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The Australian Jewish News is printed by Newsprinters, Woodong, VIC and Spotpress, NSW.

Printpost: No 100007670  
ABN: 54618993967

The Australian Jewish News is published by Polaris Media Pty Ltd.

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## MUSINGS ON 'LIBERATION DAY'

# Here's where the story comes full circle



**ZEDDY LAWRENCE**

“FOR American citizens, January 20th 2025 is Liberation Day.”  
As those words emerged from the lips of the 47th President of the United States last week, I must confess that I was somewhat startled.

Not because I'm an American citizen, nor because I'm startled by much of what Donald Trump says.

But because just three hours earlier, while thinking of a theme for this opinion piece, that very word – ‘liberation’ is what I'd decided upon.

The reason? That evening, back in the UK, my mother and brother were attending a ceremony ahead of Holocaust Memorial Day, marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

Moreover, that evening also saw the release of the first three hostages in stage one of the ceasefire deal. After 15 months of captivity, it was the day of liberation for Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher and Emily Damari.

The coincidence, if indeed it was a coincidence, was compounded by the fact that in 1941, DC Comics – home to the likes of Superman and Batman – had introduced a new female superhero who masqueraded under the name of Liberty Bell. Liberty – what liberation leads to.

Why is this relevant?  
Well, Liberty Bell's real name – when she wasn't wearing her mask and cape – was Libby Lawrence.

And the reason I was up at 4am watching Donald Trump deliver his inauguration speech live and declare it was Liberation Day was because I'd got up to feed my eight-week-old daughter, who just happens to be called, yes, you've guessed it, Libby Lawrence.

And if you're binge reading this column and need another twist to keep you engaged, well here's where the whole story comes full circle.

You'll remember how a few paragraphs ago, I mentioned my



US President Donald Trump speaks during his inauguration at the US Capitol in Washington on January 20.

Photo: Chip Somodevilla/Pool Photo via AFP

mother and brother being at an event marking the 80th anniversary of Auschwitz.

Well, they weren't just there as spectators. The ceremony actually included the first public performance for more than 80 years of three pieces of music by the German composer Heinz Lewin ... my great-grandfather and Libby's great-great-grandfather.

“For too many of our people ... liberation is still a distant dream.”

The songs in question had been composed by Heinz while he was a prisoner in an internment camp called Septfonds in France. With a number of notable operettas and film scores to his name, he'd fled Germany when the Nazis came to power in 1933 and at the outbreak of war was living in Paris, where he was arrested in 1939 as an enemy alien.

Under a French captain who appreciated the arts as well as the talents of many of the Septfonds internees, Heinz became musical director of a group of fellow artists who staged concerts both within the camp and in local towns.

But September 3, 1942 was the day the curtain fell and the music died.

Heinz was among a cohort of prisoners sent to Drancy, and six days later to Auschwitz.

Liberation of the camp would come too late. Two years and 141 days too late. It's believed Heinz was sent to the gas chamber on arrival at Auschwitz or shortly thereafter.

While my great-grandfather may have been murdered, his music lives on And so too, despite the best efforts of the Third Reich, does his family, with the youngest member lying in my arms at the very moment the leader of the free world proclaims Liberation Day.

For too many of our people, however, liberation is still a distant dream. Languishing in the terror tunnels of Gaza, their fate hinging on a precarious ceasefire, for whom the liberty bell will toll is a tragic uncertainty.

Liberation from the tyranny of Hamas also remains out of reach for the people of Gaza, while liberation from the terror of Hamas is far from guaranteed for the people of Israel.

Closer to home, meanwhile, as the sun sets on the week of Australia Day, we may enjoy the liberty denoted by the “and free” in the second line of our anthem, but with heinous antisemitic attacks making headlines every week, the fraying fabric of social cohesion and multiculturalism challenges

the notion that as Australians “we are one”.

In just two weeks, we will mark 500 days since the slaughter, savagery and seizing of hostages of October 7. Five hundred days since hordes of our own countrymen took to the steps of the Sydney Opera House to chant either “Gas the Jews”, “F\*\*k the Jews” or “Where's the Jews” – irrespective of the wording, all designed to taunt and intimidate.

Since then, we've suffered daubings, harassment, violence and arson, with our leaders only now seemingly realising that mere words of condemnation are not enough.

But perhaps the President promising a return to global order, alongside the release of hostages and the convening of a national cabinet on antisemitism are indicative of a new era. Perhaps Liberation Day has indeed dawned.

Either way, at the very least, I pray that Libby Lawrence grows up with both Israel and Australia free from terror and Jew hatred.

And that in contrast to the horrors of the past 15 months, true to the title of an operetta composed by Libby's great-great-grandfather in 1910, *Morgen Wieder Lustig* ... Tomorrow will be happy again.

**Zeddy Lawrence is the executive director of Zionism Victoria.**

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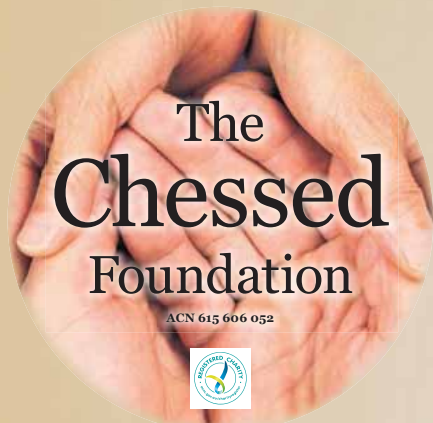
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