

Journalist Laura Kasinof at Congregation B'nai Abraham Sunday Brunch



Laura shares her experiences reporting from Yemen and the Middle East at CBA Sunday brunch

Honored guest speaker, peripatetic freelance journalist, and local-girl-done-good Laura Kasinof spoke before a packed room at Congregation B'nai Abraham during Sunday Brunch early in December.

Kasinof, a graduate of Greencastle-Antrim High School, later New York University (2007) with a degree in Middle Eastern Studies and Politics, has been reporting for the *New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Al Jazeera*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Huffington Post* for the past four years, much of it based out of Sanaa, Yemen. Noting her advantage as a woman reporting in Yemen, she said, "Western women are like a third gender," one free to interview Yemeni women otherwise off-limits in their tribal societies to male journalists.

Issues addressed by the journalist included the Arab Spring, the anti-corruption zeitgeist of it, police brutality and police states in Egypt and Tunisia, the acceptance and state-aided defense of the Jewish community in Yemen (about 300 families remaining today), education and drug use in the state (users of the narcotic "khat": 90 percent of men, Kasinof said, and 60 percent of the women), also how Yemen happens to have played host to Islamist murderers and terrorist acts: some things are "easier to do in Yemen" compared, for example, with Dubai, she noted.

Given the adventure, the stories still breaking, and the sense of security experienced in Aden, one brunch participant asked how Kasinof happened to come home: "I left because my mother wanted me home for Thanksgiving."

Thanks to mom, more than 60 members of Congregation B'nai Abraham got to enjoy a Middle East briefing over fresh bagels, coffee, cream cheese, and lox from one of the world's young and rising frontline journalists.

*Photo & review by Jim Oppenheim
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