

‘Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha’Olam,
shehecheyanu v’kimanu v’higiyanu lazman hazeh!’*

I heard dozens of Jewish voices ricochet off the dignified walls of MacBride Hall join in as I launched into the Shehecheyanu; the Jewish blessing for momentous milestones and joyous occasions and at that moment, my heart could have burst from my chest with joy. I had the honor of speaking at the Anne Frank Tree planting ceremony after having witnessed the unfolding of this ambitious project over months, and it was poignant and beautiful to see it all come together so magnificently. I also found myself *kveling* (being joyfully proud of) over the other speakers, including our own synagogue president, Janice Weiner, with words of vision and leadership, Jewish playwright Emma Silverman with a powerful narrative of remembrance and resilience and keynote spoken word poet, Amal Kassir, who navigated a complex and weighty topic with passion and sensitivity.

trees, as hundreds of people stood in a circle around it, clapping and rejoicing.

After having unstuck my shoes from the muddy ground, close to a hundred of us found our way to Phillips Hall, where we ushered in Shabbat with joyous song, as Josh Hare, the Hillel Program Director, and myself led a spirited and soulful Kabbalat Shabbat service. We concluded the evening at a delectable dinner at Hillel, where we schmoozed, feasted and dug into Jamie Holt’s delicious skirt steak dinner. It was truly a night to remember.

Janice, in her President’s Column, has written incisively about the successes and challenges of the Anne Frank Tree planting and its reporting in the local media. I am amplifying her observations and voice in this regard. This special day was a victory for inclusion, diversity and meaningful remembrance and our Iowa City community has made significant strides uplifting not just Jewish