

A ROUGH  
HISTORY OF  
THE WORLD -



JESSY COHEN STYLE.

BY DOUGLAS PAULSON  
TRANSLATED INTO HEBREW BY DINA YAKERSON



DEAR READER,

1/28/13

DINA AND I SPENT TWO WEEKS IN JESSY COHEN. WE MADE FRIENDS AND ENJOYED THE GENUINE GENEROSITY AND HOSPITALITY OF THE PEOPLE WE MET. SOMETIMES WE WROTE DOWN THE THINGS PEOPLE TOLD US AS THEY WERE TALKING, OTHER TIMES WE RECORDED OUR CONVERSATIONS FROM MEMORY. YOU'LL FIND THOSE CONVERSATIONS HERE.

I'VE DECIDED TO OMIT THE NAMES OF THE PEOPLE WE SPOKE TO BECAUSE OF THE PERSONAL NATURE OF SOME OF THE STATEMENTS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE I DIDN'T HEAR IT ALL FIRST HAND - RATHER DINA TRANSLATED FOR ME. IN SOME CASES, PEOPLE SPOKE AMHARIC, WHICH WAS TRANSLATED INTO HEBREW FOR DINA, AND THEN SHE TRANSLATED IT INTO ENGLISH FOR ME.

DESPITE THE FILTERS OF LANGUAGES AND MEMORIES, I BELIEVE THIS BOOK FAIRLY ACCURATELY CAPTURES SOMETHING ABOUT JESSY COHEN AND THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT WHAT IT IS.

DOUGLAS PAULSON

I'M TAKING PHOTOS OF AN OVER-FLOWING TRASHCAN ON A STREET THAT MIGHT HAVE NEVER BEEN PAVED...

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YOU TAKING PHOTOS OF THE PENTHOUSE?

WANT SOME COFFEE?

SURE.

YOU WANT SOME WATER?

JUICE?

A COKE?

HE BRINGS OUT SOME CAKE.

I JUST GOT BACK FROM THE DOCTOR. HE SAYS IF YOU WANT TO DIE, KEEP SMOKING. IT'S BEEN 12 DAYS WITHOUT CIGARETTES...



WHEN WE GOT TO ISRAEL,  
WE STAYED IN A TRANSITION  
CAMP, THEN WE MOVED HERE.

WE ARRIVED IN  
PICKUP TRUCKS

WE SET UP TENTS

AND TODAY  
WE LIVE AS KINGS THANK  
THE  
LORD

DO ETHIOPIANS HAVE A VERY  
DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE?

IT'S THE SAME... JUST MORE  
MODERN.

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WHEN WE ARRIVED,  
THEY TOOK US SOME PLACE IN  
THE NORTH - A TRANSITION CAMP

THEY GAVE US A CABIN

IT HAD NO WATER

NO TOILET

IT WAS SO HOT

WE STAYED THERE FOR ONE MONTH  
THEN WE MOVED TO JAFFA

THEN TEL AVIV

THEN ANOTHER CITY

THEN BAT YAM

THEN KIRYAT SHARET

I AM THE WANDERING JEW

I'VE BEEN WORKING HERE IN  
JESSY COHN FOR 9 YEARS.

I WAS BORN IN IRAQ.  
WE MOVED HERE FROM  
BAGHDAD WHEN I WAS 3.

WORMS  
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THE WHOLE FAMILY  
CAME. THERE WAS  
A BIG IRAQI  
IMMIGRATION.

MY FATHER WAS  
THE ONLY JEWISH  
POLICE OFFICER IN  
BAGHDAD

BUT THEN HE WAS  
ARRESTED - A PRISONER  
OF ZION. THEN THERE  
WERE ANTISEMITIC RIOTS.



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I'VE BEEN HERE FOR  
22 YEARS.

AFTER I SERVED IN THE ARMY  
IN UZBEKISTAN, ME AND  
MY PARENTS CAME HERE.

WE WERE THE  
LAST OF THE FAMILY

WE CAME FROM A PLACE  
WITH VERY FEW JEWS.  
MOST PEOPLE WERE MUSLIM.

WE WANTED A  
BETTER LIFE.

WE WANTED TO COME TO  
THE USA, BUT THEY CLOSED  
THE GATES ... SO WE  
CAME HERE

WE HAD THE VISA  
AND EVERYTHING  
READY, BUT GOT  
TURNED AWAY

I TRIED AGAIN  
IN 2000

THAT HAPPENED  
TO US TOO...



SO THEN WE CAME HERE  
AND LIVED IN A TRANSIT  
CAMP IN TENTS.

MY FATHER WAS A POLICEMAN  
HERE TOO. WE MOVED SEVEN  
TIMES - EVERY TIME HE GOT  
A NEW ASSIGNMENT.

FINALLY, HE WAS  
PUT ON ASSIGNMENT  
HERE IN JESSY COHEN.



WHY?  
IMAGINE!

I'VE BEEN HERE WORKING FOR  
MYSELF FOR 20 YEARS.

IF I WAS IN THE USA WORKING FOR MYSELF  
THIS LONG JUST IMAGINE WHERE I'D BE!

HERE, YOU CAN'T MOVE UP.

I WORK  
AND WORK  
AND WORK

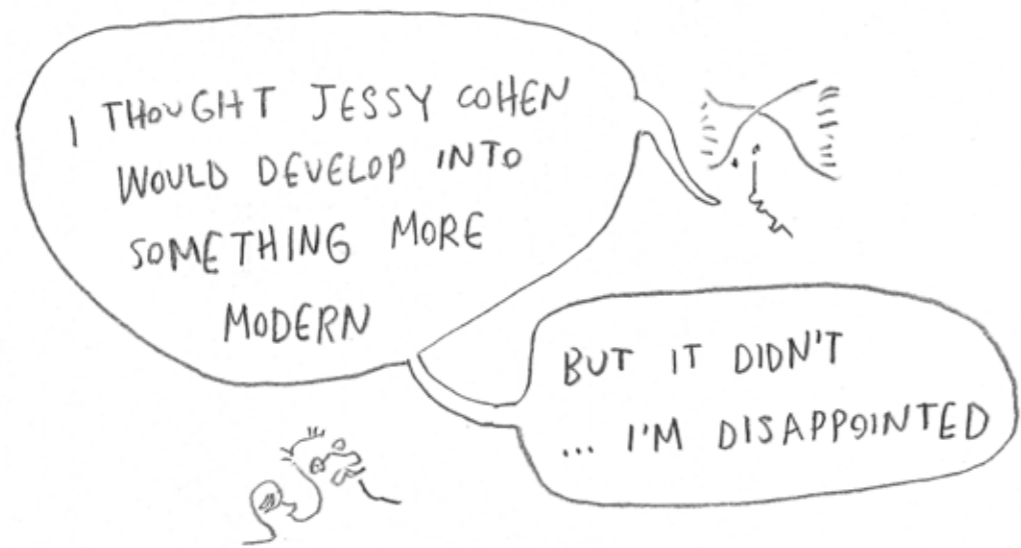
IF I HAD WINGS,  
I'D FLY AWAY.

- BUT TAXES  
ARE TAXES  
EVERYWHERE.

DO YOU HAVE A FUNNY  
STORY ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

NO, EVERYONE HERE IS A CLOWN  
BUT I DON'T HAVE A FUNNY  
STORY FOR YOU.

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WHEN I LIVED HERE  
PEOPLE USED TO BE AFRAID  
TO GO OUT.

BUT I DIDN'T FEEL ANYTHING

THE WHOLE BLOCK WAS A FAMILY

THERE WAS "THE ACADEMIC  
BLOCK" WHERE DOCTORS AND  
LAWYERS LIVED.

THERE WAS A CINEMA WHERE  
THE SHOPPING CENTER IS NOW.

WE WOULD ALSO SCREEN FILMS  
ON THE SIDES OF BUILDINGS

JUST LIKE A DRIVE-IN MOVIE



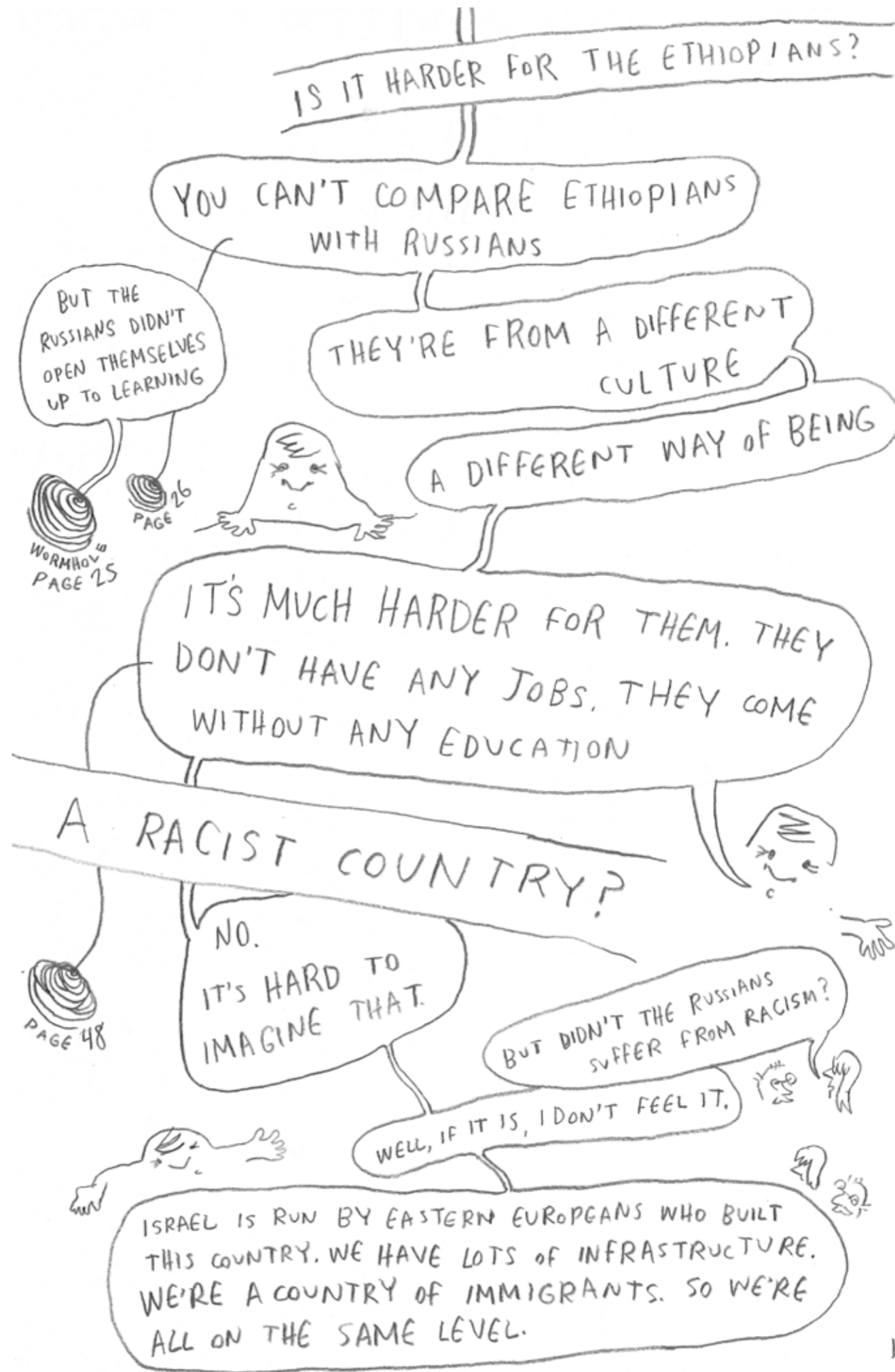
THIS PLACE HAS NO CULTURE.

RUSSIANS CAME HERE  
AND IMPROVED THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD BY  
DEVELOPING IT.

BUT THIS PLACE USED  
TO BE MORE ALIVE

LIKE CHICAGO  
LOTS OF DRUGS AND  
VIOLENCE





MANY YEARS AGO,  
JESSY COHEN HAD  
A BAD STIGMA



IF IT STILL DOES,  
IT'S ONLY TO PEOPLE  
IN TEL AVIV

PEOPLE USED TO COME  
TO THE COMMUNITY  
CENTER AFRAID - THEY  
WOULDN'T PUT THEIR  
BAGS DOWN

WHEN I STARTED WORKING  
HERE, MY BOYFRIEND ALWAYS  
JOKED THAT PEOPLE WOULD  
STEAL MY CAR WHILE I WAS  
INSIDE - AND RETURN IT EACH  
DAY BEFORE I CAME OUT!



JESSY COHEN IS NOTORIOUS  
FOR BEING POOR AND  
VIOLENT.

JESSY COHEN IS A  
TOUGH AREA



THERE USED TO BE  
SHOOT-OUTS

6 OR 7 YEARS AGO IT  
WAS A BIG MAFIA PLACE

BUT I FEEL SAFE. I COME  
TO WORK HERE EVERYDAY!



I LIVE IN THE NEXT TOWN  
SOUTH OF HERE.

I COME HERE TO BUY BREAD  
FOR THE SHABBAT.

THE BAKERY IS VERY GOOD.



HEY WHO ARE YOU?

COME WITH US  
COME SEE WHERE  
WE LIVE.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?  
DO YOU HAVE MONEY?

HERE STEP INTO MY LIVING ROOM.

WE LIVE IN THESE TENTS

THIS ONE IS THE NICE ONE

WE GET POWER FROM  
THE STREET LIGHTS.

Do YOU HAVE MONEY?  
YOU WANT TO SMOKE?

How CAN YOU HELP US?  
WE NEED WORK.

WHAT DOES HELP

HEY, IT'S THE  
PERSON WHO  
CREATES THE  
ENVIRONMENT.

THERE'S NO SCHOOL  
HERE, NO BANK  
NO POST OFFICE

ACTUALLY, THERE IS  
A POST OFFICE - AND  
IT WAS ROBBED 3  
TIMES

CAN YOU GIVE US  
MONEY?

BUT IF YOU  
GROW UP IN  
SHIT, WHAT DO  
YOU EXPECT?

WANT TO  
SMOKE?

DRUG PARTY  
TONIGHT?

BE ACTIVE. CONTRIBUTE.  
DON'T JUST SIT AND WHINE.

YES, A LOT OF PEOPLE  
THINK THEY SHOULD GET  
THINGS FOR FREE

PEOPLE FEEL REJECTED AND  
ANTAGONISTIC TOWARDS JESSY  
COHEN. IT'S A SHAME.

COME TO  
THE COMMUNITY  
CENTER!

THERE ARE  
LOTS OF ACTIVITIES  
AND PROGRAMS!

LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

JESSY COHEN IS LIKE  
A DOG - WAITING ALL  
DAY FOR ITS MASTER  
TO TOSS IT A FEW  
SCRAPS TO EAT.

I LOVE MY JOB.



IT'S HARD WORK. YOU MUST LOVE IT.

PEOPLE COME HERE AND SAY: YOU HAVE TO HELP US!

I WANT TO HELP, BUT WE DON'T HAVE MAGIC.

HERE, WE TEACH A MAN TO FISH - NOT GIVE HIM A FISH.

THE SYSTEM NEEDS TO RESPOND BETTER TO THE NEEDS OF THIS PLACE

BUT WE NEED TO TEACH PEOPLE HOW TO SURVIVE IN IT.



IN THE STREETS THERE CAN BE DRUG CRIME - PEOPLE USING TEENAGERS TO BUY AND SELL DRUGS.



THEY NEED US.

THEY'RE BETTER OFF HERE THAN IN THE STREET.

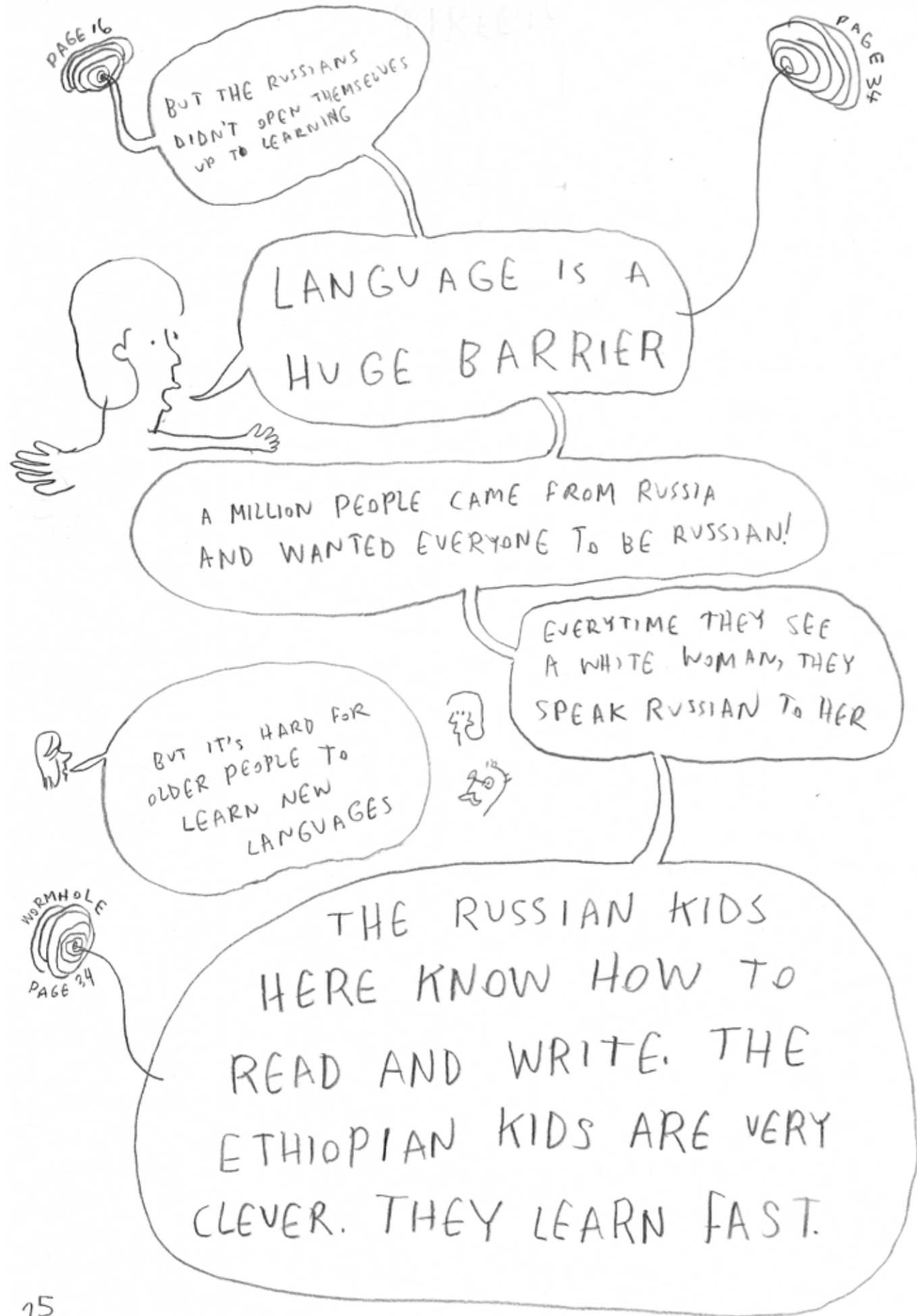
IT'S SAFE HERE AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER

MY WIFE WORKS HERE TOO. I USED TO COME HERE WITH HER AND SIT AROUND WHILE SHE WORKED.

THEY SAID: YOU CAN'T JUST SIT AROUND!

SO NOW I'VE BEEN WORKING HERE FOR 6 YEARS!





WE HAVE AN EXPRESSION:

SLOWLY, SLOWLY  
THE EGG WILL  
LEARN TO  
WALK



IF THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO  
BE HERE AT 9, THEY  
COME AT 9:30 OR 10

AND

PATIENCE IS BITTER,  
BUT ITS FRUITS  
ARE SWEET.

NOW  
I LIVE IN HOLON  
BUT MY PARENTS  
LIVE HERE.







SOME OF US CAME DIRECTLY FROM ADDIS ABBA

SOME CAME THROUGH SUDAN

I CAME THROUGH SUDAN 23 YEARS AGO ...

A NOTE.  
WE SAT IN A SEMI-CIRCLE.  
AT TIMES THE ROOM ERUPTED INTO BIG DEBATES CONDUCTED IN AMHARIC - ABOUT WHAT I HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING.

...MANY PEOPLE DIED ON THAT TRIP.

THE TWO OF US DECIDED TO COME TOGETHER

WHAT RELIGION DO YOU REPRESENT?  
WELL I'M NOT RELIGIOUS, BUT I COME FROM A CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

NO PHOTOS.

WHY?  
MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF CHRISTIANS.

I DON'T THINK THEY WANT TO TALK...

WE CAME TO ISRAEL WHEN I WAS 9.

WE WALKED THROUGH THE JUNGLE FOR 3 WEEKS. THROUGH SUDAN.

WE HAD NO TENTS.

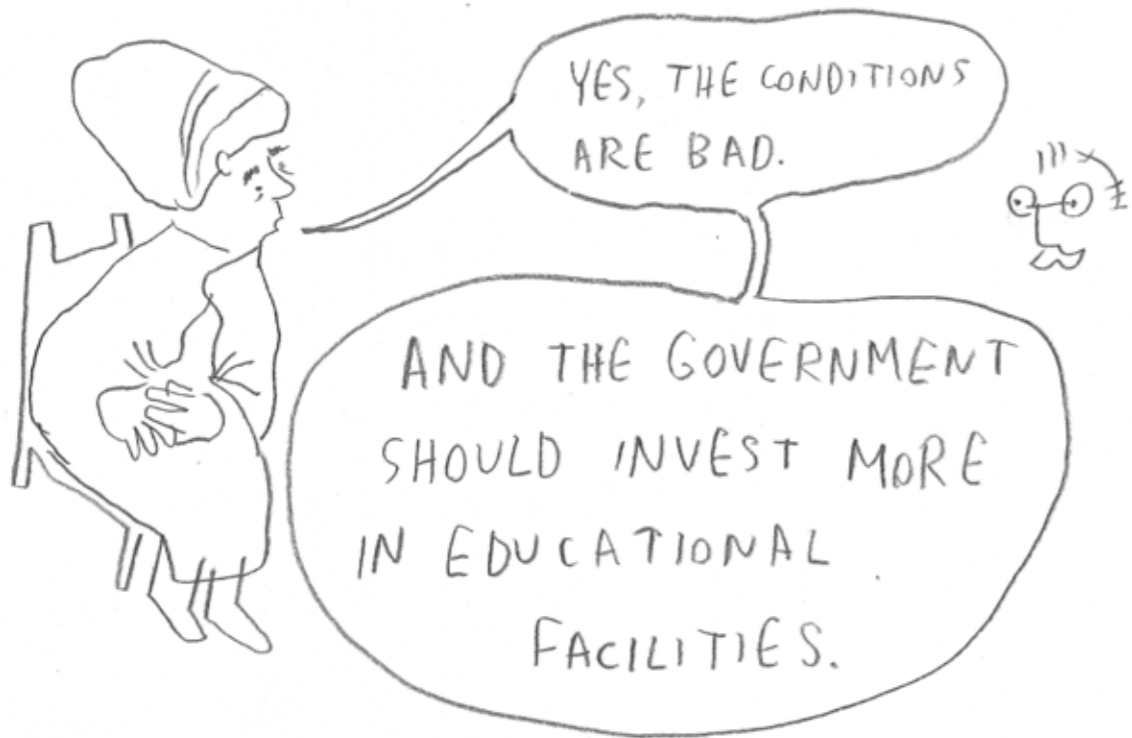
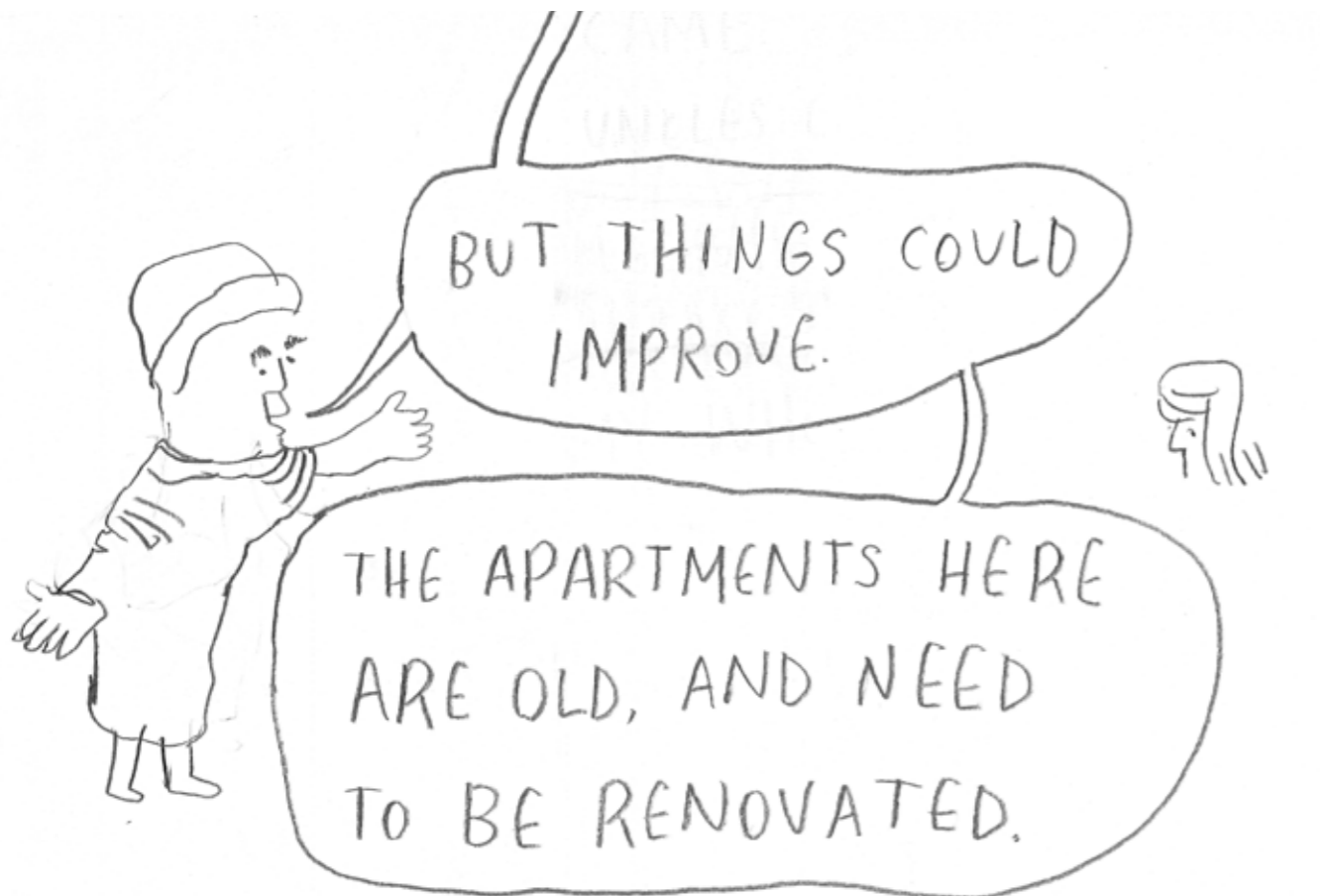




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WORMHOLE



IN ETHIOPIA, WE GREW  
OR MADE EVERYTHING  
WE NEEDED. THE ONLY  
THING WE COULDN'T  
MAKE WAS SALT.

SO THERE, YOU DON'T  
NEED MONEY.



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HERE, YOU NEED  
MONEY.

IF YOU DON'T WORK,  
YOU CAN'T GET WHAT  
YOU NEED BECAUSE  
YOU CAN'T BUY IT.



OUR COMMUNITY  
HERE IS VERY BIG  
AND VERY CLOSE

AND SOMETIMES WE INVITE  
THE NEIGHBORS TO OUR  
WEDDINGS!



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THERE ARE A LOT OF  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN  
LIFE HERE AND ETHIOPIA...



HERE, PEOPLE DON'T  
RESPECT EACH OTHER.

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-ESPECIALLY THE  
YOUNGER PEOPLE.

IN ETHIOPIAN CULTURE, YOU MUST  
RESPECT YOUR PARENTS. IT'S IMPORTANT  
TO CONSULT WITH THEM ABOUT  
EVERYTHING. THE FATHER IS THE  
MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THE  
FAMILY.



I'M ISRAELI NOW,  
BUT I STILL  
RESPECT THE  
FAMILY

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IN ETHIOPIA, WE FOLLOWED  
THE TORAH STRICTLY.  
MORE STRICTLY THAN  
HERE.

FOR EXAMPLE,  
THERE ARE A LOT MORE  
HOLIDAYS HERE.

ANOTHER GOOD EXAMPLE  
IS THE MENSTRUATION  
PRACTICE...


'NIDA'

'NIDA'... - IN THE TORAH IT  
SAYS YOU'RE IMPURE  
WHEN YOU'RE MENSTRUATING,  
AND YOU SHOULDN'T TOUCH  
YOUR HUSBAND, OR PREPARE  
FOOD FOR OTHERS.

VERY RELIGIOUS JEWS  
CAN'T TOUCH ANYONE  
- AND CAN'T HAVE SEX  
FOR A WEEK AFTERWARDS

IN ETHIOPIA, WOMEN HAVE  
TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE  
AND GO STAY IN A  
SEPARATE HOUSE

SOME WOMEN STILL PRACTICE  
THAT HERE.



ONCE THERE WAS A WOMAN WHO WAS COOKING WHILE SHE WAS MENSTRUATING. SHE WAS PREPARING THE BREAD AND PUTTING IT INTO A BIG PILE. SHE STEPPED OVER THE BREAD AND ACCIDENTALLY DRIPPED MENSTRUAL BLOOD ONTO THE PILE - SOAKING IT THROUGH.

A CHRISTIAN PRIEST WAS THERE AND WAS SO DISGUSTED THAT HE CONVERTED TO JUDISM - BECAUSE JEWISH WOMEN ARE THE CLEANEST IN THE WORLD.



THAT'S A TRUE STORY.

AND IT MAKES SENSE. IN ETHIOPIA, YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE CONVENIENCES THAT YOU HAVE HERE. SO YOU HAVE TO BE VERY HYGIENIC

ALSO, YOU GET ENGAGED WHEN YOU'RE 7 OR 8. THEN YOU GET MARRIED AND MOVE IN WITH YOUR HUSBAND AFTER YOUR FIRST MENSTRUATION.

I WAS ENGAGED WHEN I WAS 7.



WOMEN SHOULD  
RUN THE WORLD.

WOMEN TALK THROUGH  
THINGS AND UNDERSTAND  
THE WORLD.

WOMEN NEVER  
WANT THEIR CHILDREN  
KILLED.

PERHAPS.

I RESPECT MY FATHER, BUT  
THERE SHOULD BE EQUALITY  
IN THE FAMILY.

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DOES THAT CONTRADICT THE  
ETHIOPIAN FAMILY STRUCTURE?

BUT WE HAD TO BREAK IT  
OFF WHEN WE CAME HERE  
- BECAUSE WE WERE TOO  
YOUNG TO MARRY  
IN ISRAEL.

THEN I GOT ENGAGED  
TO ANOTHER MAN. WE  
LIVED TOGETHER FOR  
5 1/2 YEARS, BUT THEN  
I BROKE IT OFF.

I REALIZED THAT MARRIAGE  
KILLS LOVE.

AS SOON AS THERE'S MARRIAGE,  
LOVE IS OVER - BECAUSE THEY  
TAKE EACH OTHER FOR GRANTED.

I DIDN'T WANT TO BE LIKE  
MY MARRIED FRIENDS.

YOU CAN JUST LIVE TOGETHER  
AND LEAVE WHENEVER YOU  
WANT WITHOUT ALL THE BUREAUCRACY



IS ISRAEL A RACIST COUNTRY?

YES.

BUT NOT ONLY AGAINST ETHIOPAINS, BUT EVERYONE

FOR EXAMPLE 15 YEARS AGO, WHEN MOROCCANS CAME, ISRAELIS THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH THEIR SKULLS.

BUT WITH ETHIOPAINS IT'S WORSE BECAUSE OUR SKIN IS SO DARK.

THE ISRAELIS LOVE YOU FROM AFAR, BUT WHEN YOU ACTUALLY COME HERE IT'S DIFFERENT...

YEAH...  
IN THE CAR  
IN THE DISCOTHEQUE...



IT'S IRONIC IT'S SO RACIST -BECAUSE THE JEWS ENDURED THE HOLOCAUST.

I USED TO WORK AT A HARDWARE STORE, AND TWO HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS CAME TO MY COUNTER. THEY HAD NUMBERS TATTOOED ON THEIR ARMS.

THE LADY PUT HER MONEY ON THE COUNTER AND DIDN'T WANT TO TOUCH THE CHANGE I TRIED TO HAND HER, SAYING "IF I HAD A CHOICE, I'D GO TO ANOTHER COUNTER."

THIS WAS DURING THE AIDS SCARE IN THE 90s WHEN THEY WERE DUMPING ETHIOPAINS' BLOOD.

WHAT ABOUT RACISM AGAINST OTHER AFRICANS?



WHAT'S THIS ONE?

THAT'S BERBERE - IT'S VERY HOT. THIS ONE HERE IS AN ETHIOPIAN BLACK PEPPER.

HERE'S SHIRO. IT MAKES SAUCE, LIKE HUMMUS: PUT WATER AND A LITTLE BIT OF OLIVE OIL IN A POT AND HEAT IT. STIR IN THE SHIRO. IF IT GETS TOO THICK, ADD MORE WATER!



THEY SHOULD GO BACK WHERE THEY CAME FROM.

WHY DON'T YOU LIKE THEM?

THEY COME HERE AND TAKE OUR JOBS.

I DON'T TRUST THEM.

THEY SHOULD BE SENT BACK IN A HUMANE WAY

IT'S SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST HERE.

THE WOMEN GET PREGNANT HERE ON PURPOSE SO THEY CAN GET A PERMIT TO STAY.

WE'RE JEWISH, THEY'RE NOT.

SEE? ISRAEL CREATES RACISM. THE FLAG SHOULD JUST READ "RACISM."

SEND THEM SOMEWHERE ELSE SO THEY'RE NOT ON THE BACKS OF THE ISRAELIS.

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BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE WAR WITH PALESTINE?

UMM...

YES, THERE SHOULD BE PEACE AND LOVE. BUT IT'S HARD. - THEY RAISE THEIR KIDS TO HATE JEWS

OUR ARMY IS THE MOST HUMANE IN THE WORLD.

WHEN MUSLIMS ARE UNDER CONTROL, THEY'RE OK - THEY SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO HAVE RIOTS.



DO YOU WANT PEACE OR NOT? THAT'S THE QUESTION.

THE RIGHT WING IS THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO THIS COUNTRY.

BIBI MADE US SAFE.

WITHOUT SECURITY THIS IS ALL WORTH NOTHING!

YOU JUST LIKE HIM BECAUSE YOU GET MONEY FROM HIM!

I GET NOTHING

BESIDES

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO ASPIRE FOR SECURITY - WE SHOULD ASPIRE FOR PEACE!



A LOT OF PEOPLE  
HERE WANT CHANGE.

MY SON TRIES TO CONVINC  
ME TO MOVE TO NEW YORK.

MY DAUGHTER MOVED OUT  
BECAUSE HER KIDS NEED  
A BETTER EDUCATION.

BUT I LIKE IT. I HAVE  
EVERYTHING I NEED.



ALL I WANT FROM  
THE STATE IS  
JUSTICE.

INVALIDS GET 3,000 SHEKELS A MONTH.

BUT

THEY SHOULD GET 10,000 A MONTH  
AND NOT FEEL LIKE INVALIDS!

AND IF YOU WORK,  
YOU SHOULD GET  
PAID A REAL  
SALARY.

IF YOU DON'T  
WORK, YOU GET  
THE SAME AMOUNT  
OF MONEY FROM  
WELFARE.





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PEOPLE HERE DON'T LIKE THE MAYOR.

ALL THE NEIGHBORHOODS AROUND HAVE BEEN RENOVATED - BUT NOT THIS ONE.

WHEN THE MAYOR CAME TO VISIT, PEOPLE THREW TOMATOES AND POTATOES AT HIM.

WHEN A PERSON IS CHOSEN TO BE MAYOR, YOU NEED TO RESPECT HIM.

HERE, PEOPLE DON'T RESPECT HIM.



POLITICIANS ALL OFFER THE SAME THING BUT DO NOTHING. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO GETS ELECTED.

I PARTICIPATED IN THE "TENT MOVEMENT" HERE

- AND NOW HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD BECAUSE OF IT.

THE LEADERS OF THE MOVEMENT EXPLOITED MY SITUATION IN ORDER TO GET INTO POLITICS.

BUT THEY HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING. NOW THEY DON'T CARE IF WE EXIST.

NOW LET ME SHOW YOU SOME THINGS...



OVER HERE ARE THE HOUSES MADE DURING THE "RENOVATION."

BUT BIBI STOPPED THE PRODUCTION WHEN HE WAS TREASURER

80% OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS RIGHT WING

THIS GUY HERE KNOWS EVERYONE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

ZOROOD PEOPLE WITHOUT ENOUGH FOOD. THAT'S JESSY COHEN.

SEE THOSE GUYS LIFTING THAT BARREL TO THE ROOF? IN NEW YORK YOU USE A CRANE. HERE IN JESSY COHEN, WE DO EVERYTHING BY HAND. CRANES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE.

HERE'S THE HOUSE I BUILT, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY NEIGHBOR.  
I DON'T SEE YOUR KIDS ANYMORE! WANT TO SEE MY GARDEN?

THIS IS THE MOST NEGLECTED AREA IN HOLON. I CALL THE MAYOR EVERYDAY TO ASK THEM TO PICK UP THE TRASH.

BUT IT'S NOT JESSY COHEN

YES IT IS

NO IT'S NOT

YES IT IS! THE BOUNDARY IS OVER THERE

PAGE 2

ARE YOU A JEWISH BOY?

YOU HAVE A KIND FACE.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU CAN COME OVER FOR COFFEE ANY TIME.

IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND ALL THAT BULLSHIT.

THANK YOU TO  
EVERYONE WHO TOOK  
THE TIME TO TALK  
TO US AND INFORM  
THESE PAGES. I HAD  
A LOT OF FUN IN JESSY  
COHEN.

THANKS TO EYAL DANON, MAI  
OMER, AND THE WHOLE CREW  
AT THE ISRAELI CENTER FOR  
DIGITAL ART. I LOVE WHAT  
YOU DO!

ALSO, EXTRA  
BIG UPS TO  
CHEN TAMIR  
MEIR TATI  
AND SUSAN WOOD  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT





