

ROB ESHMAN

From CicLAvia to Cedars Sinai

by Rob Eshman

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Rob Eshman, Publisher and Editor-in-Chief

To the woman who confronted me last Sunday at the Celebrate Israel Festival, ranting that airplane vapor trails are actually toxic secret government gasses: You complain that journalists don't take you seriously. They might, if you didn't walk around wearing large posters of airplane vapor trails.

To the man who attacked me for not being outraged that some festival vendors weren't kosher: My lack of outrage wasn't because, as you said, I "don't really care about Judaism." I just pointed out that there were plenty of kosher options for people who wanted them.

To the woman who yelled at me about the Palestinians: For the millionth time, just because we don't agree doesn't mean I'm anti-Israel. I'm not even anti-you. Yet.

Ah, community.

Sunday, April 21, reminded us that you can't live without your community, even if, sometimes, you wish you could.

In the morning, just a block from my house, the CicLAvia ride closed down Venice Boulevard from downtown to the beach. The massive sea of bicyclists — an estimated 150,000 people took part — proves that CicLAvia is a genius idea that taps into a deep Los Angeles yearning for connection.

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But it was also just so ... crowded. The jam-up made me wonder two things: Isn't there a way to create serious, substantial bike lanes (and bike shares) around Los Angeles all year round, so we can spread the enthusiasm out a bit? And: Can't they close down Venice Boulevard just for me?

I'd planned my Sunday to go to the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books, on the USC campus, and then to Rancho Park, site of this

year's Celebrate Israel Festival, and then to Cedars-Sinai, where I was moderating a panel discussion on "Healing and Spirituality." Having a traffic-free Venice Boulevard all to myself would have been like having my own heliport.

But I managed (passing on the Festival of Books, as I'd gone there the day before). At the Celebrate Israel Festival, I noticed attendance was down from last year. Maybe because of lingering fears over the Boston Marathon bombing, was one theory. Maybe because there were so many other things going on that day: CicLAvia, the Long Beach Grand Prix, the Festival of Books, the Lakers game. Maybe because the whole festival needs to be reinvented.

Whatever the reasons, it's too bad more people didn't show up. Once a year, it's a good idea to bring together in one place as much as possible of our vast, unruly, cantankerous, diverse and colorful L.A. Zion, if only so each one of us can reconfirm that our particular synagogue, or political viewpoint, or level of observance, is the best — and that all those other Jews are probably nuts.

Yes, it was a long, tiring, fulfilling, exasperating, funny and teary day. In other words, a day in community. We might fantasize about having Venice Boulevard all to ourselves, but would that really make us happy?

"Here lies the very essence of our way of life," Elie Weisel once wrote. "Every person must share in the life of others, and not leave them to themselves, either in sorrow or in joy."

[Click here for more on the Celebrate Israel Festival](#)