

*Testimony of Elie Yarden
of the Green-Rainbow Party
May 23, 2011*

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Statement to City Council meeting of May 23, 2011

Honorable Councillors,

Reading the news, trials of people big and small in the face of natural disaster, participating in two of recent events of 'Climate Change Week,' I appreciate the political difficulty of getting people to confront physical change. But some of us are privileged by a different politics. A politics that makes it easier for us to draw connections, and to anticipate what might be needed.

This may not make us invulnerable to that soul-sick fear of ones own finitude that drives people to seek solace in holding on to tokens of permanence such as public office, courting immortality in having ones name on a public building, or abusing ones subordinates. But we do have ethical expectations of our public officials, elected or appointed, no less than of ourselves.

The situation confronting the members of the City Council, last Monday and today, is of its own making. Why continue to evade it? Many of you have had opportunity to observe, right here in this chamber, the unethical and very public behaviors of deliberate demeaning of the weaker, and you have feared to speak out, even when it was your duty to do so, in 'evaluating performance.' Did you really expect impunity to bring about an improvement in behavior? (Go read the papers.) I have sat here, as have many others, to hear about problems of bullying. In the schools. Among youth. Why could you not stand up to it here? (What is it that makes the fear that motivates this typically masculine assertion of power acceptable to women other than that they share it?)

But enough of pathos! You are accountable in law for how the public money is spent. If you consider the waste of millions from the public trust to keep executive talent happy, you might succeed better in some international agency. What makes you so sure that you wish to actually represent the very few people who continue to vote you into office? Are you sure that you might not lead fuller existences, however brief, without it.

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