

Menas ir kultūra

MEDRAŠTIS



2022 01 | Nr. 16



BE AN UPSTANDER

An interview from overseas
with **Nance Morris Adler**



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10 kl.

Šis interviu – anglų kalba. O to priežastis labai paprasta – žmogus, su kuriuo kalbėjau, yra mokytoja, istorikė Nance Morris Adler, mūsų mylimo mokytojo Simono draugė, gyvenanti Sietle, JAV. Su ja bendravau angliškai, todėl, siekdama kuo tikslesnio ir originalesnio pašnekovės žodžių perteikimo, ryžausi nieko neversti į lietuvių kalbą. Tikiuosi, tai nesukels mūsų skaitytojams pernelyg daug nepatogumų, o kaip tik leis geriau suprasti pašnekovės idėjas ir pasaulėžiūrą.

Our zoom meeting with Nance started with Simonas telling us a story about how they became friends – they met in Budapest in 2017, in a seminar where they both studied about the holocaust, civil rights and Jewish heritage in Europe. They bonded over a radio station called “KEXP” that

they found out both listened to (if some of the students remember the famous Unicorn shirt that Simonas wears – that's a gift from Nance). Nance lives in Seattle, has a Master's degree in Jewish studies and is a holocaust expert. For the last 17 years, she has been working as a Jewish educator in a Jewish community school.

While talking to her about the various problems teachers face in the Western world, like low salary and undervaluation, I realized she is more of a mentor to her students than just a teacher who has no real interest in teaching kids about the world around them. Nance told me that her goal as a teacher is to make good people – Upstanders are what she calls them. It's a name for a person who takes positive action when faced with injustice. But what is the secret recipe for raising humans like that? Nance does that by giving students examples of individuals, who have made a difference in the world. She inspires them to know that if one person with no power or money could save hundreds of lives or change the course of history, they can do that too. Her classroom is a safe space for all of her students and a place where hard and meaningful conversations happen.

One of the other things that amazed me about her is how much she's seen. Nance travels a lot. She has lived all over the US, taught Australians about her teaching, and visited most of Central and Eastern Europe. She started her travels to Europe in 2014 with Centropa, an organization through which she later met Simonas, and then continued coming back to Europe to seek knowledge about Jewish history. “Partially it's the learning, exploring, and seeing what's there. I don't want to see the big sights, I want to discover. And

as a historian, I want to discover places where I know what happened there". Nance has a great deal of friends all over Europe and that's one more reason for her to keep coming back. Traveling also benefits her students – they get to see lots of pictures taken by Nance from places they only learn about in the classroom. *"It really brings it home to my students, when at the end of me showing a film about two sisters in Belgrade who were saved from the holocaust by a Serbian orthodox priest, I'm able to hold a picture of me with one of those sisters. It takes it from being just a story to being real and helps my students to connect with them. A lot of my travels is about being able to bring those connections back home to my classroom"*

I had to ask Nance one question that I have been wondering about – is Jewish a nationality or a religion? Turns out, it's hard to form a definitive answer even to an expert. Apparently, Jewish people were originally a nation that practiced the same religion. In today's world, the idea of a country having one and the same religion could seem

strange, although historically it is not. Nance told me that when Israel was caught in wars and conquests, Jews dispersed to other parts of the world. They were left with nothing but their religion, which was the only national identity they had left. *"For most of history if Jews converted to other religions, then they were no longer considered Jewish. It's only with Hitler that the idea of Jewish being a race or something that can't be undone by conversion to another religion takes a stronghold. With Hitler, it had to do with their blood"*. In modern times, it's still confusing whether Jews are a religion, a nation, or ethnicity. It's a unique cultural phenomenon and even Jewish people themselves have different opinions on it.

What is your nationality?

My nationality is that I am a United States citizen. I do not hold that as a huge part of my identity though – I try to be a citizen of the world and have a global outlook. I think this is necessary to get a place where we can all live in harmony and with the concern for all humanity in mind. Being Jewish is a big part of my identity as well, but is not my nationality or my race. We talked about Judaism as a religion or a people or an ethnicity already. For me it is my religion and my culture and informs much of my personal philosophy and actions.

What problems do people in the Jewish communities (or in the world right now) face?



Antisemitism is still a huge issue worldwide. Much of this is really aimed at Israel or is as a result of the actions of Israel. So one problem is people holding individual Jews who are not even citizens of Israel responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. This does not happen for other nations/people. If Eng-

land does something people don't approve of, no one goes out and attacks people of British background living in France or the US or elsewhere. Jews are held responsible for the actions of Israel but not all Jews are Israeli or even have a close connection to Israel. There are issues faced by Jews that are internal to the Jewish people – like issues of "who is a Jew." Traditionally, according to Jewish religious law (Halacha) you are a Jew if your mother was Jewish or you have converted to Judaism through the proper process. Since the Holocaust Reform Judaism has recognized those whose father was Jewish as well. And converts face questions about who oversaw their conversion and are they really Jewish. This is a huge issue in Israel for people who came from the former Soviet Union who have no supporting documents to show that they have Jewish ancestors.

What are your views regarding the conflict between Palestine and Israel?

Not going to say a lot on the issues between Israel and Palestinians – it is an extremely complex issue – I usually say "I don't need anyone else to argue with, I can have a three-way argument about this issue with just myself." Ultimately, both Israelis and Palestinians deserve a country, they deserve to live in safety and security. Israel has a right to exist and Palestinians have a right to a state. How we get there, I have no idea.

Is there any relation between the persecution of Jewish people and the Black lives matter movement? Is there support between these two groups of people?

Historically the Jewish community and the Black community have worked together – during the Civil Rights Movement there were many Jews who were very involved in the movement. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and other rabbis, marched with Martin Luther King Jr in Selma and spoke at the March on Washington. Today this relationship is not so simple. Jews have gained acceptance into "white" society in the US and are not seen as obvious allies by the Black community. The BLM movement also identifies with all "oppressed" people and so is anti-Israel, and this has caused a lot of problems here for Jews wanting to support BLM. I think we should be clear and obvious allies, but I also understand that the position of most Jews has changed for the better in this country while that of BIPOC individuals has not.

Since you travel so much – have you noticed whether people in various countries all over the world have different views on the problems of ethnic minorities or human rights in general?

In my travels, and even more so in my conversations with my friends in many countries, I have learned a lot about the views of different places towards minorities, refugees, and Jews. Even among the people I meet who are educators teaching about the Holocaust, there is often some underlying prejudice towards Jews, or towards another minority. It is always shocking to me that someone who has learned the history of the Holocaust, or other genocides, can maintain preju-

dice towards any group. I have had wonderful, and not so wonderful, experiences being the first Jewish person people have met. I feel like I am representing a whole group and want to make sure that I leave a positive impression of Jews and Judaism on each person.

I have found that those who have lived through war or other major social upheaval have a very different way of viewing the world and many do not want others to experience what they have. For sure different countries have different feelings, and knowing the history and experiences of each country or group of people can help one understand why they have those feelings and perhaps help them process their biases and move towards being more accepting. Not expecting everyone to think like me is vital and knowing/seeking to understand their history and experiences is vital.

Do you think it is possible to live in a world where basic human rights are ensured for everyone and are never violated?

I would absolutely like to say that I believe we could have a world where everyone has enough and is treated equally. I know though that that would take a HUGE amount of change in our current way of doing things to be even remotely possible. The world's resources would need to be equitably distributed and greed and selfishness would need to vanish. Everyone needs to be lifted up and feel secure in their own needs at the same time. People fear that someone else doing better, getting more rights, automatically means they are losing something. Until this changes, I don't see how we can have a just and equitable world.

What do you think is the best way for people to fight for their rights and be heard?

I think that being who you want everyone else to be and really modeling that behavior all the time is one way to be "heard." I wear T-shirts, badges, hats all the time with a message on them. Small things, but people ask about them and I can have a moment to make a difference in their thinking.

Making use of the political process available to you to elect and support people who think like you is important. Speaking up and working to fix local and smaller problems will create change that can grow. Being an Upstander and helping the oppressed, speaking out against injustice and

basically constantly reminding yourself and others that a better world is possible. Having a network of like-minded people to support you and to keep you from losing hope and giving up is vital as well. Change can be slow, but it does happen if people keep pushing for it.

Mokiniai rašo



Dailės technikos, jų paieškos ir laidotuvės

Darija Slivko,
7 kl.

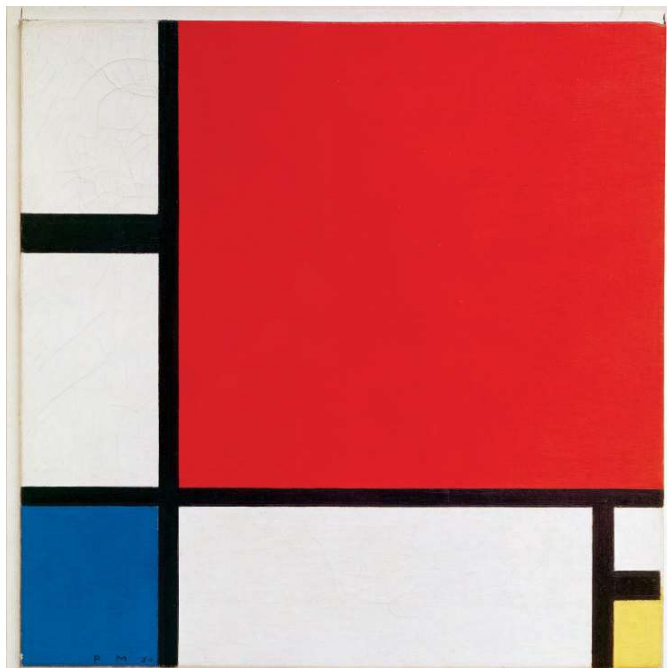


Van Gogh

Kai galvojate apie dailės būrelį, daugelis įsivaiduoja mokytoją, piešiančią nosį ir aiškinančią, kaip tai padaryti. Bet aš kaip žmogus, jau nuo dviejų metų lankantis dailės mokyklą, galiu lengvai tai paneigti.

Dailės būreliai yra skirti ne tam, kad išmoktum „gražiai“ piešti (daugelis mano, kad gražus piešimas yra realybė). Dailės būreliai moko plačiau mąstyti (think outside of the box), arba neapsiriboti stereotipais. Dailės būrelyje taip pat galima atrasti sau patinkančią techniką, tarkime, Vincent Van Gogh naudotą monotipijos techniką ar Piet Mondrian naudotą abstrakciją.

Bet tuomet iškyla klausimas: ar galima pamesti sau patinkančią techniką, savo kūrybiškumą? Atsakymas yra – žinoma!



Piet Mondrian