

# Galina Nizhnikov

Galina Nizhnikov's (1940- ) parents moved to Moscow in the mid-1920s from Kodyma, a small shtetl near Odesa, Ukraine. Notwithstanding the deprivations of World War II, which the family spent in evacuation in Orenberg, Russia, Galina had a happy childhood. She grew up in Moscow in a house that her father, a carpenter, had built near the city center. Her parents maintained a vegetable garden and raised chickens and even pigs on the strip of land surrounding their home. They attempted to shield their children from the Stalinist campaigns engulfing the country and spoke Yiddish among themselves whenever they wanted to keep their children from overhearing their conversations.

Galina's problems began after she, her husband, their two children, and her in-laws were refused exit visas in 1975. The idea to emigrate to the United States was first raised by her father-in-law, a Jewish veteran of World War II who had fought all the way to Berlin with the Red Army. He had grown disillusioned and felt that everything for which he and others had sacrificed so much was being squandered by the regime. Once the family was refused exit visas, Galina's husband was forced to resign from the laboratory where he worked. Galina retained her job, but her coworkers shunned her and wrote letters about her to the administration.



Galina Nizhnikov



Edward and Sasha Nizhnikov at an underground festival of Jewish music in Moscow.

*Courtesy of the Nizhnikov family.*

After emigrating to the United States, Galina spent more than ten years taking part in protests, letter-writing campaigns, and speaking engagements on behalf of refuseniks. She served on the Resettlement Committee for the North Shore Federation and volunteered at Action for Soviet Jewry. Her tireless work on behalf of refuseniks helped countless refugees from the former Soviet Union start new lives in the United States.



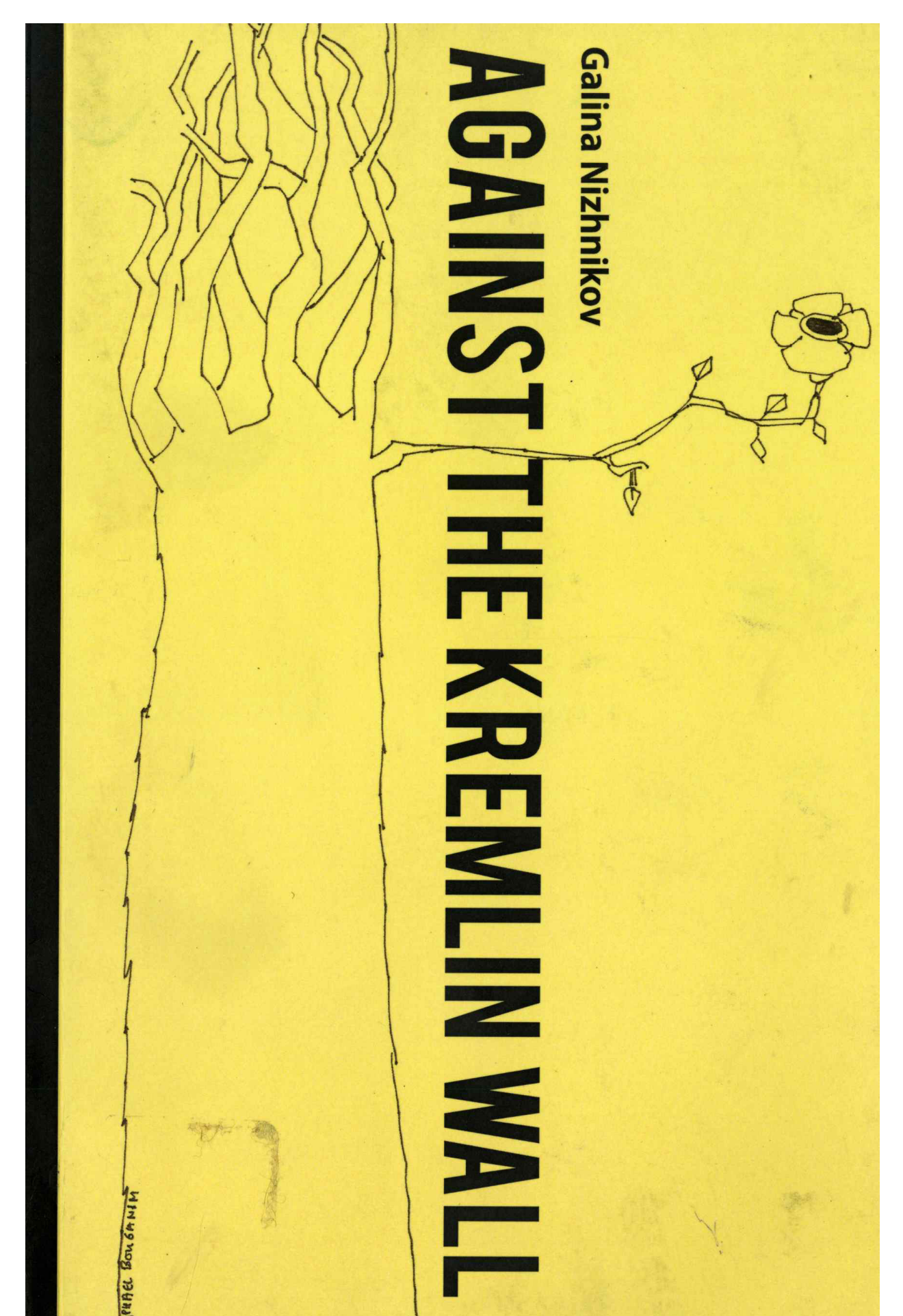
Scan the QR code to hear Galina Nizhnikov speak about the protests she participated in during the late 1970s in the Soviet Union.



Galina Nizhnikov with other refusenik women during a protest in Moscow in 1978.

*Courtesy of the Nizhnikov family.*

Soon after, the couple started participating in protests, for which they were harassed and surveilled by the KGB. During this time, Galina met and became friends with Ida Nudel, the "Guardian Angel" of refuseniks. In 1978, Galina took part in a series of unprecedented women-only demonstrations in Moscow that were led and organized by Nudel. Later that year, Senator Edward Kennedy visited the Soviet Union to advocate for the release of several refuseniks, one of whom was Galina. Thanks in part to his intervention, Galina's family received exit visas in late 1978.



The book *Against the Kremlin Wall* chronicles the series of women-only protests in which Galina Nizhnikov participated in 1978.

