

www.TheJewishMagazine.Com
The **JEWISH** magazine

HOW THE MARKOWITZ FAMILY BROUGHT FASHION - ONE STEP AT A TIME

WINTER 2007 COLLECTIONS HOT OFF THE RUNWAY

STEP INTO J'WALKIN' JEREMY FREED'S CLOSET



TJM CELEBRATES FASHION IN CANADA



ISBN 14169873201 -6
1 416987 3201 6
Issue 147 Nov 2007

Philanthropy

By Lisa Summers

She is a corporate leader, visionary and philanthropist who embraces the ideal of living with passion. Joelle Berdugo Adler, known to friends as "Joey", is the president of Diesel Canada as well as the founder and driving force behind One X One (pronounced "one by one"). This umbrella charity partners with organizations such as DATA (co-founded by Bono), Spread the Net, Free the Children and others, to improve the lives of children in need, both in Canada and abroad.

In just three short years, One X One has become the premiere event at the Toronto International Film Festival, having drawn the likes of Bono, Brad Pitt, and Matt Damon to the annual gala. More significantly, it has raised

How has Judaism influenced your work with One X One?

The basis of the mission and foundation of One X One is based on the Talmudic saying that if you save one life, you save the universe.



OneXOne founder Joelle Berdugo Adler and her father Fred Berdugo

That, to me, is the most powerful phrase that we have in our lexicon of famous quotes... there can be no more important message for humanity. It touches on the fact that every single life is equally precious; that every single human being has the same value, and that we should never feel as though we can make distinctions between people. Imagine the power of that saying.

When my husband was sick, I lived every single moment with that saying in my mind, repeating it over and over again. And when I started One X One, this was the message I gave to people as to what the mission of our foundation was: that every single life must be respected.

My husband and I were always philanthropic - it was part of everything we did. This was very important to us. And then of course, there's the basic premise of Tzedakah and our responsibilities as Jews to make a difference.

Do you believe that Jews have a special responsibility to "give back"?

There are other religions, for example, Mormons, who tithes. That comes from the Old Testament. I believe that giving to those

ONE X ONE

millions of dollars for charities who in turn have established programs for sick children, Canada's First Nations, and children without adequate food, clean water or medical supplies in Africa.

The story of how One X One began is a testament to the strength of an extraordinary woman. On the evening of September 11th, 2001, Adler sat next to her husband and business partner, Lou Adler, who lay clinging to life in a hospital bed. Doctors had refused to provide complete medical assistance, reasoning that Lou was not likely to survive the week. Where others would have lost hope, Adler rose to the challenge of finding alternative medical care for Lou, who ultimately lived another sixteen months.

It was the night of September 11th, however, in the wake of the destruction of the twin towers, that Adler made a decision that would alter the trajectory of her life. As she watched a program on Africa in the hospital, she was struck by how the lives of those suffering on the other side of the world, and her husband's life, were one and the same: infinitely precious. Adler promised herself that if she made it through that night, she would do something for Africa. After reading *The Tipping Point* a short while later, the concept of One X One was born: Adler decided she would show that every life in the world has value. From there, she expanded the concept to include the idea that we can all make a difference, one person at a time, to save another person, one at a time.

Adler's faith is at the core of her work with One X One, as she describes below.

less fortunate is not only a Jewish thing - it's a humanity issue.

I think though, that it is a deeply-rooted message in Judaism. During Rosh Hashanah, and especially at Yom Kippur, we read through



The Dutchess of York and the African Children's Choir

the services, that there are three things we can do to atone for our transgressions, one being charity. So yes, we have responsibilities, but not only as Jews, as human beings. We are lucky that it is such an important part of our teachings. I think we are better educated at it.

Are there any verses from the Torah that have special meaning for you?

There are a few lessons [that] I think have formed me. One is a simple thing: When a guest comes to you, it is necessary to escort them to the door when they are leaving for the simple reason that if they leave alone, they may feel as though they were an intrusion. That made me really think...people come to visit you - what does it take to get up and walk them out? It's really nothing. But the bigger message I think, is this is another way of teaching us to be sensitive to others' feelings and needs - it is also a way to give people a sense of dignity, meaning they are important to you.

The other lesson I believe is from Genesis: how great a sin it is to embarrass someone. It is incredible to think that the message is so clear. Again, how we conduct ourselves around others, how we behave towards people, can we take that extra time and be respectful - all these things have really influenced me.

Finally, there are other important lessons (in the Torah) vis-a-vis ego and integrity - these two things are paramount to how I want to live my life.

Who or what has most influenced your work over the past year? Do you have any personal heroes?

There are so many people that are doing such incredible work who inspire me, but they are not necessarily the ones that are in the limelight. I have been touched by the people I met working in Rwanda; for instance, a young doctor from the U.S. who has committed himself to helping others. There is also a Rwandese doctor who is about 30 years old and has eleven children, two of his own, and nine more brought home from the hospital so his wife and he can take care of them. Then there is Josh Ruxin, who has a doctorate in public health and works for Columbia University. His dedication to Africa is unbelievable. He and his wife just had a baby and are going to go back to Rwanda to raise their family. They continue to make a profound change in the lives of children - they are the people that inspire me. In the end, I give my time and help to raise money [but] they are dedicating themselves and their entire lives.

What keeps you going?

I love what I do! I love my business and I love

the philanthropy I am involved with. We are a group of people around the One X One board who really believe with all our hearts that we can make profound changes in the lives of thousands of children. There can be no better motivator. I try to do everything with 100% commitment and I never quit. "Not possible" is not in my vocabulary!

Has your vision for One X One changed over the past three years? How?

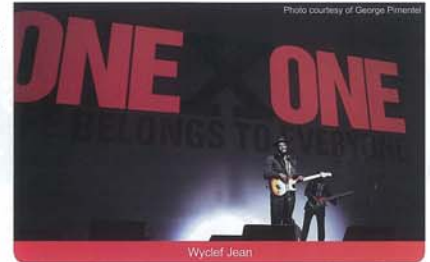
Yes, the vision has changed in that it is now completely focused on children. At the beginning [the focus was on] children as well as other components. Also, we are concentrating on specific areas where we feel we can make sustainable and profound changes. For example, Rwanda is our African focus, and then we are going to start work in Haiti with Wyclef Jean's foundation Yele Haiti, among others. So, by concentrating on specific areas, we feel we can effect change in a more efficient way.

What are your plans for the upcoming year?

Establishing One X One USA, as well as implementing more programs; creating huge events for Haiti and a special one here in Canada to not only raise money, but bring the attention and focus to the causes.

Is there anything you'd like to add that I haven't asked you?

I can't believe how fortunate I am as an individual to having taken the time to learn our religion. I came from an Orthodox family where religion was more a burden than the beautiful life blueprint it can be. For many years, we



Wyclef Jean

were traditional but not observant or committed to learning. But when my husband and I got involved with Chabad, we went back to our roots and took the time to learn about the life lessons our religion is steeped in.

Religion should be about spirituality. With everything I went through when my husband was sick, many people would have turned away from religion feeling that God had abandoned them; we were more in tune with the fact that we were seeing miracle upon miracle, getting my husband through the most catastrophic moments any human being could go through. Faith gave strength to all of us to go forth and not fall into the depths of self-pity and bitterness. And everyday, I draw on our religion to make many of my decisions.

There's a new book called *The Secret* that everyone is raving about. The premise of the book is that a person's thoughts are paramount in everything that happens in [his or her] life. So, if you think positively, positive things happen and visa versa. This comes directly from the Old Testament - the fact that your thoughts correlate with action, so whatever you want to achieve is possible. That belief has been something very important in my life.



OneXOne founder Joelle Berdugo Adler and the African Children's Choir