

Heidi Rabinowitz 0:13

[MUSIC] Welcome to the third and final entry in our series, The Mitzvah of Voting. It's October 2020, and your favorite Jewish kidlit authors want all eligible US citizens to vote in the upcoming presidential election and listeners around the world to vote in their own local elections. My author guests will be sharing why they vote, and they'll give you some recommendations for ways to keep democracy healthy. This time we will leave you with some musical inspiration to carry you through Election Day!

Once again, I want to remind you that, as always, the views expressed on this podcast do not necessarily represent the views of our host organization congregation B'nai Israel of Boca Raton, Florida.

One of today's guests, Sarah Aroeste, is not only an author, she's also a singer/ songwriter who performs in Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish dialect that became the tongue of Spanish Jews after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. I'm excited to tell you that Sarah is sharing a full song with us today. The title song from her album Gracia. The word gracia means thanks and grace, but it's also a tribute to the medieval Sephardic heroine Dona Gracia Nasi, who lived in the 1500s and saved hundreds of Jews from the Inquisition. On her website, Sarah says, "I wanted to say gracias to her for leading the way, for serving as a light and role model to me and to so many others. Ultimately I wanted to write a song about empowerment and how inspiring a person Dona Gracia is as are so many other unsung women throughout history and today." Towards the end of the song, you'll hear a clip from a speech given by Gloria Steinem at the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971. I'll put the English translation at BookofLifePodcast.com, but the main idea of the song is that activists of the past inspire us to activism in our own time. I hope that this musical treat, and the words of today's guests, will inspire you to take action and vote.

Gail Carson Levine 2:19

I'm Gail Carson Levine, author of Ella Enchanted, and A Ceiling Made of Eggshells, and I want you to vote. Your vote is important because democracy depends on voters. I'm planning to drop my mail in ballot off at my polling place, dropping it off for extra certainty and mail in ballot, because I'm old and afraid to linger. Beyond voting, my call to action for you is to go to authors and illustrators for children on Facebook, to see what other kids' book creators are doing for the election, then please amplify our voices on your own social media. Let's make voting viral. Thanks for standing with me and voting. Yay, voting!

Leslea Newman 3:15

Hello, my name is Leslea Newman. I am the author of Gittel's Journey, An Ellis Island Story, and I want you to vote. Your vote counts. Your vote matters. You have the right to vote. You also have the responsibility to vote. You have a say in who is running this country. You have an obligation to perform tikkun olam, repairing the world. Help repair the world by electing kind, compassionate, intelligent people who will unite us, not divide us. Many people unfortunately have had their voices silenced and can no longer vote. I'm thinking in particular about Matthew Shepard, who was killed exactly 22 years ago, simply because he was gay. I'm thinking of Brooklyn Deshauna, also known as Brooklyn Deshauna Smith, a black transgender woman who was killed this year on October 7. Please vote. Please, elect people who will protect our laws that protect ourselves. I'm going to vote by placing my ballot, which I received in the mail yesterday, in a collection box where it will be safe, and where it will be counted. And beyond voting, what I'm going to do, and what I encourage you to do if you are able, is to make a donation to the social justice organization of your choice. I am going to make a donation today, to the Matthew Shepard Foundation in Matthew Shepard's memory. And I'm just asking you to please please exercise your right, which so many people have fought so hard for, for you to vote. And I thank you for being a voter, and I look forward to casting my own ballot later today.

Evan Wolkenstein 5:13

I'm Evan Wolkenstein, author of Turtle Boy. Here's my voting method. I voted by mail along with my wife. We sat down together with our ballots and went over the different options and read all the different resources that gave us some guidance into what the different election measures might mean. And we dropped them off at a box, and the reason why we did that is we wanted to reduce the number of steps between voting and counting. And beyond voting, my call to action for you is: there's an organization called SURJ and they do a lot of individual ways of getting involved in combating systematic racism, through getting a lot of people online at the same time and then going over an agenda together and then kind of talking about it, doing education at the same time. There are SURJ chapters all over the place, and they meet twice a week so if you miss one you can join in the next one. And after an hour, it feels like I have contributed to some really meaningful pushes, and to some meaningful organizations. Thanks for being a voter and for helping to make this democracy into a better place through voting and through action.

Sue Macy 6:19

Hi, my name is Sue Macy and I'm the author of The Book Rescuer, and I want you to vote. Your vote is your voice, and it's really important this year, to speak up about how you want things to go in Washington, in your state capitol, in your local community... and voting is the best way that you can do that. I'm voting by mail. I live in New Jersey and this year, I believe, unless you have a disability, you have to vote by mail, but I will be bringing my completed mail in ballot to a special box that they have in my city hall to make sure it's delivered. Beyond voting, I call on you to make sure your elderly neighbors or family members also have the chance to vote. In New Jersey, I can bring as many as three ballots to my polling place or my box. And so I'll be bringing my mother's because she's not mobile. This year, a lot of people are not leaving their houses, so if you can help your neighbors or your family members to deliver their votes, that's terrific. Stay healthy and stay safe and thanks for voting.

Sarah Aroeste 7:41

Hi, this is Sarah Aroeste, author of Buen Shabat, Shabbat Shalom, and I want you to vote. Your vote is important because it's your civic duty. I decided to vote by mail-in ballot in an abundance of caution and because I wanted to vote early and make sure my vote was counted. Beyond voting, my call to action for you is to either text or phone bank, especially through the organization Reclaim Our Vote. Thanks for being a voter. We'll see you at the polls!

Unknown Speaker 8:32

[SONG: GRACIA BY SARAH AROESTE]

Heidi Rabinowitz 12:01

[MUSIC, OUTRO] Thanks for listening to this Book of Life special, The Mitzvah of Voting. Visit BookofLifePodcast.com for links to more information about today's guest authors. Want to share your own thoughts on voting? Leave a comment on our blog or social media, call us at 561-206-2473 or email BookofLifePodcast@gmail.com. As always, the opinions expressed on this podcast are not necessarily those of our host organization Congregation B'nai Israel of Boca Raton, Florida. Our background music is provided by the Freilachmakers Klezmer String Band. Thanks for listening, happy reading, and happy voting.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>