



## Dramaturgy Packet

# MY CALAMITOUS AFFAIR

WITH THE MINISTER OF  
CULTURE AND  
CENSORSHIP OR  
**DEATH OF THE DIALOGIC** IN  
THE AMERICAN THEATER



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FEATURING ANAT COGAN, ILASIEA GRAY,  
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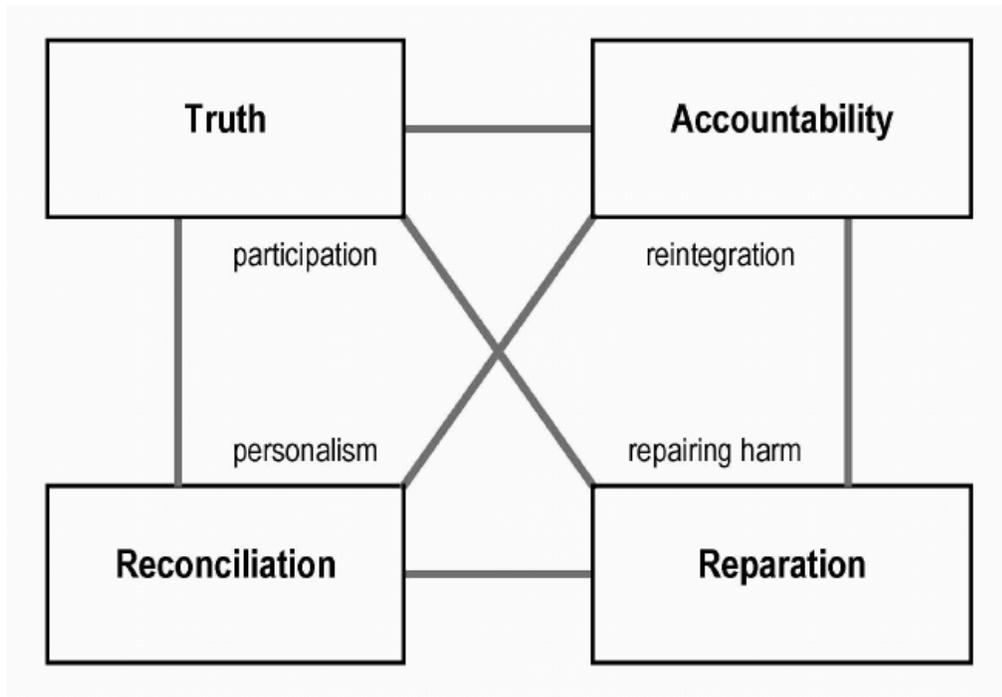
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### On Reconciliation and Restorative Justice

- Restorative Justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that allow all willing stakeholders to meet, although other approaches are available when that is impossible. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities.
- The three core elements of restorative justice are the interconnected concepts of **Encounter, Repair and Transform**. Each element is discrete and essential. Together they represent a journey toward wellbeing and wholeness that victims, offenders and community members can experience.
- Reconciliation is a **complex set of processes that involve building or rebuilding relationships**, often in the aftermath of massive and widespread human rights violations. It can occur at the individual, interpersonal, socio-political, and institutional levels and be described as “thin” if it is based on coexistence with little or no trust, respect, and shared values, or “thick” if it is based on the restoration of dignity, reversing structural causes of marginalization and discrimination, and restoring victims to their position as rights bearers and citizens.

### REFERENCES

- [www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)
- [www.ictj.org](http://www.ictj.org)
- [www.peaceinsight.org](http://www.peaceinsight.org)



## Performance that Invoke Restorative Justice Models

1. This is not a play but arguably the most relevant and directly parallel example of restorative justice. South Africa's **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** opened up the possibility of transformation of relationships between victims and perpetrators, and the impact of these encounters in the broader South African story of racial division and intergroup hatred between blacks as the oppressed group, and whites as beneficiaries of apartheid. It argues that when perpetrators express remorse they validate the victims' pains and give them back their uniqueness and that forgiveness, and not forgetting, is a healthy response that allows the parties to move forward.



More information here: <https://www.beyondintractability.org/library/reconciliation-through-restorative-justice-analyzing-south-africas-truth-and-reconciliation>

2. In 2017, Mosaic Theater Company produced ***A Human Being Died That Night*** based on the book by TRC commissioner and psychologist, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. In the play she interviews South Africa's most notorious apartheid-era assassin, Eugene de Kock, who received parole after spending 20 years in prison. The question of the play centered on forgiveness and authenticity of contrition.



Adapted for the stage by Nicholas Wright from Gobodo-Madikizela's best-selling 2003 book, this taut cross-examination is "a scorching look at Apartheid guilt" in a deeply wounded South Africa, and the pained negotiations between past and future in a country aching to move on.

3. **Blackbird** is a play written in 2005 by Scottish playwright David Harrower. It was inspired in part by the crimes of sex offender Toby Studebaker, and depicts a young woman meeting a middle-aged man fifteen years after being sexually abused by him when she was twelve.

4. Ariel Dorfman's **Death and the Maiden** is a moral thriller about a woman, Paulina, who believes that a stranger who comes to her home is the doctor who, under a military dictatorship, tortured and raped her many years before. Dorfman began writing the play in the mid-1980s, when he was in exile from Chile, a country under the rule of the military dictator General Augusto Pinochet. It was not until Chile's return to democracy in 1990 that Dorfman returned to the play and "understood. . . how the story had to be told."



5. **The Investigation** is a play by German playwright Peter Weiss that depicts the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963–1965. It carries the subtitle "Oratorio in 11 Cantos". Weiss was an observer at the trials and developed the play partially from the reports of Bernd Naumann.

6. A true story, still unfolding. June 3, 2017. A 25-year-old former Air Force linguist named Reality Winner is surprised at her home by the FBI, interrogated, and then charged with leaking evidence of Russian interference in U.S elections. Reality remains in jail with a record-breaking sentence. The FBI transcript of her interrogation is the heart of **Is this a Room?** By Tina Satter, conceived as a play and directed by Obie Award-winner Tina Satter, in which an extraordinary human drama unfolds between the complex and witty Reality (Emily Davis), and the agents who question her.



## A Dramaturgical Statement on the Notion of the Dialectical

Dialectics is one of those words that has come to mean many things to many people. I therefore want to start by making clear what I mean by dialectics, so that we share, at least for this dialogue, a common foundation for what is, after all, an unusual investigation of a methodological practice in the creation of theatre.

Dialectics has ancient roots in the dialogic method, the method of philosophical exploration in the form of dialogue and discussion utilized by Socrates and other early Greek philosophers. Early on in Western intellectual tradition it became associated with the notion that the search for truth is a social activity involving the clash (and interdependence) of varying viewpoints. As opposed to the metaphysical tradition which identifies truth (and the nature of the universe) with a stable, unchanging essence, **dialectics**



**identifies truth, to the extent that it recognizes the concept of truth at all (and the nature of the universe) with unceasing change and transformation.**

**Dialectics, however, holds that everything is itself and not itself at the same time, that is, everything is and is becoming. Nothing is static or self-contained. Everything is connected and nothing is finished, closed, concluded. Nothing, to use a theatrical term, is resolved.**

Dialectics, the practice of method and transformative logic first consciously introduced to the theatre by Brecht, has increasingly come to characterize the contemporary avant-garde, what has come to be referred to as the postmodern theatre. Although Brecht's understanding of dialectics was formulaic, it is nonetheless what links his work to contemporary postmodern developments in theatre and performance. The emerging postmodern and "political" theatre (characterized by a variety of writing styles from Caryl Churchill to its best understood, I hope to demonstrate, not in terms of content, but as a methodology of performance and a performance of method.

With his "epic" narrative form, Brecht attempted to find a structure more coherent with the dialectic method. His approach to structuring conflict, he argued, showed development as uneven and irregular; change as zig-zag and qualitative as opposed to linear and quantitative.

Brecht, in his well-known chart contrasting what he called "dramatic" theatre with his "epic" theatre, put it this way. In dramatic theatre, "the human being is taken for granted/he is unalterable/eyes on the finish/one scene makes another/growth/linear development/ evolutionary determinism/man as a fixed point." In epic theatre, on the other hand, "the human being is the

object of inquiry/he is alterable and able to alter/eyes on the course/each scene for itself/montage/in curves/jumps/man as process.”

**Why does understanding the dialectic matter for the process of *A Calamitous Affair*?** This play is, at its heart, about the inherent value of exchange of ideas despite the conflict and tension that that exchange inevitably breeds alongside change and growth. Understanding that *A Calamitous Affair* fits within this genre of political theater where interlocutors exchange ideas and are changed by them, like in most of Brecht or Ibsen’s plays, fundamentally informs its staging performance style and beyond.

This directly aligns with John’s vision for the production, which he describes as, “an event to be an expressionistic painting of a gigantic emotional and purely vulnerable event. This gives us freedom to go beyond the bounds of convention and realism into heightened tension, greater theatricality in expression, stronger, more in-your-face challenges to the audience.”

## **REFERENCES**

- “The Dialectical Method in the Work of Brecht and its Role in the Postmodernizing of the Theatre” by Dan Friedman
- *The Development of an Aesthetic* by Bertolt Brecht

## Intertextuality: Plays referred to in *Calamitous Affair*

### 1. *The Admission* by Motti Lerner (2014)

*AD: When Habib was doing THE MASSACRE at the J by night— he was writing THE REBIRTHING by day. We did a first reading at a donor's house!*

*EILAT: I can't imagine!*

*MIRI: Disgusting!*

*AD: I got the photos!*

A political drama about the contradicting narratives of the 1948 war that led to the establishment of the state of Israel and to the exile of the Palestinian refugees. Giora, a wounded veteran of a military action in Lebanon who tries to discover the circumstances surrounding the murder of a group of Palestinian villagers, by a unit commanded by his father, 40 years earlier, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.



### 2. *The Return* by Hanna Eady and Edward Mast (2017)

*AD: When Habib was doing THE MASSACRE at the J by night— he was writing THE REBIRTHING by day. We did a first reading at a donor's house!*

*AD: There could be dialogue. "Backstage at The Al-Madina!" Because you and Samad each talk about THE REBIRTHING – that it closed; prematurely – but why? What was going on? You could do a scene. Recreating. I'm sure our audience would find it fascinating!*

*EILAT: I'm not sure Samad would agree.*

*The Return* revolves around the aftermath of an affair between a Palestinian and an Israeli woman whom he allowed to believe he was Jewish. She would not have had sex with him had she known he was an Arab. Because he hid that from her, it's 'rape by deception,' which is a legal term in Israel and the U.K."



3. *I, Dareen T.* by Einat Weizman (2018)

*AD: (to Audience) We hear about it in workshop. Do 15 hours of interviews; every major incident in their lives as actors. Go with Eilat to visit the poet she's written about under house arrest, Dalia Tbakhi, who has a court date the same week in Nazareth. **Arrested for a poem!** We see her sentence commuted – then celebrate with the family after.*

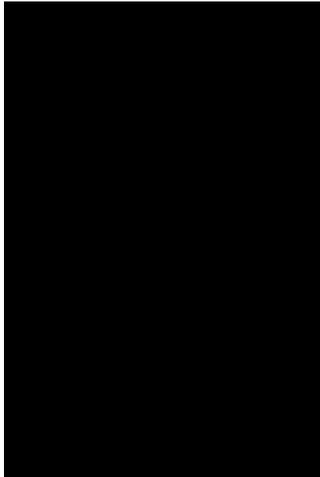
*AD: Fair. Still: I fly to Israel 6 weeks before first rehearsal to read the next draft aloud with Samad and Eilat. I'm dotting i's – crossing t's. See Eilat perform her new show, "I, DALIA," about the poet under house arrest, Dalia Tbakhi, "As Told To and Performed By Eilat Herzog." It's masterful. And she knocked it out in, like, a month?!*

*I, Dareen T.* Is a solo documentary theatre work based on the story of Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour, who was convicted by the Israeli authorities for "incitement to violence" over a poem and two posts she published on Facebook. She held a long legal battle (during which she was under house arrest) to prove that her poem and posts constituted a legitimate protest against the crimes of the Israeli occupation. In May 2018 she was sentenced to 5 months in prison.



The creator, who gives her body and voice to the poet to speak through her, uses her body as a channel for the testimony of Dareen, a testimony that exposes a double-oppressive narrative: the Israeli control over the Palestinian people, and the female oppression within a patriarchal society Dareen is part of. The narrative of Dareen and that of Einat merge and the boundaries between them become blurred. The work uses minimalistic performance means to expose a suppressed reality and gradually emerges as an act of liberation, from the chains of oppression, through sisterhood.

4. Shame 2.0 by Einat Weizman with Morad Hassan (2019)



*“This is not just a call to Resist ‘Occupation’ – It’s a call to Resist Our Existence. Of course, I knew this before seeing Humiliation 2.0 – I’d done my research – But to my surprise, there it was! Never questioned! Apparently, Herzog is so wrapped up in her own Righteous Narrative as to be incapable of Self-Scrutiny.”*

Hate mail. Death threats. Intimidation. Incarceration. Artists under siege and house arrest. This is happening. Now. This is Shame 2.0, a blistering, documentary portrait ripped right from today’s headlines. As Israelis and Palestinians work together in the face of government censorship, cultural suppression, and Loyalty Oaths, we see the costs on embattled artists in a conflict-ridden region unfold onstage.

5. Borders by Nimrod Danishman (2020)

*AD: We were watching a play about two guys on Grindr. One from Lebanon. One from the Galilee.*

*EILAT: A Grindr play at IsraDrama? Was it any good?*

*AD: I don’t know. I think so. At first I couldn’t tell if it was him.*

The play, “Borders,” is about two gay men, Boaz, an Israeli, and George, who is Lebanese, who meet on Grindr, a social networking app for the LGBTQ community. Onstage, the play tells a story that takes place over the course of three months.



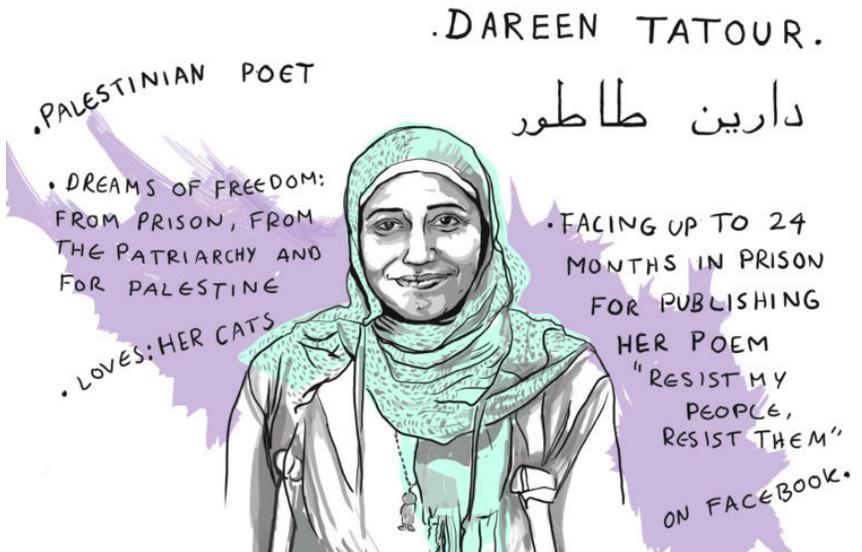
## Non-Anglophone Glossary

1. **Ma-Zeh (9)** - Modern Hebrew to "What's this?"
2. **Al-Madina (20)** - An allusion to Al Midan Theatre in Haifa, which was Israel's only state funded Arabic-language theater, until it was defunded by the state after being embroiled in controversy over a production of a play based on the life of a killer of an Israeli soldier.
3. **Sephardi-Mizrachi (22)** - Although sometimes used interchangeably, the terms "Sephardi" and "Mizrachi" refer to two distinct Jewish diasporas, each one itself characterized by internal cultural diversity. Since a majority lived for many centuries in the Islamic world, both "Sephardi" and "Mizrachi" Jews encountered the modern age facing many of the same forces, among them Western colonialism, the dissolution of empire, and the rise of nation-states.
4. **Kiryat Gat (22)** - a city in the Southern District of Israel where Miri Regev is from.
5. **Ashkenaz (23)** - Ashkenaz in the Hebrew Bible is one of the descendants of Noah. Ashkenaz is the first son of Gomer, and a Japhetic patriarch in the Table of Nations.
6. **Yemenite (23)** - a native or inhabitant of Yemen, or a person of Yemeni descent.
7. **Galut (23)** - [Hebrew: "exile", "diaspora", "captivity"] A period of deprivation of statehood and of life under foreign rule, particularly the life of Jewish people outside Palestine, and today — outside Israel.
8. **Kippa (23)** - A kippah, yarmulke, or koppel is a brimless cap, usually made of cloth, worn by Jewish males to fulfill the customary requirement that the head be covered.
9. **Koolulam (23)** - Koolulam is a Haifa social-musical initiative aimed at strengthening the fabric of society, centering around mass-singing events.
10. **Al Kol Eleh (23)** - A nationalist Israeli song. This song is very Israeli expression of faith in God, not in a ritualistic sense but in that God is part of every aspect of life— including the honey and the bee sting, the garden and even the walls. [Listen here.](#)
11. **Naqba (36)** - The Nakba, also known as the Palestinian Catastrophe, was the destruction of Palestinian society and homeland in 1948, and the permanent displacement of a majority of the Palestinian Arabs.
12. **Gadna (36)** - Gadna is an Israeli military program that prepares young people for military service in the Israel Defense Forces. It was established before the foundation of the State of Israel and was anchored in law in 1949.
13. **Ben Shemen (36)** - Ben Shemen Youth Village is a youth village and agricultural boarding school in central Israel. Located near Ben Shemen and Ginaton, it falls under the jurisdiction of Hevel Modi'in Regional Council. In 2019 it had a population of 620

- 14. Lod / Lyddah (36)** - Lod, also called Lydda, is a city 15 km southeast of Tel Aviv in the Central District of Israel. Right next to Ben Shemen. It is situated between the lower Shephelah on the east and the coastal plain on the west. The city had a population of 77,223 in 2019. Lod is an ancient city, and Neolithic remains have been discovered there. (see earlier note about Ben Shemen) Also see Ari Shavit's devastating New Yorker article, "Lydda, 1948: A City, a Massacre, and the Middle East Today":  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/10/21/lydda-1948>.
- 15. Chalutzit (36)** - In the days of the chalutzim" is an expression one often hears in Israel. It evokes images of young people in shorts draining swamps, planting oranges and dancing the hora after a day's work in the fields. The Chalutzim, or pioneers in an organization called BILU, that came to Israel, created Moshavot with hopes and dreams that Israel would become an Am (people), not just a group of individuals. This was during the 1st Aliyah between 1881 and 1903, however, there were still difficulties during this time period.
- 16. Kibbutz Ma'ale Ha-Hami-sha (59)** - A kibbutz is an intentional community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. Ma'ale HaHamisha is a kibbutz in central Israel. Located in the Judean hills just off the Jerusalem–Tel Aviv highway, It falls under the jurisdiction of Mateh Yehuda Regional Council. In 2019 it had a population of 793.
- 17. Shiva (59)** - Shiva is the week-long mourning period in Judaism for first-degree relatives. The ritual is referred to as "sitting shiva" in English. The shiva period lasts for seven days following the burial.
- 18. Kaddish (61)** - Kaddish is a 13th century, Aramaic prayer said during every traditional prayer service. Kaddish means 'sanctification' in Aramaic and it is related to the Hebrew word Kadosh, which means 'holy.' The word of the Kaddish are:  
*May his great name be blessed, forever and ever. Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, honored, elevated and luaded be the Name of the holy one, Blessed is he – above and beyond any blessings and hymns, Praises and consolations which are uttered in the world; and say Amen.*
- 19. Alte-kacker (66)** - A senior citizen with a Yiddish accent. Basically the equivalent of saying "boomer"
- 20. Haaretz (67)** - Haaretz is a very liberal, Israeli newspaper. It was founded in 1918, making it the longest running newspaper currently in print in Israel, and is now published in both Hebrew and English in the Berliner format
- 21. Bil'in (67)** - Bil'in is a Palestinian village located in the Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate, 12 kilometres west of the city of Ramallah in the central West Bank. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Bil'in has a population of 1,800, mostly Muslims.
- 22. Dhimmi (69)** - A dhimmi refers to a non-Muslim subject of the Ottoman Empire. Derived from Islamic legal conceptions of membership to society, non-Muslims 'dhimmis' were afforded protection by the state and did not serve in the military, in return for specific taxes.

## Dareen Tatour

- Palestinian poet, Dareen Tatour was arrested during an Israeli police raid in October 2015, a few days after posting on Facebook and Youtube a video of herself reading a poem titled "Resist, my people resist them" as the soundtrack to images of Palestinians in violent confrontations with Israeli troops.
- She was sentenced by an Israeli court to five months in prison for "inciting terrorism" in a poem she posted on social media.



- The prosecution wanted to send her to jail between 15 and 26 months but the judge decided to send her for five months which is still a long time in prison.
- Nadim Nashif, director of 7amleh, the Arab Center for Social Media Advancement based in Haifa, told Al Jazeera that Tatour's sentence and conviction are part of the systematic attempt of the Israeli government to reduce Palestinian freedom of speech on the internet.



- Tatour was arrested for three months and was interrogated five times by Israeli officers. Each interrogation lasted five to six hours.
- Some 40 people gathered in the Haifa Al-Ghad club, including five young Palestinian poets, Dareen's father and some relatives and friends, local activists and poetry lovers to emphasize the persecution of Palestinian arts – by calling for an artistic event.
- A few excerpts from the poem:  
"Resist, my people, resist them. / Resist the settler's robbery / And follow the caravan of martyrs."

"I wasn't expecting justice to be done. The case was political from the start because I am Palestinian and support freedom of speech," she told reporters at the Nazareth Magistrate's Court in northern Israel.

"The whole world will hear my story. The whole world will hear what Israel's democracy is. A democracy for Jews only. Only Arabs go to jail. The court said I am convicted of terrorism. If that's my terrorism, I give the world a terrorism of love."

"They considered me a danger for Israelis, but when they dictated the location of my house arrest, they could not find a place more Israeli than Tel Aviv to do that. I find this ironic," she said.

## REFERENCES

- [Al-Jazeera on Dareen Tatour](#)
- [BBC News on Dareen Tatour](#)
- [Middle East Eye on Dareen Tatour](#)
- [Haifa Poetry Night](#)

## Miri Regev



- Mere months after her military discharge, Regev became a member of the Knesset with Likud after the 2009 elections for the Eighteenth Knesset, which ran from 2009 to 2013. She participated in a wide array of committees and lobbies during the Eighteenth Knesset, including Chair of Subcommittee for the Outlying Areas, Member of Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Chair of Lobby for Strengthening the Periphery, and Member of Lobby for the Prevention of Illegal Immigration to Israel.

- With the 2013 elections for the Nineteenth Knesset—which lasted from 2013 to 2015—Regev retained her seat as an MK. She served as Chair of Internal Affairs and Environment Committee, Chair for Applying Israeli Law in Judea and Samaria, Chair of the Lobby for Closing the Social Gaps, Member of Lobby for Female Knesset Members, and Member of Gay Pride Lobby.

- By the 2015 elections for the Twentieth Knesset, Regev had become an indispensable part of

modern Likud's brand. As one of the party's rising stars, she rocketed up to fourth position on the party's list of candidates. During the Twentieth Knesset, which lasted from 2015 to 2019, Regev was appointed Minister of Culture and Sport.

- Regev retained her status as a member of the Knesset through the political upheavals that heralded two ephemeral governments—the Twenty-First Knesset from March to October 2019, and the Twenty-Second Knesset from October 2019 to March 2020—as electoral stalemates prevented the creation of any viable majority government coalition.
- Regev continues to serve as a member of the Knesset and currently holds a position as Minister of Transportation and Road Safety. She has reportedly been tapped to become Minister of Foreign Affairs in November 2021 when Benny Gantz becomes Prime Minister—as per the details of the unity agreement between Likud and Blue and White—but her future in this role is purely speculative at this point in time.

## **PUBLIC OPINION**

- Her tenure as Minister of Culture and Sport was especially fraught, considering Regev's open antagonism to Israel's Ashkenazi cultural elite. Regev possessed a strong stance against allocating government funding to art projects she perceived to be unsupportive of the state of Israel, which typically included a sizable number of Israel's most internationally

recognized artists. Instead, as Minister of Culture and Sport she favored redistributing government funds towards artists who had previously fallen outside the normal boundaries of Israeli culture, such as Mizrahim, Ethiopians, or residents of Israel's periphery. Some of the notable institutions and individuals Regev clashed with as Minister of Culture and Sport include the Arab-Israeli Al-Midan Theater in Haifa, renowned pianist and composer Daniel Barenboim, and Israeli author Amos Oz.

- Her proud display of her Mizrahi identity, and the degree to which she explicitly plays upon tensions between Israeli Ashkenazim and Mizrahim in her politics. On multiple occasions, insults directed at Regev have been drawn from well-trodden anti-Mizrahi sentiments that cast Mizrahim as backwards, brutish, unintelligent, or superstitious.
- Actor Gavri Banai called her a "behema," a beast. Theater director and actor Oded Kotler, in remarks much criticized from all sides, dismissed the entire body of Likud voters who supported her as a "herd of beasts."
- Author David Grossman has accused Regev of fanning Israel's tensions into a veritable culture war and voiced concern that she intends to turn Israel into a "militant, fundamentalist sect."
- Actor Itay Tiran called her "populist," "manipulative," and "lacking in culture." Columnist Nahum Barnea described her as a "walking graffiti wall" and warned that she was two minutes away from becoming a national joke.

## REFERENCES

- [Jewish Women's Archive](#)
- [Haaretz](#)