in which we win as if it were your child.

It is your child.

Defend it as if it were your lover.

It is your lover.

When you inhale and when you exhale
breathe the possibility of another world
into the 37.2 trillion cells of your body
until it shines with hope.

Then imagine more.

Imagine rape is unimaginable. Imagine war is a scarcely credible rumor
That the crimes of our age, the grotesque inhumanities of greed,
the sheer and astounding shamelessness of it, the vast fortunes
made by stealing lives, the horrible normalcy it came to have,
is unimaginable to our heirs, the generations of the free.

Don't waver. Don't let despair sink its sharp teeth
Into the throat with which you sing. Escalate your dreams.
Make them burn so fiercely that you can follow them down
any dark alleyway of history and not lose your way.
Make them burn clear as a starry drinking gourd
Over the grim fog of exhaustion, and keep walking.

Hold hands. Share water. Keep imagining.

So that we, and the children of our children's children
may live

Thanks for joining us!