

# CJH Today

A Publication of the Center for Jewish History

Spring 2010

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends,

It has been 10 years since five distinguished Jewish archival and cultural institutions came together to build a communal home dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Jewish people. That home is what we refer to as the Center for Jewish History and it is focused on the vibrant collections and historic contributions of the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS), American Sephardi Federation (ASF), Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), Yeshiva University Museum (YUM) and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO). Together with its partners, the Center has emerged from a vision to become a bastion that safeguards the memory of the Jewish people from being destroyed, re-written or erased.

During its short but meaningful 10-year history, the Center has been a learning institute and resource for more than 40,000 students, scholars and members of the general public from over 55 countries from around the world who conducted research on-site, and for the tens of thousands more who have obtained knowledge online at the Center's Web site. It has become a destination of Jewish learning and culture for the more than 210,000 visitors who have viewed exhibits, attended conferences, enjoyed films, concerts and performances, and participated in a plethora of public programs. The Center has provided support to more than 200 graduate students through its fellowship program.

It is important to recognize the continued support of the prominent philanthropists, foundations and governmental institutions who have acknowledged the importance of the Center's work, as well as the more than 25,000 individuals and families who have been inspired to contribute to the Center's continued growth with more than \$130 million raised since our founding.

It is with great pleasure that I wish all of you continued success in the New Year and look forward to the Center's future as a vibrant home to study and celebrate the Jewish experience.

*Bruce Slovin*

Bruce Slovin  
Chairman



## NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS



Before Judah P. Benjamin became the Confederacy's Secretary of State and Jefferson Davis' right hand man, he was a U.S. Senator from Louisiana and an advocate for a trans-Mexican railway to facilitate commerce with California via the Gulf of Mexico. AJHS received a gift of the 1850s correspondence of more than 100 letters and telegrams from Benjamin to his major NYC investor in this scheme. The historic documents were discovered in a Newport, RI basement and were the topic of a feature story in the New York Times.



As part of a year-long program on the Jews of Spain, ASF and the Sephardic House presented a Symposium entitled "The Jews of Spain: Past and Present" on December 5-7, 2009. Senior Spanish Government officials came to New York to join eminent scholars from the US, Canada and Israel in addressing both the triumphs and travails of the Sephardic Jewish legacy in Spain. The symposium proceedings will be published into a book, documenting the deep roots of the Sephardic heritage in Spain, and translated into Spanish and distributed to universities, libraries, and other institutions throughout Spain.



Leo Baeck Institute recently acquired a collection of books by the greatest intellectuals of the Renaissance period, including Erasmus, Martin Luther, Sir Thomas More, and Johannes Reuchlin. Reuchlin, a Christian theologian, defended the right of Jews to publish books at a time, when the Church controlled the press. This debate was one of the earliest controversies in Jewish-Christian relations, and without Reuchlin's intervention, these Jewish books may have been burned.



*A Journey Through Jewish Worlds: Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books* offers museum visitors a first-time glimpse at the rare treasures inside a world-class private collection. The exhibition provides an overview of seven centuries of Jewish creativity and artistry, and features beautifully ornamented legal and liturgical manuscripts, decorated marriage contracts and illustrated scrolls of the Book of Esther, many with richly crafted cases made from precious metals or carved wood. The exhibition will run from March 21 through July 11, 2010.



The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is pleased to announce that it has received a gift of approximately \$4.5 million from the estate of Michael (Mickey) Ross, an award-winning television writer, who was the first generation son of Jewish immigrant parents. The initial bequest will be supplemented by periodic residual payments from the estate. YIVO shares the estate with the National Yiddish Book Center and the Los Angeles Jewish Federation.



Guests mingle during cocktails at the Center's Great Real Estate Families of Gotham.

## GREAT REAL ESTATE FAMILIES OF GOTHAM

Keeping to its mission of preserving Jewish heritage and honoring Jewish contributions to society, the Center for Jewish History hosted its 5th annual dinner celebrating the history of Jewish involvement in building New York. The event was held on December 10 and featured Howard P. Milstein, Chairman and CEO of New York Private Bank & Trust Corporation, and Milstein Properties.

Mr. Milstein has continued his family legacy as a prolific builder of large scale office buildings and apartment houses in New York City and is regarded as one of the most prominent individuals in the real estate and banking industries. Guests attended breakout sessions by leading academics that chronicled the limitations placed on Jews in Banking and Politics; their roles as Merchants in the Garment Industry; the emerging significance of High Tech Economics and Jewish Entrepreneurship; the historical challenges of Usury, Anti-Semitism, Capitalism; and an insider's exploration of Untold Real Estate Transactions. The Center developed this model of fund-raising, which targets the real estate and finance communities, because it not only provides a unique networking opportunity, but allows attendees to engage in an evening of high-level scholarship and philanthropy.

In the past five years, more than 1000 guests have attended these annual events, creating a new generation of donors and partners interested in the context of the history of business, finance and real estate, as it relates to the core mission of the Center. The event attracted nearly 200 guests, representing a cross-section of the real estate and financial leaders who came to the Center and raised more than \$850,000.



Steven Kumble



Bill Ackman

### THE EVENT'S BREAKOUT SESSIONS INCLUDED:



David Engel on the great Jewish banking families of the Modern Era who played an essential role in Jewish politics and Jewish identity.



Derek Penslar on the transformation of Israel's economy from agrarian socialism to one of the world's most dynamic hubs for high-tech entrepreneurship.



Hans Sternberg on the legacy of Godchaux's/Maison Blanche, at one time America's largest family-owned department store chain and a symbol of the success of Jewish immigrant families in the United States.



Jerry Z. Muller on the history of the relationship between Jews, usury, Anti-Semitism and capitalism, from medieval Europe through today.



Kenneth Patton on the untold stories and dramatic tales of the history of the great Jewish real estate families of New York.



*Honorary Chair Howard P. Milstein and Abby Milstein*



*Simon Ziff and Joseph S. Steinberg*



*Beth Rosenstein, Elysabeth Kleinbans and Peter Kleinbans*



*Isaac Khafif, Edgard Khafif, Robert Shapiro and Jerome Gottesman.*



*Brian Rush and Rafael Bejerano*

*Save the Date*

**Wednesday, October 13, 2010**

**The Center for Jewish History's Sixth Annual Real Estate/Finance Event**

Featuring keynote remarks by Sam Zell, Chairman and President, Equity Group Investments, LLC

# THE HISTORY OF GENOCIDE INITIATIVE

In November 2009, the Center launched its History of Genocide Initiative in partnership with AJHS and YUM, with an international conference, **Genocide and Human Experience: Raphael Lemkin's Thought and Vision**, featuring internationally renowned scholars of both *genocide* and of the life and legacy of Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin is the man who coined the term genocide, and is considered the architect and chief motivating force behind the United Nations' Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. More than 250 people attended the conference, which focused on specific aspects of Lemkin's original formulation of the concept of genocide. The conference began with opening remarks from Vartan Gregorian, President of the Carnegie Corporation. Gregorian emphasized the need to examine past genocide to help prevent future atrocities, for "the moment memory dies, inhumanity begins."

A multi-sensory exhibition depicting the crusade of Raphael Lemkin, **Letters of Conscience: Raphael Lemkin and the Quest to End Genocide**, curated by Yeshiva University Museum, will be on display at the Center through March 2010. Highlights of the Lemkin Exhibition include a December 23, 1947 interview by UN Radio of Lemkin that can be listened to in his own voice by picking up a telephone receiver; a 1948 television broadcast co-produced by the UN and CBS based on the Genocide Convention that can be viewed in an old Philco console TV in black and white; and, a radio broadcast based on a play depicting Lemkin's life and career, which aired May 1, 1949, can be listened to on a table radio.

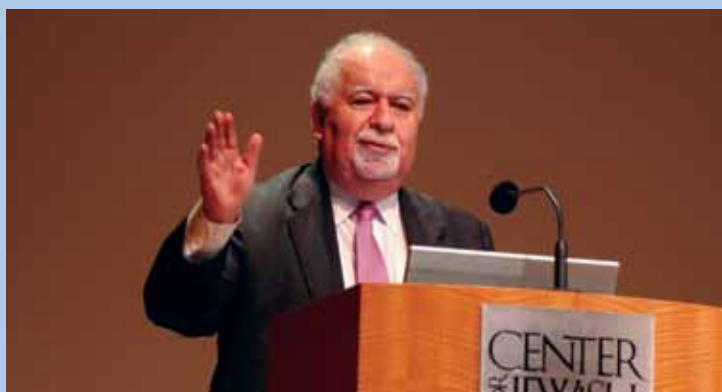
In addition to the conference and exhibition, the Center will extend the History of Genocide Initiative into 2010 by making available Web-based versions of the conference talks; an online exhibition in which people can view the collection; a blog in which visitors of the online or physical galleries can interact; and a series of public programs that focus a lens on genocide through Raphael Lemkin's unique perspective.



*Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Bill Ackman discuss the opening of the exhibition*



*Mary Smart, Irv Fletcher, Michele and Joseph Tocci*



*Vartan Gregorian provides opening remarks*



*Audience captivated by conference presenters*

## DAVID BERG FOUNDATION

A generous gift from the David Berg Foundation will enable the Center to produce public programming based on the History of Genocide Initiative over a period of the next three years. This gift will enable the Center to continue to present the historic archival materials and collections of its partners through unique and innovative educational and cultural means.

# CJH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

In September 2009, the Center in concert with a forward-thinking group of business professionals, philanthropists, and leaders in the Jewish community, launched a capital campaign to raise \$30 million. The campaign, co-chaired by Joseph S. Steinberg of Leucadia National Corporation and William A. Ackman of Pershing Square Capital Management, has garnered nearly \$20 million in support since its inception. This effort will secure the Center's financial future by enabling it to emerge a debt-free institution in 2010.

## WISSENSCHAFT DES JUDENTUMS

Wissenschaft des Judentums (Science of Judaism) represents a scholarly movement among European Jews that began in 1790 and lasted nearly 200 years until the mid 20th century. During that time some 13,000 titles were produced, mostly in German with about 20% in Yiddish, that studied Judaism through modern methods of research, combining the ideals of emancipation and enlightenment brought about in the French revolution with critical engagement within classical sources of Judaism. These works soon became the legacy of important Jewish communities worldwide and one of Judaism's outstanding manifestations of modern times. The Frankfurt University Library recently initiated a project to digitize the Wissenschaft des Judentums resources and realized that 25% of the collection was missing. It has been discovered that 60% of the missing references or about 1400 titles are currently preserved within the archives of the Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. The titles of those missing books are written by the great philosophers, thinkers and religion experts on the Talmud, bible, liturgy, as well as other modern references.

The Center for Jewish History is working together with Frankfurt University Library to integrate the Wissenschaft collections at LBI into an online digital database in an effort to reconstruct the collection so that it will be complete and represent the most comprehensive library detailing of Wissenschaft des Judentums in the world.



## PLANNED GIVING

A bequest or other legacy gift to the Center offers a unique opportunity to extend your commitment beyond your lifetime. By committing to a planned gift, you guarantee that the Center will have the resources to continue its unparalleled work of preservation. Moreover, your planned gift will help provide scholars and individuals alike the opportunity to encounter, discuss, evaluate and analyze the hundreds of thousands of papers and artifacts housed in the collections of the Center's five partner organizations. As a final statement of your philanthropic values and priorities, it will ensure that these treasures will continue to be available to future generations and will help preserve the continuity and strength of the Jewish people.

# LETTERS OF CONSCIENCE – PHOTOS FROM THE EXHIBITION



The **Center for Jewish History** is one of the great public Jewish historical and cultural institutions in the world. Opened to the public in October 2000 as the campus to its five Partner organizations, the Center has achieved recognition as a venue of unrivaled historical documentation and scholarship, imaginative exhibitions of Judaic art and artifacts, and vital public dialogue. The collections of its Partners total more than 500,000 volumes and 100 million archival documents, and include thousands of pieces of artwork, textiles, and ritual objects, as well as music, films, and photographs. They comprise, taken as a whole, the largest repository of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel.

VISIT US ONLINE AT [WWW.CJH.ORG](http://WWW.CJH.ORG)

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