

# Moments with Miriam



[www.diemer.ca/Miriam/MiriamMoments.html](http://www.diemer.ca/Miriam/MiriamMoments.html)

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### The Heart of Toronto

**Jeremy Wildeman**

It is hard to convey how important Miriam has been to me in my own journey, and our journey together supporting human rights.

What is funny is that I cannot fully remember when I first met her. I think this is because it feels like she has always been a part of my life, and will always be a part of it.

For me, she is synonymous to Toronto, both at the heart of it and as the heart of it. She embodies for me what a person should aspire to become: a kind and committed advocate of social justice and humanitarianism, going above and beyond to help make better the lives of those around her better, while trying to understand the specific nuances that brought them there.

That came through with the constant support she offered to me as I struggled for years founding a charity working in Palestine. That support ranged from offering to host me or people working with me, fundraising and donating, offering volunteer and morale support, offering a home to my luggage as I wandered the globe and hosting me indefinitely while I waited on a visa. She has also always been someone brilliant to spend time with, to complain to (or with), to discuss world events with, to share pancakes or coffee with, and for connecting me to brilliant interesting people (not the least being Ulli).

Every day with Miriam is a great day. She is one of the most lovely and fantastic people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

Thank you for everything, Miriam!

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### Poem learned by heart

**Martha Baillie**

October, on Lake Killarney, we were four (you, Sharon, Anne, and me) and Sharon brought this poem, which we all tried to memorize over the course of four days, paddling, swimming (who's that swimming in the frigid water? A seal? No! It's Miriam, heading out, farther, farther...come back...), dipping ginger cookies in whiskey, and listening through the membrane of a tent for approaching bears....



**Through a Glass Darkly**  
**by Michael Symmons Roberts, from Drysalter**

Mist can be a form of mercy,  
all precision gone, all detail lost.

Cataracted hawks hunt woods  
for motion-blur, then stoop

into the slipstream of their prey.  
I pray for days like these,

when cars are lit corteges.  
As for oceans, fog is respite

from the ache of holding surface  
as a clear line named horizon.

Forensic summer gone, now we  
live in close-up: flaked face of brick

frostbitten, verdigris and icicles  
on statues. A world drawn tight.

Look up: stars are gone. It's just us.



## A friend, ally and partner

**Robert Massoud**

What is the world going to be like without a Miriam Garfinkle walking in it and among us? It is all the poorer because she loved and cared for nature and for people. She also loved justice and had the courage to stand up for it regardless of cost or consequences. It is an understatement to say “Miriam was courageous” - she was and also so much more. She was loving, kind, considerate, fair, dedicated, tireless, musical, painterly and above all she was a friend to so many in many situations and circumstances.

For me she was the friend, an ally and partner in the work of Zatoun, fair trade olive oil from Palestine. From our first meeting in 2004, she adopted Zatoun as her favorite projects for doing battle against the injustice committed against Palestine. Miriam was an original director and board member of Zatoun. The first six years of monthly board meetings were at her kitchen table. Through her front door passed many \$100,000s of olive oil but more importantly many friendships were made and renewed. Everyone knew and loved Miriam. She spared no effort, no words in her dedication to justice or to Zatoun.

I can only be grateful for the day at the rally up Yonge street when we ended up together holding a banner. Miriam came into my life not just as a comrade in struggle but as a true friend in life. I am grateful for the almost 15 years of being held in Miriam's vast spirit and generosity and love.

What is the world going to be like tomorrow? It will still be here and the struggle will continue but we will have Miriam Garfinkle helping from another place - an inspiration and a model of how to be in the world.

Miriam we will miss your voice and conviction beside us but now we can feel you behind us.







## Dear Miriam

anne egger

Compassion  
 Commitment  
 Empathetic  
 Outspoken  
 Mighty  
 Feisty  
 Somewhat stubborn  
 Political activist and agitator  
 Hardest swimmer of all  
 Hilarious  
 Painter  
 Photographer  
 Birdwatcher  
 Musician  
 Dancer  
 Pianist  
 Mother, Partner, Grandmother  
 Canoeist  
 Cyclist  
 Delivery person (only Palestinian goods)  
 oh yes a physician to boot  
 Prize waffle maker

This list is clearly not finished, but I am running out of breath naming these wonderful and essential qualities, dear dear Miriam, you nourish us all in so many ways.

anne

## **Dear Beautiful Gentle Courageous Miriam**

**Marjorie Robertson**

I salute your effervescent spirit, your joie de vivre and positive energy combined with creative strategic knowhow and steadfast commitment to work for peace and justice, especially for Palestinians. I salute your broad commitment to health in all its dimensions for individuals, communities and societies. I salute the clarity and effectiveness of your writing which brought new insights to and motivated so many. I salute your sterling example to live fully and well through adversity.

May you feel enveloped by the love and admiration of all the people whose lives you have enriched and inspired. May comfort and peace attend you.

Sincere thanks to Ulli Diemer for sharing the loving tributes to Miriam and the archive of her articles and essays. What an impressive legacy!

Sincerely,

Marjorie Robertson

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## Shebahonaning (Killarney)

**martha**

Gorgeous Miriam, I am so grateful that you entered my life, October, 2008, here, on these rocks.



## Shebahonaning again?

**martha**

2008, 2009, 2012, 2013...we just couldn't get enough. And now we had to filter our drinking water, since you insisted:)...and oh, the stories you told, and oh how you sang, and hungered for justice and a better world, and you gave me a new lens for looking, and you listened with such care, then weighed, then spoke fearlessly, then laughed, then dove into the lake. Thank you. Miikwec.





## Walking and talking

**Margie Sumadh**

Miriam - we walked together in several rallies.

You talked me about my cancer treatment and how it might affect me. You walked with those seeking justice - the Palestinians, the immigration detainees and so many others.

You walked with the United Church folk trying to get a resolution through their own assembly - even as you were recovering from surgery. You sold endless boxes of Zatoun oil.

You have a beautiful smile, an insistent resilience that will never fade. You have the courage of a lioness and the compassion of a physician, a mother, a partner, a friend. So much richer to have walked and talked with you.

Your footprints remain.

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## Chickadees

**Brian & Michael**

Miriam:

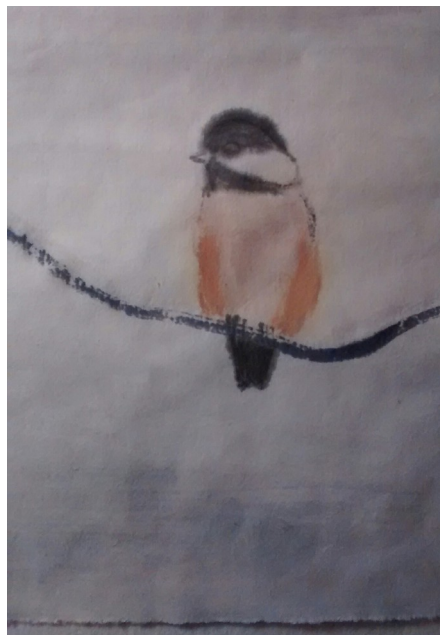
A big life, bold. Too short but so full.

Irrepressible, unquenchable, irreplaceable.

You made sparks.

You will leave a very big gap in a darkening world.

Chickadees always bring you to mind.



## **my favourite miriam quotation**

**Kathy Hardill**

Dearest Miriam, have been thinking of you so very much. I treasure the time we spent working together to care for patients - i miss those days! and i miss hanging out in your delightful company.

Glancing through Ulli's web page, i love the letter your 8 year old activist self wrote to Kennedy and Kruschev!

I came across an email you sent me about what you called "the latest grotesqueness" in the pink ribbon BS - with a link to israeli fighter jets adorned with pink ribbons - ugh. Grotesque indeed.

I am inspired by you dear Miriam! and i love what you wrote at the end of that email: "The world is a mess we know but we must find a way to live in that reality and yet maintain our joy in life."

You are one of the most joyful women i have had the good fortune to meet on this crazy journey - i love you Miriam!

xo kathy

## **Miriam always was thinking of others**

**SandraLaya Ruch**

My heart feels heavy and so full of sadness but it is so easy to share beloved memories of time with Miriam.

She was always so supportive and so generous of spirit.

Around Pesach 2009, I had first degree burns on my arm. I bumped into Miriam at an event and she arranged for me to come to her office to have her nurse bandage it properly and then arranged for daily homecare for another week or two. She made a few phone calls and found me a family physician. So generous of her time.

Later that week, we attended a rally and the Zionist contingency were very rowdy and several times someone grabbed at my bandaged arm. Miriam kept her eye on me and stayed near me suggesting that I go home early. She was always so kind and so caring.

## For Miriam

**Melissa Paterson**

Dear Miriam,

From the moment I met you, I felt such a kinship with you. I so admired your passion for and commitment to social and political justice, both here and abroad, and was moved by your love and compassion for those less fortunate and for the patients you cared for over so many years. Your love of nature was also an inspiration. I will treasure the photos you shared of beautiful birds and trees and for the special pictures you sent to me when you and Ulli returned from your trip north of Superior, including this one of you sitting in front of an easel, part of an art installation on the Group of Seven. So delightful!

I am grateful for all of our wonderful chats and get-togethers and will miss you immensely. You are such a bright light.

Much love and hugs into eternity,

Melissa





## **The world is a better place because Miriam was here**

**Tony Souza**

I only knew Miriam through her activists work. We were on many a march/meeting together. She lived her beliefs and for me she was a great comrade and example.

Her work will be remembered and I know the world is a better place because Miriam was here. She showed so much respect, warmth and caring. She was an inspiration to all of us. We will continue your work and struggle Miriam, you enriched the lives of so many people. We share your belief that there is no peace without justice. We will carry out your legacy.

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## **Thank-you Miriam for just being there and caring and listening**

**Jessica Deutsch**

I became close with Miriam through my mother, Judith Deutsch. Miriam became a part of our family, and shared so much love for all of us, as well as my nieces and nephews. She was a huge support during a time when I was going through depression and insomnia.

She and Ulli offered for me to stay at their house while they went camping, and I was able to get back on my feet during that time.

Afterwards, she would have me over for dinner or tea, and she just listened and was so loving and helpful. I feel like she is an aunt, and very much a member of our family.

Thank-you Miriam for just being there and caring and listening. I love you.

- Jessica



## Canoe Trips in Killarney

**Anne Egger**

For a number of years, Miriam was part of a small group of women -- Anne, Sharon, Martha, and Miriam -- who went on a canoe trip in early October.



*It's cold, but we're happy.*



*Swimming in a lake in October? Nothing would hold Miriam back!*





*Miriam loved being in a canoe*

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## **Lupines**

**Ulli**



*Enjoying the lupines, Signal Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland, Summer 2015.*



## **An incredible woman**

**Andrea Meeson**

An incredible woman, physician and activist and someone with such compassion for others. I knew her through Beit Zatoun and also her work with a woman with severe addiction, who we knew mutually and whose life was undoubtedly improved and prolonged by Miriam's direct and dedicated intervention.

I will remember her warmth, her conviction and her huge generosity of spirit.

Rest in power dear Miriam,

Andrea

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## **She has inspired many**

**Joyce Nelson**

I happen to love uppity Canadians, especially uppity Canadian women, and Miriam Garfinkle is one of the most uppity Canadian women I have ever met. For years she was my family doctor, and then my friend. She has long been a smart, savvy activist on many issues and she has inspired many with her bold thinking and her caring heart. We have been so blessed to have her in our midst and I personally am so thankful for her.

With love,  
Joyce Nelson

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## **Wonderful Miriam**

**Judy Deutsch**

Dearest Miriam,

There is so much to remember and love about you. So many little details of everyday life, and so many grand and even overwhelming details about the larger world.

Being with you and talking with you has always been about heart and passion. You have such deep feelings about everything and everyone and so much honesty -- to see so much with open eyes. So many loves: of your children, of Ben, of Ulli, and of swimming, watching birds, walking, dancing, music. And much anger: social injustice, medical negligence, Zionism and hypocrisy, crushing poverty and discrimination.

There's so much to remember. Right now I'm thinking of the music you've talked about most recently -- Kol Nidre, and Blowin' in the Wind. And your self-knowledge.

There's so much more to treasure and remember about you.

Love, Judy

## Sweetness, kindness, and loveliness

Suzanne Weiss and John Riddell

Two years ago, John Riddell and I spent some time with Ulli and Miriam in their backyard. We admired the birds that visited them in their lush garden and the proud overhanging trees. We had brought them a plant, and in turn Miriam presented us with a potted jasmine. It had not done too well, Miriam said, advising us that “it needs some tender words,” She knew John as an accomplished plant-whisperer and hoped it could make a difference.

In fact, the jasmine was merely dormant. In a little while it sprouted new branches and burst into flower. Since then our jasmine has blossomed a number of times, sending a lovely fragrance to those passing her. I think of Miriam each time I look at the plant. It evokes a feeling of sweetness, kindness, and loveliness that is Miriam.

### Miriam

Abeer

Miriam, thank you so much for our friendship and I am profoundly grateful that we met. You are so truly special and dear to my heart. I remember when we first met, beyond connecting on our shared political values, I felt you’re one of those souls who just resonated deeply. I’m sure a lot of others who’ve been fortunate enough to know you, feel the same way. You are a powerful, inspiring, generous, loving, kind, joyful presence in my life and those of others. You’re part of my chosen fam and have been an incredible friend, mentor, and supporter.

With you and only you, i’ve been able to experience this beautiful, funny example and combo of things life: geeking out about the night sky!, chatting endlessly about the wonders of murmurations, successfully spotting owls and eagles with your binoculars, learning about guerilla community gardening + techniques, seeing lupines for the first time ever!, delighting in and being spoiled rotten by your epic waffle brunches, sharing and disclosing the personal, worlds colliding at my sis’s wedding after-party, social justice organizing & activism, healthcare work...

You are so loved. Thank you Miriam for being who you are and everything you’ve done.



*At a migrant justice OHIP for All demo in Toronto*





*At the overnight campout outside the Israeli consulate*



*Surrounded by lupines at High Park*

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## Standing up for justice and human rights

Smadar



*Miriam often made her own signs to take to demonstrations so that she would be able to say exactly what she wanted to say.*

## The painter

Ulli



*Miriam shows Ulli her latest painting. Josie's cottage, Bruce Peninsula, 2008.*

## Mom and Ben Playing Piano

Simon

Mom taught Ben a fascination with the piano very early on. She never seemed to tire of his minor keys (pun not intended), nor his insistence on turning the page of music. When he finished his dinner and \*cough\* insisted on being taken out of his chair, she would always take him to go play.



## **Joy in what is rather than fear in what might come**

**Sarah Vance**

I got to know Miriam a little bit through several different contexts: when we worked together on the Special Diet, when we were both supporting people from tent city, and later, when we were both going through breast cancer.

Miriam has served me as an example of how it IS possible to live a principled life, to stay true to your beliefs and make different kinds of contributions at different points in life and that all those things have value.

But the moment I remember most tenderly is when we ran in to each other some time after we had each undergone breast cancer treatment. She smiled at me with such warmth, looked me in the eyes and said, "Look at us! We are ALIVE."

Thank you for reminding me to find joy in what is rather than fear in what might come. What an honour it's been to share space with you.

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## **Passionate about her activism and compassionate with her comrades**

**Ben Peto**

My fondest memory of Miriam comes from the day that we occupied the Israeli Consulate back in 2009 to protest the war on Gaza. Miriam was a big part of the planning and strategizing for that very powerful action and was our media spokesperson the day of. We could not have pulled it off without her.

Miriam has the rare ability to be passionate about her activism and compassionate with her comrades. It is a gift to be able to harness anger productively to fight injustice, while remaining patient and generous with those around you.

Our movements are stronger because of Miriam and we will continue to be inspired by her work and carry on her legacy.

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## **You have always been an example of courage and compassion**

**Glen Hornblast**

Dear Miriam:

Is this goodbye? No, I can't believe that - it's too sad. Or will we see you on the other shore some day? I tend to believe that. I've written many songs with that message in it - one for a musical friend who died tragically: a song for Karen Gamble called "Little Sister" -

"Carry on Little Sister,  
Carry on, you're going home  
Yes, we'll meet you in the Garden of the Lord'  
At the end of the road ..."

Or a song I wrote recently for my dear Mom who passed away about 10 years ago called "Just Like The Rain": it goes:

"Just like the rain/  
we fall into the ground and disappear/  
Just like the rain/  
We live for just a moment/  
Then we're here and gone/  
Just like a song/  
Just like the rain."

Yes I think we will meet again. Somehow Miriam. While we were merely friends, our lives have been intertwined for all these years. From when I first met you in high school, when you were Dave Chapkin's girlfriend. You were very cute - and I loved that you were intelligent and political. Not very many of the girls I grew up with were political at all. And then later on, when you became a doctor, I knew you through various connections in your medical practice. How strange life is.

As I heard about your social justice work through the years, I was so proud of you for your defence and involvement in the Palestinian cause - you were always fighting for "social justice" wherever you found yourself. You have always been an example of courage and compassion.

So you have left a legacy, dear Miriam, you have left a fine example of how to live your life, for your friends, for your children, for your devoted partner Ulli - yes we will miss you - but we will always remember you in our hearts. And I will think of you when I sing those songs.

With much love,

Glen Hornblast

## **Miriam was a blessing to all of us**

### **Karin Brothers**

Miriam is an extraordinary human being who was an inspiration to everyone who was lucky enough to know her.

I valued and was educated by our personal talks, but I was blown away by her tireless dedication and energy to justice.

Miriam -- while she was ill -- attended every day of the Toronto Conference AGM in 2009, making a huge contribution to the passage of three stunning United Church resolutions: BDS, Cultural and Academic boycott of Israel, and calling for the honoring of Fourth Geneva obligations.

She showed tremendous spirit at that event because the Chair kept trying to shut her down. I believe that her passion for speaking out was a powerful statement in itself for everyone.

She had also contributed significantly to the previous passage of the BDS motion before it reached that Conference level, not only giving her testimony, but also going the extra mile by visiting the tables of those voting to answer their concerns.

Miriam was also articulate enough to get important letters to the Star editor published.

I love Miriam and will miss her.

Karin Brothers

Thank you, Ulli, for giving us the space to share our memories and give her our blessings.

.Miriam has led an enviable life of service and dedication to justice

## To Miriam, With Love

Nanky

Dear Miriam,

I've felt incredibly lucky to be able to build beautiful memories together and I wanted to tell you about a few of them and the ways I feel you've helped shape me into the person I am today.

### **The medical student you saved**

I remember when I was going through my core psychiatry rotation, largely terrified at the state of our mental health system and contemplating yet again leaving medicine. And then one day, you walked into the inpatient setting looking to connect with a client on your way home from work. You weren't able to say hi to the client herself but you spoke with her psychiatrist and advocated for her, letting the psychiatrist know that you were there and able to take the call should they have any questions going forward. You spoke about your client in a dignified and compassionate way; focusing on her resiliency and the injustices she had lived through, cutting through all the ways the system had deemed her broken, not the society she lives in. You also brought with you a calmness with your smile, disrupting the heartache kind of day I was having. I had already known you for a few years now through your activism but I remember thinking that day, I'd like get to know Miriam better. I remember asking myself: how has Miriam remained so caring and thoughtful despite all the ways the practice of medicine is meant to burn us all out. I would later experience all the ways you have remained a passionate human being, care giving for everyone around you from patients to friends. I hope I can carry with me the love you extend to all those around you and the passion with which you have lived your life.

### **The caring mentor and friend you are**

There are so many other memories that always return to me at random and not so random times. Like the time we were all freezing on route back from a rally against immigration detention and you were supporting someone with their frostbitten hands. Or the times we've sat in your backyard eating and watching the birds.

I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to share many meals, laughter, anger, strategy, joy, and sadness together. I also have a strongly held memory of you telling me, as we ate Indian food together somewhere (maybe Banjara?!) how deserving I am of love for all aspects of me. I cant tell you how much that meant for me then and now. From our long conversations about the state of this world, from Palestine to Kashmir, to family and relationships to activism; you taught me through your action just how and why building honest authentic relationships is a necessary and central aspect to any and all struggles for justice. I will forever cherish all the ways we could talk about things from direct action tactics to ravens and hiking to immigration detention to ceramics and painting (especially all your rock paintings :) and flowers and the importance of community health centres all in one conversation.

Its really hard to put into words all the ways you've made me feel loved. I have enjoyed your company immensely and I will work every day to do your spirit justice by acting from a place of love, listening deeply, being passionate for what makes us all safe and well, and being present to as much joy as possible through life.



“All that you touch  
You Change.

All that you Change  
Changes you.

The only lasting truth  
is Change.”  
Octavia E. Butler

Thank you for changing me.

I love you,  
Nanky



*Miriam, Abeer and Nanky at OHIP for All rally*

## My favourite radical

**Kevin Moloney**

In my moments with Miriam I have learned that she is driven by kindness and compassion, together with outrage at injustice. Over the years from selling Zatoun oil to occupying consulates, protesting massacres in Gaza, singing to boycott Aroma cafe, handing out flyers, holding placards, stickering, poster, meeting to plan activities and much more Miriam has always been unflappable, completely dependable, devoid of ego, eternally enthusiastic, and simply there. She adores her family, cherishes her friends, and loves life. A truly impressive person.

And when Palestine is free and the Wall falls, Miriam will have played her part.

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## Five Generations In One Photo

**Simon**

Mom's father grew up in the grocery store just at that corner. They lived upstairs from the store at College and Robert. We visited on our way to Kensington Market and a brunch at Average Joe's on a chilly day. Mom bought Ben a nice shirt that said "Kensington Market, Kosher" in Hebrew. It only started fitting a few days ago. Mom held Ben in the cafe while we ate and talked to the couple beside us. He was teething (top front teeth) and miserable, but Mom kept him happy enough for us to eat before getting him home for a nap.





## Upstairs Garden

### Simon

Mom had a knack for gardening. Or maybe a passion. Probably both. She had a front garden, a back garden, a lane-way garden, and an upstairs garden. The upstairs garden was in a community garden and each year grew lots of vegetables to eat. She tried something different each year, but in my opinion, her garlic and tomatoes were the best. One clove of garlic could literally make your eyes water in a pot of sauce. Each tomato was always sweet. She got lots of help in the end growing, but she would go when she could to pick what needed pickin'.

The last time we went, she had to bribe Ben with a flower to get her tomato back. She later admitted this probably wasn't the best thing to do as he then started picking all the flowers. But she got her big tomato back, so maybe it was a win.





## **Dr. Miriam**

**Anne Egger**



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## **Save The Pumpkins**

**Simon**

Mom was a big supporter of saving pumpkins from an untimely post-Hallowe'en splatter. She compiled a host of pumpkin recipes for people to eat, and we spent a night writing them up. Like a good environmentally responsible Jewish mother, she hated to see food wasted. You can find the recipes on the website below, and give those pumpkins a good home this year, in your stomach.

[www.sources.com/Pumpkin.htm](http://www.sources.com/Pumpkin.htm)

## Sugar Moon Miriam

**Johl**

Miriam the best thing at NishDish on the menu is the sound of your laughter. I always look forward to hearing your laughter when you receive the food on your table because that amazing incredible exquisite sound of love dancing through the air in the room is the way I feel about our Indigenous food systems.... and you just show that same joy so freely and share it with everyone. Hearing your laughter hands down is the most favourite response I've ever heard anyone show when they receive a plate of our food at NishDish.

But getting the Zatoun Palestinian olive oil from you and meeting Ulli and adventuring off to the sugar maples near Humber to collect the sweet medicine from the trees Ninaatigwaaboo (maple tree water) with you and Kate was more than a dream of dreams because it feels like it was a dream inside a dream because just like the trees give us medicine so does your laughter.

You are light that emanates love.

I'm going to make sunchoke waffles for you and have the Ojibwe open-fired maple syrup on them too.

Chi miigwech. "Your friendly neighbour since always". lol.

love, Johl



## **The world is a better place for you having been a part of it**

**Valerie Endicott**

Dear Miriam,

I remember my first encounter with you was at your office on Palmerston. Right from the start, I felt so utterly cared for as your patient. I have such fond memories of arriving at your office on Spadina for confirmation of each of my three pregnancies. Your sensible, warm, friendly demeanor as our family doctor is something I will always be grateful for. You enjoyed our children and we felt they were in such very capable hands. You can imagine our dismay when you gave up your family practice, but I recall speaking proudly to others of how my doctor gave up her family practice to lend her medical expertise to social justice.

The full range of your activism became more apparent to us when Vivien got involved in the BDS movement at U of T, and there you were, in the thick of it and such a thoughtful, spirited example to all.

You have lived a truly meaningful life. The number of years lived is not necessarily a good measure of a life well lived. The world is a better place for you having been a part of it and you will always be a part of it through the people you have touched; the people who you have helped; the people who you have motivated; the people who you have loved and cared for.

We thank you and send our deepest love and admiration.

Valerie Endicott (on behalf of our whole family)

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## **The Miriam's Laugh**

**martha**

When I miss your laugh, I'll go to Nish Dish, drink cedar tea, eat Johl's food, and feel your presence. Your compassion and determination are an inspiration. You've changed how I see the world.

Thank you, thank you, dear Miriam for being such an extraordinary friend.  
Thank you, Ulli, for this archived exchange of Miriam moments.

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## **Your incredibly gentle but radical self**

**Alisa**

Dearest Miriam,

Like so many of us, I can't recall when we first met. I feel like I've had the blessing of knowing you forever.

I have so many wonderful memories of being with you at social justice events talking about politics but also often healthcare and, of course, music - from Beethoven to Pete Seeger .

You brought your incredibly gentle but radical self and your unwavering integrity kindness and compassion (and your gorgeous infectious laugh!) One of my favourite memories is our Boycott Aroma performance -- a perfect mix of your passion for justice in Palestine and your creative and musical self.

Even in the midst of your own health struggles you have always been so compassionate and caring. During the past few years of my own health struggles you always went out of your way to show me so much care and support.

Miriam. I will hold you in my heart forever and I will feel your spirit every day and at every event. You have touched us all and changed our lives.

All my love and hugs forever,

Alisa

## **What loveliness**

**Valerie Lannon**

Dearest Miriam and family. I met Miriam through her work opposing the Enbridge Line 9 pipeline. She was always so thorough, asked great questions, thought very strategically and was a marvellous communicator.

I loved her knowledge of and commitment to a wide range of social and political issues. And wow did she ever teach me a lot. She showed me how to feed birds in High Park... right from her hand. She taught me how to skate, after I had been away from that for decades "Bend your knees a bit, and lean forward". When she had to be fixed up to get her infusions, we referred to her "boob job".

Miriam you never shied away from sometimes painful realities, you brought us all into you.

What a gift to us, and to the world, and memories of you will always be vivid and gratefully brought to mind.

## Supporting Bi'lin

In 2009, Miriam became involved in supporting the village of Bil'in in the occupied Palestinian territories. Bil'in has been engaged in an ongoing non-violent struggle against the building of illegal Israeli-only settlements on Bil'in's lands.

Bil'in launched a court case in Canadian courts against two Canadian construction companies which were involved in building the illegal settlements.

Mohammed Khatib, one of the leaders of the Bil'in resistance, and Emily Schaeffer, an Israeli lawyer committed to supporting Bil'in's legal case, toured Canada in June 2009.

Mohammed stayed at Miriam and Ulli's house while he was in Toronto, and the house (and garden!) became a meeting place for others involved in the cause.

In 2010, Miriam went on a solidarity tour to Palestine, and was able to visit Bil'in and meet Mohammed and his family and other members of the resistance.



*Miriam with Mohammed Khatib and Emily Scaheffer*



*Miriam at a display explaining Bil'in's struggle*

## **Swift watching and Palestinian solidarity**

**Ted Turner**

I first met Miriam and Ulli while counting Chimney Swifts at St Anthony's and The Paradise. Sometime later I went to Beit Zatoun to purchase olive oil and Miriam was there. We recognized each other but couldn't recall from where. After a short time we finally figured it out. After that we saw each other many times at Palestinians support events and once when she and Ulli were delivering Zatoun olive oil to Fiesta Farms. She is a Fine person and will be dearly missed.

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## **Big condolences re Miriam!**

**Agi Lukacs**

...Miriam was our well-informed and kind doctor when my daughter was little, 30 years ago, and onward for some years. I missed her when she went to deal w less privileged folx than some of us on the left etc. But it was a fine clinic she went to...and added to, significantly.

...Later on, she invited me to protest Harper and Co.'s draconian moves vs. refugee health care...annually or so, for about four years. She invited me because she knew that I was once a refugee (from Hungarian fascism, in 1956). It felt right to go.

...She sent me a letter from the Canadian Medical Assn. journal, detailing setbacks in the ten years under Harper and Co. I was able to send this to neighbours and to Lead Now. I also got your effective flyer re Harper around somewhat, with Miriam's encouragement.

And one day when we were standing beside each other at the vigil in front of the Israeli consulate, I asked if she could talk with an adult student who was at my workplace. She then mentored this student, who was from a war-ravaged country, and who wanted to be a doctor. The young woman was very appreciative.

...It was always nice to stand beside Miriam at the vigil, and talk a bit. I can't imagine not seeing her ever again...but I plan to remember how lovely it was to know her. To be a comrade and friend.



## Dear, dear Miriam

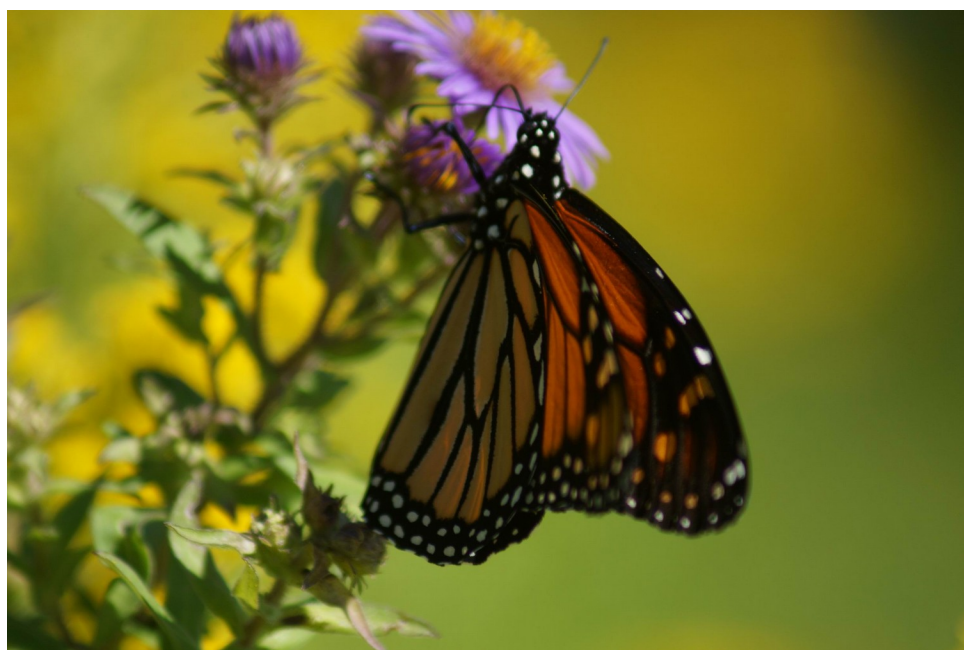
**Marie Lorenzo**

I know we first met long ago when in the 1980s I worked at the Immigrant Women's Centre, and you were the wonderful doctor in the Mobile Health Unit. For years after, your name and impressive actions, including as one of a few brave doctors pushing for medical reform in Ontario, were around my scope of activism, but it wasn't until 2005 or so that I ran into you at an event and we really connected. You befriended me then, and became such a good warm friend, above all.

But I also think of you as my political mentor and marvel at how much you know and do about everything I am interested in: social justice, the environment, cycling, gardens, native flowers, birds, people, relationships. I was glad to be in regular touch through Zatoun olive oil and loved when you joined the community garden. I so enjoy our time together sharing our worries and struggles, our laughter and our victories. You made friends with my son and taught us both how to watch the swifts in school chimneys. I think of you most with the monarch butterflies, after our sad conversation as we worried about their decline, in spite of our best efforts. And then rejoicing as we watched their numbers slowly come back, especially in our garden. I thought of you every time I saw one bravely flutter toward Lake Ontario as many made their impressive way across the Toronto sky last week. I thought, for Miriam and for me, I am so glad to see you.

I learned so much from you, I think of you as a mentor in so many ways. Yet you never act as such, you always treat me as if I have as much to offer you as you to me, but I know that I can only aspire to what you are, what you have accomplished; and aspire I do. You are an example to me. You are the most extraordinary example of humanity. Bless you Miriam for being my friend, such a good friend to me, to all, sharing so much wisdom, compassion and that joyous laughter at every opportunity. In the end, friendship is really the only thing that matters and if only every human being was like you, all of our problems would be solvable. Like so many, I am lucky to know you and hold you in my heart. I sprouted your echinacea seeds and will nurture them and they will always be my Miriam's flower. I love you.

Marie Lorenzo



## You did not bow down or go easily

Jim Deutsch

Dear Miriam and Ulli, yours has been such a warm and welcoming home and a lively and defiance-filled refuge from the storms of the world. It is tempting to surrender to the gloom at times, but there has been such joy and clear vision, and Miriam, you did not bow down or go easily, whether facing directly the sad and enraging injustices in the world, or the ravages of illness. As I look at the photo of the swifts you carefully counted flying upward from the chimney, I think of the cranes of Hiroshima Day, and your remarkable connection to life, love, and the world as it is and must be. Thank you for all you have given to me, my family, and all of us.

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## Camping in early Spring

Ulli



*Spring camping with Ulli in MacGregor Point Provincial Park, 2018.  
Overnight temperature was minus 2. We were happy.*

## Love and Gratitude to our Friend and Colleague

### Ayesha Adhami-Magueta for IWHC Toronto

It is with profound sadness that IWHC Toronto marks the passing of Dr. Miriam Garfinkle, our former Medical Director, colleague and friend.

Miriam was an indomitable spirit - a staunch ally and advocate for patients, a vital, fierce and vocal defender of social justice, and a passionate, intelligent and vibrant woman. She spoke often - with love and devotion - of her children Simon and Leah and shared their many accomplishments with great pride.

Miriam worked as a physician at the Centre for many years and took on the Medical Director position for a time during the early 2000s; she came to both roles with her usual professional dedication, medical expertise, good humour and incredible kindness. She had a way of engaging everyone around her with such authenticity and openness, it was as if one had known her for years. As many have said, her infectious laugh will never be forgotten; it is one of her many, many memorable qualities.

We all loved, admired and respected her and we send our love and condolences to her partner Ulli, her children Simon and Leah, her beloved grandson Ben and all of those in the activist, medical and social communities we share who knew and loved her as well. We have lost a bright light in our world, but her spirit shines on. Rest well, Miriam. Thank you for everything.



*Miriam on the Immigrant Women's Health Centre mobile health unit.*



## Try To Remember

**Melissa**

It was always so easy to talk to Miriam. Conversations flowed like water cascading from the miniature fountains adorning the treasure that was her backyard garden - the hidden oasis where we loved to relax together, nursing mugs of steaming hot tea or cool glasses of pink lemonade.

In my presence, she always wore her heart on her sleeve. I felt safe in asking her anything I wanted and she was gracious enough to answer fully and honestly, even when the topic pained her.

In the relatively short time I spent with Miriam, my mother-in-law had fleshed out to become a whole person: a mother, a partner, a physician, an activist... my good friend and a pillar of support.

Miriam Garfinkle was a woman who did many great things, but I will always remember her in the little, soft ways she embedded herself so deeply in my life and my heart: pad thai orders from Pour Boy, Nish Dish on a windy day at Christie Pits, chicken soup and succulent deliveries when I fell ill, little gifts just because, concertos in utero just for Ben, memories of Duke Ellington's Autumn Leaves and Try to Remember from The Fantasticks playing in your household as a young girl.

Miriam, you once told me your father remembered you best swimming strong and free. In the years to come, when I try to remember you, it will always be in the soft, gentle ways you made me feel the depth and boundlessness of your love. My life has been truly enriched for having known you.

Love always and forever,

Melissa

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## Unforgettable

**Judy Steed**

Miriam was Dr. Garfinkle my family doctor many years ago before she left her private practice near Spadina and Bloor and joined the Regent Park Community Health Centre. We were very sorry to lose her but happy for the people at Regent Park. I have never forgotten her kindness and her insight and her positive caution as a medical doctor. She really is Unforgettable in terms of the way she connected and supported and saw us as individuals. I am very sad that she has died and I would like to attend a memorial service

## Miriam and Music

Clayton Scott

I first met Miriam when our children, Simon and Susannah, were in the same class at Huron Street Public School. But we truly connected when she phoned, about 20 years ago, to inquire about taking piano lessons with me.

Miriam had studied to a high level in her youth, but had not taken lessons for many years. We met once a month for a number of years.

Miriam was a natural musician, who brought intelligence and curiosity, as well as innate musicality to her music studies. Miriam was not a dilettante, not a “once over lightly” kind of person. This showed in her approach to music: she dug deep. She wanted to know the why as well as the how.

When I last saw her, about two years ago, we sat at my two pianos and played a Mozart concerto together, she playing the soloist’s part.

I am deeply saddened by Miriam’s death. I have always thought of her as being around the corner and that there would be a time when we would play together again.



*Miriam started playing piano early...*



*... and she kept playing throughout her life*



*... and when Ben came along they played together.*



## **My Aunt Miriam**

**Rachel Buhler**

This past Saturday, my sister Shayna and I lost our dear aunt Miriam. Due to the incomparable relationship between our mother, Diane, and her sister, we experienced a uniquely close relationship with our aunt, and the impact of this loss is more profound than I could have ever anticipated (can you ever anticipate these things?).

My mother's relationship with her sister is their own story, but it is deeply embedded in the fabric of my being. Clear as day, I have the image of my mom on the cordless phone in our front room talking with Miriam, or can hear my mom's voice when I'd be on the phone with her saying "that's Miriam on the other line" and sometimes, choosing to stay on with me, but more often, letting me know she'd call me back in favour of taking the call. My sister and I marvel at the sheer amount of time those two spent talking and the amount of detail they shared about the characters in each other's lives, with their respective children figuring prominently in those conversations (or so I like to think).

Miriam is inextricably linked to my memories of childhood as she was over at our home for innumerable dinners. She brought tradition (Hanukah and Passover and Rosh Hashana were invariably led by her in beautiful, inclusive, joyful fashion), laughter and stories about who she ran into and who she knew (lots of people!), praised my mother's cooking (Diane! This is so good), and made our family whole.

For several years, on occasion we met for Chinese food on Baldwin street, around a big table with a lazy Susan, where she was always certain to include in our (very large!) order something that she knew Simon (black bean chicken) and Leah (soup) fancied. This was perhaps the smallest indicia of her innate sense of her children's uniqueness and her fierce desire and profound ability to foster it.

We also frequently travelled the, what seemed as a child, long distance from our house in North York to downtown (gasp!) to visit Miriam and our cousins on places on Albany, Walmer, and what I will always feel was her "Home" on Barton, with Ulli.

Later, as a ridiculously selfish and self absorbed teenager (is there any other kind?) ,I still would join for dinners with Miriam and Ulli and my parents even as my sister and cousins, all younger than me, seemed to be more independent and were often elsewhere for school or other pursuits. No doubt, as I sat there, I was preoccupied with whether I was meeting this or that guy after dinner, but I had the luxury of partaking in the food and conversation and Miriam's songlike laughter (which in my memory increased tenfold as Ulli became part of our family), and the ensuing sense of peace and foundation that it provided as I made my way out the door.

Later as a grownup, and mother myself, with my own home in the previously viewed as exotic downtown Toronto, Miriam welcomed me and my sons for her famous delicious gatherings and no matter the extra effort, waffles were on offer, and the red plastic box of toys (the California Raisin characters! The train blocks!) was inevitably pulled out as she was always so eager to have my Dylan and Ethan feel welcome and enjoy themselves. Recently, when I went through a separation, Miriam offered me valuable insight and advice borne of a shared experience, and I felt her as an inspiration as I moved forward towards my new normal, making my new home and creating a strong threesome with my two sons, as I had seen her do with her own children.

Equally, I increasingly looked at her relationship with Ulli as inspirational and heartwarming. She got to be herself entirely with him and she shone: this is invaluable.

I knew of course Miriam battled, and I knew of course that that the viciousness of that battle increased so as to become unwinnable . Still, I don't know why I naively thought this day wouldn't come. Perhaps it was the vestiges of the self absorbed teenager which made me think I'd not lose MY aunt. When I had the honour of the chance to say goodbye, I told my still and always beautiful aunt that we have so much to remember and that remember we will. I intend to do that.

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## Friend

### Shawna Perlin

Miriam was an amazing friend.  
So kind, compassionate, helpful and supportive.

I met her at age 16 and we were very close for several years. She was always by my side during especially difficult times throughout those years.

She always managed to do so much.  
She parented her children lovingly, ran her busy medical practice, supported so many social justice causes and still had time to support her friends and have some fun from time to time.

Even though we were in less contact in recent years we did have some communication last spring. I was able to share my enormous gratitude to her for her support.  
In typical modest Miriam fashion, she didn't want to take credit, she only wanted to talk about her kids and grandson and did not want to dwell on herself

This memorial is so beautiful.  
I know the family and all her community will cherish this forever .

I , too, can also hear Miriam's wonderful laugh and as another friend wrote, "May she rest in power."

Love  
Shawna

## A special relationship

Shayna Buhler

My aunt Miriam has been a beautiful presence my whole life and in recent years I have had the joy of watching a special relationship develop between Miriam and my daughter, Eloise, built on their shared love of nature, and, I think, a quirkiness in Eloise that reminded Miriam of a Leah as a child. I was the conduit for Miriam's emails to Eloise with pictures of birds, butterflies and fairy doors. They traded their works of art and painted rocks together. When Eloise learned how to cook milkweed, Miriam worried for the monarchs and we had to assure her that Eloise would save them some.

Eloise and I will feed the birds together with Miriam in our hearts.




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## PA day activities

leah



*Leah & Mum & Byron, PA day, 1994.*



## Next Door Neighbour

**Carrie Meston**

A few months ago, on several occasions, I could hear Miriam outside laughing as she was chatting with friends/neighbours. I was thinking (and very hopeful) that she had received some good health news. When I spoke with her, unfortunately the news wasn't good. I said to her "but you're always so cheerful" to which she replied "there's no other way to be." To say she was a strong person is an understatement.

I will dearly miss our front and back yard conversations. Along with my husband Dave and daughters Lindsay and Jamie we feel so fortunate to have been her neighbour. We have nothing but wonderful memories of Miriam which we will forever cherish.

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## Paddling on...

**Ulli**

Terminal cancer didn't keep Miriam from canoeing and swimming. Here Miriam and Ulli paddle on the Gull River, July 31, 2018.

She was out in a canoe again (and swimming in the river) on August 22.



## **What a wonderful person**

**Sid Shniad**

I met Miriam when she and I were part of the great solidarity tour to Israel and Palestine that Fabienne Presentey put together for Independent Jewish Voices in 2010. Since that time we have remained in regular contact.

She has been a wonderful friend and ally in the struggle for justice for Palestine, as well as in her role as a progressive physician.

People like Miriam are a treasure to experience as friends. The world desperately needs more like her.

The best tribute we can make to Miriam is to rededicate ourselves to building a world of justice and compassion for all.

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## **A Beautiful Soul**

**Catherine Carroll**

Miriam, how beautiful a soul you are.  
 Your heart Is in the right place.  
 The world is a better place for having you.  
 You have been so very kind to me and all who have crossed your path.  
 You will live on in all who love you.  
 You also taught me how to make chicken soup.

All my love

Catherine

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## **What she said, she did. What she believed, she went out and fought for**

**David Chapkin**

Miriam was my first real girl friend. I was 16. She was all of 14 years old. We met, believe it or not, at a Jewish Zionist camp called Solelim, located near Sudbury. Even back then, she impressed me, and no doubt others around her, with her fiery passion for social justice. She could get up in a crowd, as young as she was, and pronounce with both intensity and clarity on such issues.

I believe her involvement was not only a morally principled choice on her part but also something that was bred into her. When you entered her family home on Hillhurst, her parents had copies of I F Stone's journalism on the side table. In her basement hung a Republican Spanish civil war flag. I also believe her father, a lawyer, had unions among the clients he represented.

I recall my first demonstration with her, a protest on behalf of farm workers led by Cesar Chavez to boycott California grapes. We walked around for hours in an oval with 20 or so others carrying placards in front of Loblaw's at Lawrence Plaza. And while I latterly became somewhat disaffected and inactive, her commitment to such causes never waned. Never. Whatever you may want to say about Miriam, that girl always put it on the line. Strong. Determined. What she said, she did. What she believed, she actively went out and fought for. It was really most exemplary.

Although I moved abroad to England in 1984, we never really lost contact. I remember talking to her about her failing marriage, how she'd found Ulli and was happy with him and specifically our little talk in some small Toronto park in 1998. I'd just come out of hospital after a lengthy spell of cancer treatment. I'd had the whole nine yards to put my non-hodgkin's lymphoma in remission. We talked about the disease. I knew her mother had died young of breast cancer. It was not too long thereafter before she too was afflicted.

You just soldier on through cancer. You just have got to keep on keeping on. But her's seemed/must have been a long drawn out war. Surgery after surgery, relapse after relapse. We'd sit down when I came into town at her kitchen table and just talk, mostly about politics. Even with all the cancer, she seemed almost unburdened, light humoured and happy. Sometimes there was little to say, as if we knew the score. The Palestinians suffering set-back after set-back in the face of a tribal Jewish community in support of an implacable Israeli state. Still she continued seemingly undaunted to do whatever could be done. Whatever small measure. It was no doubt like that with the immigrant women she treated at her clinic down in Regent Park.

I'm glad to see how impressive this memorial website is. It's heart-warming to see how many people she touched who admired and cared for her. It's not many friends whom you can say are exceptional. Inspiring too. Yet she was one. What can you say but that she was the best of us. Gone too young, she, irretrievably, will be missed, sadly missed. My sweet Mim.





## Miriam in Palestine and in our hearts

Scott Weinstein

I first met Miriam on our Independent Jewish Voices delegation to Palestine in 2010. Everything nice people have said about Miriam is true.

She was not only a sweetheart, a Mom, a partner, but a humble social justice activist. Miriam as I was to learn later, was one of those radical community doctors who practiced health care for the people, the poor, and those without legal status.

These photos are of Miriam in a Palestinian olive grove in the northwest West Bank, 2010. To me, they captured her lovely essence. She really was amazed by the actual olives which grew because Palestinian farmers struggled to care for the trees and their harvest despite violent attacks by Jewish settlers and Israeli security forces.

I only hope her family and friends retain great memories of a wonderful woman.

Scott



*Miriam in a Palestinian olive grove in the West Bank, 2010*

## Capitalism is Killing Us All

Miriam has often made her own signs to take to demonstrations rather than be faced with picking up pre-printed signs that might not reflect her views.

Her Capitalism is Killing Us All sign has come to many demonstrations and protests since it is so pertinent to so many issues.




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## The world has truly lost a wonderful soul

**Christie Maccallum**

The world has truly lost a wonderful soul, but being who she was, she will always remain alive in the hearts of all she touched -- which is just about everyone with whom she came in contact!

I knew Miriam initially as a patient and later as a physician colleague. I have to say that as a doctor, she was the most solidly compassionate and respectful person one could imagine. The truth of that was borne out when I later ran in to her as a colleague. Despite having been in quite a vulnerable stage of my life during the years when I saw her as a patient, she later warmly welcomed me as a respected colleague, and even invited me to her dance class!

Miriam, you're in a class of your own! We love you!

---

## **A Healer and an Activist**

**Cathy Gulkin**

Miriam was my doctor for many years when we were both in our 30's and having our children. She was a remarkably gifted doctor: when I went through a period of mysterious weight loss, a friend suggested I see a top oncologist. He looked at the chart Miriam had sent to him and told me that I had an incredibly thorough doctor and there were no tests left to give me! She always listened with compassion and care and I was very sad when she moved on.

We also worked together over the years in various Palestine Solidarity groups. Back in 1982 we were both part of a group called "The Committee of Concerned Canadian Jews" which eventually became "Jews for a Just Peace". We lost touch over the years but then reconnected when we were both part of the group that occupied the Israeli Consulate in January 2009. I was always happy when Miriam was part of an action or a meeting. She was the voice of reason and a calming presence no matter how contentious the debate.

I will miss Miriam's warm smile, infectious laughter, wonderful sense of humour and indomitable spirit.

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## **A Warrior for Justice**

**John Sharkey**

Miriam was a significant influence in my life in the short time we worked together. She was a remarkable woman who did much good in the world. I'll always remember her as we all will. I'll think of her especially in the spring when the lupins appear in my garden that grow from seeds she gifted me.

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## Miriam and Molly

Bonnie Heath

I never had the pleasure of meeting Miriam, but my daughter Mollie Rolfe did – when she was three years old. Mollie's father, Roger Rolfe, was hired to shoot this photo of Miriam and Mollie for the cover of the United Church Observer, featuring an article on (what else?) health care! I am very sorry for the loss of Miriam to the community and send my heartfelt condolences to Ulli and all of her loved ones.



## A dedicated and thoughtful activist

sue goldstein

I remember one winter Miriam and i wanted to have a Christmas tree wrapped in barbed wire to have at the vigil in front of the Israeli consulate. Two Jews who wanted to make sure that people knew as they passed by, that Christmas in Palestine, the place where it was born, was locked up behind barbed wire. I went to purchase the barbed wire and Miriam got the tree. However not one hardware store sold anything like barbed wire, so i made it out of sculpture wire. We put it together @ Miriam's house.

For many years, Miriam was a stalwart at the vigil, come rain, shine, or nasty angry Zionists. And so many other actions.

I remember Miriam as a dedicated and thoughtful activist, concerned with the basics: kindness, compassion, and all the things that you won't find in capitalism.

Clearly, Miriam was someone dedicated to justice, as a doctor and an activist. You are already sorely missed, Miriam. Sincere and deep condolences to Ulli, and your children and family. And thanks to Ulli for this wonderful page.

Rest in Power, Miriam

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## a poem Miriam liked

Peggy Lathwell

My inner Miriam is alive and well but still I'm crying.

### a poem Miriam liked

Margaret are you grieving  
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
 Leaves like things of man, you  
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
 Ah! as the heart grows older  
 It will come to such sights colder  
 By and by, nor spare a sigh  
 Though worlds wanwoods leafmeal lie;  
 And yet you will weep and know why.  
 Now No matter, child the name:  
 Sorrows springs are the same.  
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind expressed  
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
 It is the blight one was born for,  
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

Spring and Fall  
 (for a young child)

Gerald Manley Hopkins

## Swift-watching

Ulli

A chance encounter with a group of young birdwatchers in the Rouge Park in June 2013 introduced Miriam and Ulli to the pleasures of swift-watching: standing staring up at a chimney shortly before dusk, waiting to see chimney swifts plunging into their roosting chimneys for the night.

A couple of days later, Miriam and Ulli headed over to St. Anthony's Church for their first swift-watching experience. Some 50 swifts flew into the chimney that night. Miriam especially was hooked. From then on, she devoted many hours to working as a citizen scientist: observing and documenting the swifts' behaviour in order to contribute to a body of knowledge that could help us to protect these threatened birds -- and many other species -- in the face of habitat loss and climate change.



Photo: Erin Brethauer, Asheville Citizen Times

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## I appreciated Miriam very much

Ronny Yaron

I regret only meeting Miriam a few years ago and not getting to know her better. I did meet her a few times at the Friday vigil and then a group of us met in her home to practice for an action -- to do a protest in front of Aroma Cafe on Bloor and Albany. It was a fun experience that we all enjoyed.

I appreciated Miriam very much for how she welcomed me into her home and never made me feel I wasn't as "good" on activist as she was. Many people leave me feeling that way -- because I know I am not such an active activist!

Luckily there is a video of our action against Aroma Cafe and whenever I hear that song from Lady Gaga, I think of Miriam.



## Feeding chickadees

Ulli



*Feeding chickadees in High Park, 2010.*



*.. and at Wye Marsh in November 2017*

## Miriam, Chimney Swift Champion

**Liz Purves, Bird Studies Canada**

Miriam was a treasured member of our SwiftWatch volunteer crew, always willing and keen to count Chimney Swifts, a threatened bird species, at chimneys in Toronto. Miriam shared observations from over 40 surveys she completed in Toronto over the past five years, which is an incredible accomplishment. Her data contributions have been used to help track population numbers for this at-risk bird over time and address priority research questions. She was an integral part of our Toronto team, and will be deeply missed. We are so appreciative of the passion and dedication that Miriam put into swift-watching, and hope these birds brought her much joy.

[illegible]



## **Energy, depth, passion and love**

**Rosemary Frei**

Miriam's energy, depth, passion and love were stronger than anyone else I know. It was so affirming to talk to her, whether it was about fighting the expansion of the tar sands or about daily life. I'm lucky to have known her!

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## **Joy, integrity, passion, principles**

**Ester Reiter**

I know Miriam from many places -- Beit Zatoun, UJPO, dancing, just around.

When Miriam was off work, because of her first round of chemo, we played music together -- me on the recorder and her on piano. She was also taking advantage of time away from work to take banjo lessons.

Her loveliness, her devotion to her kinds, her valuing her connection with Ulli are what stay with me. She is gone way too soon despite having packed into one life everything worthwhile -- joy, integrity, passions, principles.

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## **On her way, Zatoun olive oil in her bike rack**

**Amy Gottlieb**

One of the last times I saw Miriam, we bumped into each other at Spadina and Bloor. Miriam was on her bike.

She stopped and we took the opportunity to catch up a bit. I had just recently retired and she and I talked about what we were doing with our time.

We talked about the dismal state of the world and the right-wing shift. We both were upset and expressed our desire for change in so many arenas, including justice in Israel/Palestine. We talked about the importance of staying hopeful and engaged, even in small ways. We hugged. Miriam went on her way, Zatoun olive oil in her bike rack to be delivered that afternoon.



## Celebrating Miriam Garfinkle (1954 – 2018)

**Robert Massoud**

Miriam Garfinkle is my hero (I do not have many). Miriam is my hero NOT ONLY because

- she adopted Zatoun from day 1 in May 2004
- or that, she became the #1 salesperson and promoter of Zatoun in the world (12,000 bottles went thru her front door)
- or, she was a founding director and board member
- or, she gave me the key to her house so I could deliver Zatoun when she was not home
- she remained committed to the very end to Zatoun, to Palestine, and truth

Also, not only because, as a 17-year-old counsellor in a Jewish summer camp she took advantage of everyone being on the bus to read them the PLO charter. This in 1970 when Israel basked in the euphoria of 1967. This was decades before it became obvious what Israel truly was and what it practised. Image the courage and internal compass of a 17 year old standing against such a colossal public relations force!

Also, not only because, as a young doctor she gave an interview to Maclean's on the subject of Palestine which put her at odds with her beloved father whom she admired greatly on every issue except seemingly Palestine.

Miriam is my hero also because she:

- danced
- played the banjo
- painted
- canoed
- played hockey
- gardened & birdwatched

- the last time I visited Miriam was 2 weeks before she died – she was low on “Zatoun” and insisted I deliver. She had a unique way of pronouncing the word that will never leave me.

Miriam is my hero because she is a truly beautiful, balanced and accomplished person who loved nature and people and understood in her deepest core that justice was the only true way to secure both.

In all this, remember and thank her family, her children who supported Miriam in all she did for others. Thank you Leah and than you Simon. I also thank Ulli her partner who supported her in every way possible, every day until her last. Even in death, Ulli has shared Miriam with us in the incredible website he assembled.

I will miss the phone calls, the emails, the visits, the sharing of wisdom and empathy and sometimes outrage. Now I have Miriam with me as a “constant comrade” walking beside me with her love and also behind me with her courage.

Miriam you have left us but you are still with us.

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## Courage and kindness

Lyn Adamson

Dear Miriam,

I am so grateful for the times we had together when you would have our Zatoun board meetings in your kitchen and serve us tea and goodies along with your friendly smile and your goodwill and commitment to the project we shared.

I most strongly remember our connection with activism. To be with you while we planned and then carried out a street stoppage in front of the Israeli consulate when Gaza was being attacked, when we did a flashmob 'boycott Aroma' outside their cafe, and then most significantly when you and several other Jewish women occupied the Israeli consulate. That bravery echoed around the world as the 7 of you shook the standard quiet around Israel - violence, especially when you showed that Jewish women were not all in line with Israel - but were willing to take a risk to challenge that violence. I was very glad to be able to be with you in the planning and in supporting that action.

The courage and the kindness you always showed people made you such a special person, and I was honoured to know you. May you fly above the world continuing to inspire us, as these kites over Gaza inspire us with dreams of what is possible when we work together

In peace and friendship for a better world,

your friend,

Lyn Adamson



## **It was such a privilege to know her**

### **Elizabeth Littlejohn**

I worked with Miriam as part of NOJetsTO when she wrote articles and deputed at Toronto's City Hall about childhood asthma increasing near Billy Bishop Airport  
[https://www.nojetsto.ca/dr\\_miriam\\_garfinkle\\_public\\_health\\_will\\_be\\_loser\\_if\\_jets\\_win](https://www.nojetsto.ca/dr_miriam_garfinkle_public_health_will_be_loser_if_jets_win)

I also had the pleasure of filming her for a short documentary about the airport's impact on the waterfront, 'Save our Waterfront' - <https://vimeo.com/81250896>

She was the doctor who spoke with the mother, architect, teacher and sailor as they toured Toronto Harbour to discuss Billy Bishop's health risks. It was such a privilege to know her. Her commitment to social and environmental justice was absolute.

It was such a wonder to see the video to garner so many views, and change people's minds about the island airport.

Rest in power, Miriam.





## **Miriam was graceful, angry, incisive and magnanimous**

**b.h. Yael**

Of course memory collapses many moments which have been repeated and become a composite image. As it is with Miriam, being on the other end of a banner in front of the Israeli consulate building, holding posters and passing out literature all converge into too many times that we stood outside, in rain and snow and sun.

Miriam was dedicated to Friday evenings at 5 pm. After the second Intifada we were resolute. After 5 years I stopped. Miriam continued.

Miriam was graceful, angry, incisive and magnanimous. And the loveliest and most serendipitous moments were bumping into each other at Fiesta Farms. Checking in and having a chat about the state of our world(s).

Since she died I have seen her on the street so many times as I did before, on her bike, walking from behind with a back pack, smiling turning her head.

Of course it wasn't Miriam. It was the wish that she hadn't left so soon.

It is the void of the enthusiasm she carried in life, for life, for others, in community, her sense of justice.

It seems trite to say she will be missed because it is more than that, this haunting. But she will be, and is missing to me.

And so is her smile.

