

A Community Gathering of Remembrance and Reopening, May 29, 2025

Closing Remarks by Dr. Beatrice Gurwitz

Executive Director of the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum

Good morning.

I am Bea Gurwitz, and I am the executive director of the Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for being here with us to remember Sarah and Yaron, to support the Jewish community, and to stand with us as we rededicate ourselves to the important work of the Museum.

I specifically want to thank Mayor Bowser, Police Chief Smith, Councilmember Allen and all the first responders in the room for your support over the past week.

And in this room today, we feel the embrace of so many overlapping communities—our closest neighbors, our museum colleagues, our Jewish community, and the interfaith community. The outpouring of support from all of you has strengthened our whole team.

In the past week, we have come to know Sarah and Yaron through their friends, families, and coworkers. Today we were so grateful to hear tremendously moving words from Sue and Josh. Thank you so much for sharing your tributes and being with us today even as you are grieving.

I have come to learn that Sarah and Yaron represented the best of all of us, pursuing the peace that we all yearn for.

Through their work at the Israeli embassy and their connections with the local Jewish community, they wanted to bring forward a better future. They collaborated with other Jewish groups, synagogues, and leaders in this region to strengthen our community; for example, just last week, Sarah was helping to coordinate activities related to WorldPride in DC.

Their story was part of DC's Jewish story, and therefore part of our Museum's story. We are interested here in all facets of Jewish life in the region, from Jewish baseball teams to political buttons to board meeting notes.

But as a Jewish museum focused on Washington DC, we have a special interest in the ways people come to DC to change the world.

So many young people like Sarah and Yaron arrive in our nation's capital, from across the globe, ready to get down to work for all of us. They want to make a difference, build bridges, work in diplomacy. They organize marches; they lobby their representatives. They go to mixers, happy hours, and networking receptions, to meet other young people, to build community.

These are Jewish stories, representing Jewish lives, and they need to be told, deserve to be shared, and we—as a museum—are taking up that unique responsibility.

We always hope that the stories we tell in this Museum will continue to inspire our visitors to find their own ways forward.

Through our exhibits and programming, we strive to build connections, identify points of commonality, encourage civic engagement, and – always – educate the public about the richness, diversity, and vibrancy of Jewish life.

This work will not stop.

Last week's antisemitic attack cannot be our last chapter.

So we re-open today and we dedicate ourselves to honor Yaron and Sarah and their commitment to repairing the world. And we take strength in all of you as we go forward in fulfilling the mission of the museum.

Thank you to all of you for being in community with one another this morning. We look forward to welcoming you back many times.

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The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum opened in 2023. The Museum explores the Jewish experience in the national capital region and inspires visitors to connect personally and collectively, reflect on the relevance of the past to today, and act on behalf of their communities and values. The Museum connects the past to the present through thought-provoking exhibitions, dynamic programming, and creative public experiences.

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