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NEWS from the Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History

Volume 5 Number 1, December 2003

The Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History was founded in 1990 as a joint project of Temple University and the American Jewish Committee. It seeks to facilitate research, teaching, and the systematic study of American and Philadelphia Jewish history. The Feinstein Center is an academic unit of the history department of Temple University. It sponsors scholarly conferences and symposia focusing on American Jewish history, provides fellowships to encourage research, and the director teaches a course in American Jewish history. An advisory board, composed of academics from around the country and prominent Jewish leaders from the American Jewish Committee and the Philadelphia area, generally guide the work of the Feinstein Center.

Murray Friedman, Ph.D., Director of the Feinstein Center
Nancy Isserman, Associate Director of the Feinstein Center, Newsletter Editor

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The Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History
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UPDATE ON FEINSTEIN CENTER ACTIVITIES Newly launched project on Jews and Business

Throughout history Jews have been closely connected with the mercantile tradition. Jews have also benefited significantly from the business world and can trace their success in the U.S. and other countries to the pursuit of business or commercial careers. Yet little has been written on the subject of Jews and business in the American tradition.

The Feinstein Center has begun a project to document the history of the relationship of Jews and business, especially as they intersected in American history and in Israeli society; to begin to illuminate the impact of Jews and their culture on the development and growth of American business, as well as the Jewish experience in relating to the world of business;

and to explore recent changes taking place in the views of Jewish intellectuals and broader groups of Jews in business regarding the role of capitalism in society.

The first phase of the project has been to commission a bibliographic essay on the material and archival resources on this topic in the country. Dr. Andrew Harrison, archivist at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has been hired to write this essay, which will be available in 2004.

The second phase of the project is a major conference on October 19 and 20, 2004, discussing the following topics: the Biblical roots of Jewish views on business, the history of Jews in the mercantile tradition, the changing response of American

Jewish intellectuals towards capitalism, Israel and the transition from a socialist to a market economy, comparative views of Jews and other ethnic groups in business, research on the Philadelphia Jewish business community, and the role of Jews in the technology revolution. Jonathan Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, will give the keynote address on the image of the Jew in business: What is Reality; What is Myth. The essays presented at the conference, along with others, will be published in a book after the conference is held.

Commentary and the American Jewish Community and American Culture

In March of 2003 the Feinstein Center jointly co-sponsored with The American Jewish Committee and The Graduate Center of City University of New York, a day-and-a-half conference on *Commentary and the American Jewish Community and American Culture*. *Commentary* has operated as a magazine of ideas covering the full range of contemporary life and culture, with an emphasis on issues of concern to Jews. From its beginning in 1945, it functioned in a unique manner. Created under the auspices of The American



Feinstein Center Director Dr. Murray Friedman, second from the left, with panelists Cynthia Ozick, Norman Podhoretz and Joshua Muravchik

Jewish Committee, it has enjoyed editorial freedom from the very outset. Unlike its counterpart, *Partisan Review*, it was an

explicitly Jewish magazine funded by one of the leading national organizations of the organized
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Jewish community. Under the leadership of Elliot E. Cohen, it developed into the premier post-war journal of Jewish affairs, attracting a readership far wider than the Jewish community. Over the past 57 years it has played an important role in influencing American cultural life and political thought and policy, as well as Jewish affairs.

Publishing articles on Soviet expansion during the Cold War, exploring inequities in poverty, race relations, and education, among other key issues, *Commentary* significantly contributed to major changes in American politics and American culture. Yet, despite this prominent role, little scholarship has been devoted to a thoughtful and systemic analysis of the role of *Commentary*. Without such an analysis, the picture of contemporary American Jewish and general intellectual life is not complete.

Some of the key presenters participating at the conference were: Nathan Glazer, Nathan Abrams and Ruth Wisse on *Commentary's* early years; Terry Teachout and Thomas L. Jeffers on *Commentary* and culture; and Richard Gid Powers, George H. Nash, and John P. Diggins on *Commentary* and the Cold War. A book of these conference essays and others will be published by Temple University Press. The conference was covered in detailed articles by *The Forward*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other publications.

The *Commentary* Project was supported by grants from The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Inc. and private gifts.

Breaking the Silence About the “Jews of Silence”

by Henry Feingold, Professor Emeritus, Baruch College, City University of New York

Recent statistics published by the Jewish agency show that about 50,000 Russian Jews continue to settle in Israel every year. They are part of an amazing and as yet unsung population movement of about a million and a half Jews that were first extricated then allowed to voluntarily emigrate from the former Soviet Union. The discovery and absorption of these “lost” Jews may become a critical factor in the shaping of the Jewish future. The Feinstein Center for American Jewish History has undertaken the task of breaking the silence about Elie Wiesel’s “Jews of Silence.” We do so primarily because it is a story that needs to be told, not merely for its demo-

graphic importance or because its amazing success can serve as a counterweight to the post-holocaust uncertainty which characterizes Jewish history. It enabled the thousands of Jews, stultified by a tyrannical regime and a hostile society, to build and find new lives for themselves. Less well known is that it gave the thousands of activists who became involved in the struggle for Soviet Jewry an opportunity to find a new meaning for their own lives as Jews. There is something special that happens when we dedicate ourselves to saving the lives of others while helping to shape a new page in Jewish history at the same time. It is in fact two of these well-known activists, Joe and Connie Smukler of Philadelphia, who are providing the initial funding for this far-ranging study.

From a historical perspective, the struggle to save Soviet Jewry is not an easy story to tell. Not only is it replete with the organizational conflicts that seem to be the fingerprint of Jewish communal life, but there are also three quite separate actors on the historical stage, each with their own distinct motivations and goals. The primary focus of this study will be the role played by American Jewry. But to do that in a balanced way, the crucial role of Israel — which reestablished contact with these Jews and guided the early effort — and the role played by the Soviet Jews themselves, must be included. The very names that we assigned to this last mentioned aspect, “Jews of Silence,” “prisoners of conscience” or simply “refuseniks,” suggests a heroic quality that poses a challenge to the narrative skills of the historian. There are of course other examples of bravery and courage in the face of insuperable odds. One thinks of the gallantry of the Polish cavalry attacking German tanks in September 1939 or the handful of gallant fliers to whom so many owe so much during the battle of Britain. But the kind of sustained courage of an Ida Nudel or an Anatole Shcharansky, which tested not only the ability to survive physically but to retain one’s sanity and certainty of moral purpose, is a historical rarity. The story of the redemption of Soviet Jewry is so full of emotion and drama that it is bound to test the requisite sense of balance that the professional historian must bring to bear. The task is made complex by the fact that the struggle to extricate Soviet Jewry occurred within the context of the Cold War. Unlike the years of the Holocaust, which incidentally haunt this

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rescue effort, the American government this time proved willing to exploit the human rights question inherent in the Jewish emigration issue as a Cold War weapon. It may be that change — more than others — accounts for the success of the campaign to “save” Soviet Jewry.

Lastly, we have in this episode a new way to measure the viability of American Jewry. In the last decade we have been deluged by the gloomy statistics of survey research about the American Jewish condition. This study may give us a needed “second opinion.” The image of the American Jewish mobilization for Soviet Jewry is far from perfect, but what emerges from our early research is that American Jewry was, and probably remains, far more effective than our surveys would lead to believe.

The Lasch-Smukler Foundation has given the Feinstein Center a grant to write this book on *The Integrated History of the Soviet Jewry Advocacy Movement* in this country.

Editorial note: Henry Feingold has been commissioned by the Feinstein Center to undertake the research. His prior work deals with the role of American Jewry in the rescue of European Jewry during the Holocaust. His five-volume series, *The Jewish People in America*, has earned wide acclaim. He is a former chair of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society and today sits on the Board of Directors and serves on the Academic Council of the newly established Center of Jewish History, a principal research archive for Jewish history. The project should take about three years to complete.

Challenge and Change: The American Jewish History Curriculum

The Feinstein Center for American Jewish History, in conjunction with the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education (CAJE) and Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University, are designing a middle school curriculum in American Jewish History. The need for this project has long been apparent. Teaching American Jewish history to adolescents will foster and strengthen the Jewish identities of American Jewish youth. These materials will be appropriate student materials for supplemental and day schools, youth groups, and camps.

The project is designing student material in nine units, complete with a teachers’ guide, text for student reading, worksheets, maps, primary source documents, a time line and a linkage to American Jewish history sources on the World Wide Web. The curriculum will cover American Jewish history from the first settlements through the end of the 20th century. The aim is to have this curriculum ready for distribution sometime during the 350th anniversary year of the Jews landing in America.

The project will also consist of teacher training workshops. Attendees to the workshops will be designated Feinstein Curricula Fellows. They will participate in a summer workshop and remain in contact with CAJE staff and other Feinstein Curricula Fellows throughout the year through online classroom experiences and discussion groups in order to reflect on the success of their experiences teaching the curriculum, to receive feedback and input from the experiences of the other Fellows, and to receive help from the CAJE staff.

This project has been generously supported by gifts from the Feinstein Center Advisory Board members. In addition, the project has just received an award from the Righteous Persons Foundation, which was started and headed up by Steven Spielberg and which will help finish the development of the units.

The first three units will be published in a book by Behrman House, Inc. due in April 2004. These units will cover the colonial, revolutionary, and Central European immigration eras from 1492 through 1880.

Additional Projects Underway at the Feinstein Center

The Feinstein Center has commissioned a biography of the late Philadelphia businessman and philanthropist, Albert M. Greenfield, a powerhouse figure in the middle years of the 20th century. The book will be written by Andrew Harrison (author of the Feinstein Center publication, *Passover Revisited*) and Justin Coffin, a free-lance journalist.

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Recent Year Awards for Feinstein Center Fellowships

Summer 2000

The Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center announced the awarding of its 2000 Summer Fellowship to Marc Frey, for his work, *The American Soviet Jewry Movement, 1958-1972*. Frey, who was just finishing his doctorate in the Department of History at Temple University, researched the origins, antecedents, and implications of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Frey's research asserts that the official American response to the plight of Soviet Jews is intimately connected to United States policy toward Israel, in particular, and the Middle East, in general. He states that the struggle for Soviet Jewry contributed to a "feedback loop" between changing American perceptions of Israel and the broader transformation of American political and foreign policy culture.

Along with Frey's award, the Feinstein Center awarded two honorable mentions as well. Libby Garland, Ph.D. candidate in the Program in American Culture at the University of Michigan, received honorable mention for her research, "Migrants, Aliens, Citizens: United States Immigration Policies and the Making of Jewish Americans 1919-1939." Adam Howard, a doctoral student in American History at the University of Florida, also received an honorable mention for his proposal to investigate "Return to Zion: Organized American Labor and the Establishment of the State of Israel 1942-1948."

In addition, in 2000, the Feinstein Center sponsored three awards for research on the history of American Jewish political conservatism, funded through The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation as part of a larger project that supported a conference on the history of American Jewish political conservatism in April 1999. One-time awards were given to support new research in this area. Edward Shapiro, a professor at Seton Hall University, received a grant to support his essay "Right Turn: Jews and the American Conservative Movement," in *Jews in American*

Politics (Roman and Littlefield 2001). A second award was given to Eugene Sheppard, an assistant professor at Brandeis University, to expand his dissertation on "Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile" to include an analysis of Strauss' philosophy and work post-World War II at the University of Chicago. Nathan Abrams, a lecturer at the University of London, received the third award to expand the work of his dissertation in order to more fully examine the special role played by *Commentary* magazine in Jewish affairs, especially on the growth of American Jewish political conservatism.

Summer 2001

In the summer of 2001 the first Dissertation Fellowship was announced. The Dissertation Fellowship supports Ph.D. candidates or recent Ph.D. graduates as they prepare their dissertation for publication. The first Fellowship was awarded to Eric Goldstein, Assistant Professor, Department of History and the Institute for Jewish Studies at Emory University, for his dissertation, "Race and the Dilemmas of American Jewish Identity, 1875-1945." His work examined the static notion of racial identity, suggesting that immigrant groups, e.g., European Jews, often had a tumultuous encounter with American whiteness and found it difficult to square the demands of white Americanism with their own group loyalties and self-understandings. By tracking the process of how Jewish immigrants "became white," Goldstein's work uncovers not only the emotional dilemmas Jews faced in adapting to American racial categories, but also revealed the contingent and ideological character of these categories and the larger cultural reasons that white, native-born Americans fought intensely to maintain them.

In the summer of 2001, the Feinstein Center Summer Fellowship was awarded to Beth Cohen, a Ph.D. candidate in Holocaust history at Clark University. Her work analyzed the reception and resettlement of Holocaust survivors by the American Jewish community, 1946-1954. As an analysis of immigration and acculturation, this history focuses on the emergence of the Holocaust in the

consciousness of postwar American Jewry, a presence that has taken center stage in contemporary Jewish identity and has impacted deeply on the greater society, as well.

Four honorable mentions were also awarded. They went to Susan Roth Breitzer, Ph.D. candidate, University of Iowa, for her dissertation work "Class, Ethnicity, and Community: The Jewish Working Class of Chicago, 1886-1928"; Shana Bernstein, Ph.D. candidate, Stanford University, for her dissertation research "Building Bridges at Home in a Time of Global Conflict: Interracial Cooperation and the Fight for Civil Rights in Los Angeles, 1933-1954"; Alexander Molot, Ph.D. candidate, New York University, for his dissertation proposal "Between Reform Judaism and Jewish Nationalism: David Neumark and the Problematics of Modern Jewish Identity"; and Arlene Lazarowitz, lecturer, California State University at Long Beach, whose research focused on the leadership function that liberal Senator Jacob K. Javits rendered in the writing of and negotiations over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, its role in the Soviet Jewry movement, and his involvement with the question of Soviet Jewish emigration.

In the summer of 2002, the Feinstein Center Summer Fellowship was awarded to Shana Bernstein, Ph.D. candidate, Stanford University, for her work, "Building Bridges at Home in a Time of Global Conflict: Interracial Cooperation and the Fight for Civil Rights in Los Angeles, 1933-1954." Her work focused on an overlooked, yet fundamental, aspect of civil rights struggles: the ways international issues shaped domestic civil rights efforts, first in the context of the Allied fight against fascism and subsequently during the Cold War battle against the Soviet Union and Communism. Unlike previous

interpretations that marginalized California and other West Coast history as peripheral, her work demonstrated how California helped shape national and international history.

Honorable mentions were awarded to: Lisa Silberman Brenner, Ph.D. candidate, Columbia University, for her work "The Jazz Singer's Legacy" and Suzanne Gittleman, Ph.D. candidate, Temple University, for her work on the writings of Edna Ferber.

The 2003 Summer Fellowship was awarded to Rona Sheramy, who has served as a visiting lecturer at Clark University and an assistant professor of Jewish Studies and director of the Jewish Studies Program at Bard College, for research on her book, *Defining Lessons: Creating Jewish Memory of the Holocaust Across the Generations*. *Defining Lessons* is the first comprehensive historical inquiry into Holocaust education in the American Jewish community from 1945 to 2000. It illuminates how generations of American Jews came to understand the destruction of European Jewry and why, by the end of the 20th century, the Holocaust had moved to the center of American Jewish identity. *Defining Lessons* demonstrates that educators' treatment of the Holocaust was always a function of Jewish education's primary mission: to promote a positive and appealing ethnic identity in Jewish youth.

An honorable mention was awarded to Lila Corwin Berman, Ph.D. candidate, Yale University, for her work on "Epistles to the Gentiles: Teaching Judaism and Jewishness to America, 1919-1960."

Staff Changes at the Feinstein Center

With our move from the offices of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Jewish Committee to Temple University's Center City campus, several staff changes have occurred. Vivian Reiben, a long time AJC administrative assistant, was hired to be the Coordinator of the Feinstein Center. She is in the office on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays and may be reached at 215-204-9552 or at vreiben@temple.edu. Stella Grossman, who worked for the Feinstein Center for the past five years handling the bookkeeping and paperwork for the Center, retired as of June 30. Stella's association with the Feinstein Center and with the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Jewish Committee goes back to the early 1960s when Murray Friedman hired her as a part-time secretary for

the chapter. She has retired to focus on her community work, which includes serving as the President of the Philadelphia City of Hope chapter. We will miss her and wish her well in her new endeavors. Stella's replacement is Ann Bromberg. Ann has been involved for several years with organizations in the Jewish community, heading up projects for such organizations as her school's PTO and her synagogue. She will be working one day each week and may be reached at 215-204-9553. Finally, Nancy Isserman, formerly the Feinstein Center Coordinator, has been promoted to Associate Director. She is in the office on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays and may be reached at 215-204-9553 or at isserman@temple.edu.

Recent Presentations and Publications by Feinstein Center Staff

- Friedman, Murray, "The Hiss Case and How It Split the Left," Book Review, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 16, 2003.
- Friedman, Murray, "The Mideast Fallacies of the Left – and the Right," *Jewish Exponent*, Philadelphia, May 29, 2003.
- Friedman Murray, "Neglected Areas of American Jewish History, a Summary of the Work Underway at the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History," *American Jewish History*, June 2002.
- Friedman, Murray, "The Rebirth of Neo Conservatism," *Forward*, December 13, 2002.
- Isserman, Nancy, "Identifying Individual Determinants of Intolerance in Holocaust Survivors," *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution*, the Imperial War Museum, London, January 2003. Paper Presentation.
- Isserman, Nancy, "Identifying Individual Determinants of Intolerance in Holocaust Survivors," *Secolo Verlag* (Osnabrueck, Germany). Paper accepted 2003.
- Isserman, Nancy, "Jewish Identity and Its Transmission to the Next Generation," *Transcending Trauma Conference*, Philadelphia, December 2001 and "The Innovative Methodology of the Transcending Trauma Project," *Transcending Trauma Conference*, Philadelphia, PA, December 2001. Paper presentations.
- Isserman, Nancy, "Preliminary Findings on Intolerance in Holocaust Survivors," *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches*. Paper submitted 2003.
- Isserman, Nancy, "Preliminary Findings on Intolerance in Holocaust Survivors," *The 33rd Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches*, Philadelphia, March 2003. Paper Presentation.
- Isserman, Nancy, "The Transmission of Jewish Identity in Three Generations of Holocaust Survivor Families," *Jewish Diasporas: Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. October 2002. Paper presentation.

Philadelphia Jewish Life, 1940-2000 June 2003 Release

Philadelphia Jewish Life, 1940-2000, edited by Murray Friedman, has just been updated and published by Temple University Press. The essays in the book examine Philadelphia, a city with a long history of high social barriers and forbidding aristocratic preserves, where Philadelphia Jews in the last half of the 20th century, became a force to reckon with in the cultural, political and economic life of the region. From the poor neighborhoods of original immigrant settlement — in South and West Philadelphia — Jews have made, as Murray Friedman recounts, the move from "outsiders" to "insiders" in Philadelphia life. Essays by a diverse range of contributors tell the

story of this transformation in many spheres of life, both in and out of the Jewish community: from sports, politics, political alliances with other minority groups, to the significant debate between Zionists and anti-Zionists during and immediately after the war.

In this new edition, Friedman takes the history of Philadelphia Jewish life to the close of the 20th century and looks back on how Jews have contributed to and, in turn, have been molded by Philadelphia's people and its institutions. Cloth: \$29.50, ISBN: 1-56639-999-8. Call the office at 215-204-9552 to order a copy.

Recent publications released or supported by the Feinstein Center include:



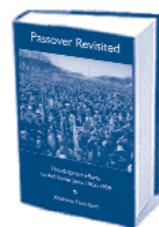
Philadelphia Jewish Life 1940 – 2000, a second edition with new essays, edited by Murray Friedman, Temple University Press, 2003, ISBN # 1-56639-999-8, \$29.50.

Preserving the Voices of History: The Feinstein Center Jewish Philadelphia Oral History Project Guide to Archival Collections, 2002, Feinstein Center publication, \$3.

In Good Faith: A Dialogue on Government Funding of Faith-Based Social Services, also a chapter in *Sacred Places, Civic Purposes: Should Government Help Faith-Based Charity*, edited by E.J. Dionne and Ming Hsu Chen, The Brookings Institution, 2001, Feinstein Center publication, 2001, \$3.



Women and American Judaism, edited by Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, Brandeis University Press, 2001, ISBN # 1-58465-124-5, \$24.95.



Passover Revisited: Philadelphia's Efforts to Aid Soviet Jews 1963-1998, by Andrew Harrison, Associated University Press, 2001, ISBN #0-8386-3909-7, \$31.

Other Publications of the Feinstein Center

The Philadelphia Fels: 1880-1920, A Social Portrait, by Evelyn Bodek Rosen, Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000, ISBN #0-8386-3823-6, \$28

"American Jewish Political Conservatism," *American Jewish History*, Vol 87, #2 and 3, June and September 1999, \$20

A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews, edited by Murray Friedman and Albert D. Chernin, Brandeis University Press, 1999, ISBN #0-87451-913-6, \$17.95

The Tribal Basis of American Life: Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Groups in Conflict, edited by Murray Friedman and Nancy Isserman, Prager, 1998, ISBN #0-275-95970-8, \$60

Moving Beyond Haym Solomon: The Teaching of American Jewish History, including essays by Deborah Dash Moore, Jonathan Sarna, Steven Bayme, Sondra Leiman, Regina Stein, Feinstein Center publication, 1996, \$3

What Went Wrong: The Creation and Abandonment of the Black Jewish Alliance, by Murray Friedman, The Free Press, 1995, ISBN #0-02-910910-8, \$24.95

When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America, edited by Murray Friedman, Associated University Presses, 1993, ISBN #0-944190-13-8, out of print

The Philadelphia Group: A Guide to Archival and Bibliographic Collections, by Dianne Ashton, Feinstein Center publication, 1993, \$8

Writing the History of Philadelphia's Jews: Consultation on the Philadelphia Group, by Reena Sigman Friedman, Feinstein Center publication, 1992, \$3