



CSJO NEWSLETTER

Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations

Winter 2005-2006

Conference 2006 - Newark NJ Campus of Rutgers University, May 26-29 *Noted outside experts to speak and give workshops*

Under the theme “Secular Jewish and Human Welfare – Putting Our Values to Work,” more than 14 well-known authors and activists will speak and give workshops on Jewish culture plus political and social welfare issues at the CSJO Conference, Memorial Day Weekend (US) May 26-29 on the Newark (NJ) campus of Rutgers University. The Conference is co-sponsored by the university’s Department of Social Work.

Fun sessions are also slated on Jews in: comics, popular music, humor, and Yiddish. Jewish educators will also find sessions on classroom management and enhancing curriculum. Teen and Young Adult sessions plus entertainment and trips are in the works; so far well-known singer Adrienne Cooper has been confirmed. Conference brochures and registration forms will soon be available but start now to save the dates and plan to come!

Confirmed To-Date

Keynote speakers on the Conference topic will be Peter Pepper, President of the Workmen’s Circle, Barry Dancis of the Philadelphia Jewish Children’s Folkshul, and a young adult speaker to be named.

Social Justice: Special guest Paul Robeson, Jr. will speak about his father in “Paul Robeson and the Jewish People.” Fittingly, the Conference is taking place in Robeson Student Center, named for the Rutgers graduate who was a famous athlete, singer, and activist. Fred Jerome and Rodge Taylor, authors of *Einstein on Race* will speak about the famous scientist’s views on racial equality in the US.

Henry Foner, *Jewish Currents* Editorial Board Member and a retired labor leader will speak about “The Current Crisis in the Labor Movement.” University of Wisconsin Professor Tony Michels will speak about his new book “A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in NY.”



Karen Knecht, CSJO chair, with sculpture of Paul Robeson

Politics: Social activist and radio host Esther Kaplan on “The Christian Right and the Jewish Left.” Professor Mitchell Silver on “How Secular Jews Should Relate to the Religious.” Author Melanie Kaye Kantrowitz on “Anti-

Semitism Today: A Progressive Jewish Perspective.”

Israel: Farleigh Dickinson University Professor Leonard Grob on “The Role of the Holocaust in Shaping the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” A spokesperson from Brit Tsedek V’Shalom – Jewish Alliance for Peace and Justice is expected to speak about “American Jews, the Peace Process, and the Israel/Palestine Conflict.”

Foreign Policy: Author Murray Polner’s topic is “The Neo-Cons Get an F in Foreign Policy.” A spokesperson from the American Jewish World Service will speak about “The Crisis in Darfur.” Professor Stephen Shalom will talk about “The Current Situation in Iraq.”

Yiddish: NJ Yiddish educator Rivke Levine on “The Joys of Mama Loshn: Yiddish for Beginners and Advanced Beginners.” York University Professor Esther Reiter of the Winchevsky Center, on “Yiddish in Vilna, Past and Present.” “Using Yiddish Games in the Classroom” presented by Nicholas Borodulin of the Workmen’s Circle Center for Cultural Jewish Life.

Fun Workshops: “Superman, Batman and Other Jewish Creations: The Role of American Jews and the Comic Book Industry” by Rick Rubenstein. “American Jews in Popular Music” by Bob Jacobson. “Jewish Humor” by Frank and Troim Handler.

Educators’ Workshops: “Classroom Management Techniques” with principals Larry Feintuck, JCSS (NJ) and Mindy Blatt of the Philadelphia Jewish Children’s Folkshul plus Shariee Calderone, Education Director/Family Educator of the Jewish Cultural School of Suffolk County. “Holocaust Education” by Madrikh Barry Swan of SHJ’s Beth Haskalah, Rochester, NY. “Critical Thinking in the Classroom,” by Barry Dancis of the Philadelphia Jewish Children’s Folkshul. “Music Education” by Ruth E. Seid, music teacher, Sholem Community of Los Angeles, CA. “Enhancing Jewish Curriculum Through the Dramatic Arts” by Ramona Brand, principal of the Jewish Cultural School, Ann Arbor, Mich. “B’nai Mitzvah Preparation and Programs” by Bonnie Cushing of JCSS (NJ) and Julie Sunstein of Jewish Parents Institute, Detroit. “Yiddish games for students and families,” Nikolai Borodulin, education director, Workmen’s Circle/Arbeter Ring. “Family education,” by members of the

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What is the potential of CSJO?

Reflections by Judy Seid at the 2005 conference



Judy Seid

For many years she was the director of the Jewish Cultural Society in Ann Arbor and later organized the Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah. She has served as treasurer of CSJO and has made many presentations regarding secular Jewish life. Judy is the author of a number of books relating to secular Jews, the most recent being *God-Optional Judaism*. Judy was ordained a Rabbi by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism.

Judy Seid's keynote presentation was less a speech than it was a conversation with the audience. The following is a reconstruction of the gist of it from her notes:

Here is a real estate ad:

"Charming, great potential, interesting, great price"

Translation:

The fall 2005 issue of the CSJO Newsletter contained some of the keynote speeches from the 2005 conference. A number of readers asked for more material of the same type, and this article summarizes the keynote presentation by Judy Seid.

Judy Seid has recently moved to northern California and is busy there with a young secular Jewish group.

Charming — too small

Great potential — badly taken care of, will cost a lot to fix up

Interesting — And all the rooms are painted different colors and have different carpets.

Great price - bad neighborhood

That's us.

We lack money, time, consistency and legitimacy.

I think that what we have to offer is that we are "compelling, sustaining, authentic, and inclusive."

Here's what we mean (with input from Bob Sims):

Compelling - makes sense, attractive.

Sustaining - gives answers, support, work, we have STUFF

Authentic - both to Jewish culture and ourselves

Inclusive - we don't tell you whether or not you are a Jew

In addition, we are small thinkers, but this is both good and bad.

We care about the individual, but we don't have vision and the will to pursue that vision because it might hurt individuals.

The challenge for us today is to use our strengths to attack our weaknesses, to build a house we can be proud of, full of interesting stuff, but coherent, big enough and a place where people want to come.

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor:

Just wanted to say thank you for a great job on this past newsletter. It was a pleasure reading all about our May conference as I was unable to attend it. Denora Knecht's keynote speech was obviously written from the heart and projects both hers and our hopes for the future of CSJO.

Please see if you can obtain the other keynote speakers' speeches to be included in future newsletters as well. The critiques of two of the workshops were enlightening and made some good points. The suggested readings when lighting the Chanukah candles, the principles of secular humanistic Judaism, and the other

articles definitely made this newsletter educational, thought-provoking and enjoyable to read. Keep up the great work and thanks again.

Joan Kurtz (Suffolk County, NY)

Dear Editor:

There is a slight contradiction between the candle lighting readings and the story of Chanuka, both printed on page 3 of the winter issue. Salome Alexandra was NOT the last independent ruler of Judea before the Roman period, as it says in the readings. Her sons were, as it says in the history:

"Alexander Jannai named his wife, Salome Alexandra, as his successor. Her Hebrew name was Shlom-tzion and she brought peace to the land for the nine years of her reign.

When Queen Shlom-tzion died in 67 BCE, her sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, began a civil war over who should be king. The Romans came in and put an end to the rule of the Maccabees."

Bennett Muraskin (Northern NJ JCSS)

CONGRESS OF SECULAR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

A non-profit organization

An affiliate of the North American Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews, a Constituent Organization of the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews

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Executive Director Reports to CSJO



Rifke Feinstein

Hello From CSJO!!!

First and foremost, I wish all of you a healthy, happy and peaceful 2006. Secondly, I'm going to write a monthly informational piece about CSJO to all of our newsletter editors for publication. We want our affiliate members to know what's happening at CSJO and, for some, to know about CSJO .

The Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations (CSJO)

was established in 1970, and a number of affiliates have been members since that time...36 years! At a later date, I will write more about CSJO, but at this time, I want you to know a few things about what CSJO has done in 2005:

We have sent each affiliate a copy of *Yiddish Stories For Young People*. This book contains stories by the Yiddish masters...Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, Avrom Reisin, I. L. Peretz and many others. This book was edited by Itche Goldberg, long-time Secular Jewish Yiddishist. The stories in this book are not only very good for children, but can be greatly

Conference Program

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Winchevsky School, Toronto.

A workshop for organization leaders on "Starting and Nurturing A New Community" will be given by Rabbi Judith Seid (with perspectives from Ann Arbor, Baltimore, and now northern California) and by Rob Agree, one of the founders of the SHJ's Congregation for Humanistic Judaism of Morris County (NJ). "Building multi-generational communities," Ira Mintz and Leslie Dyson, Peretz Center for Secular Jewish Culture, Vancouver.

Other workshops including those for teens and adults are in the works. There may be some changes in this line-up before the conference.

A complete program and registration forms are expected to be available by March. Costs are expected to be similar to previous CSJO conferences; there will be options for full participation and day rates.

Information contacts: the CSJO website: www.csjo.org. Site Chairperson: Paul Shane through e-mail: pshane@andreomeda.rutgers.edu or telephone: 215-843-2909; Program Chairperson Bennett Muraskin through e-mail: muraskin@cnjscl.org or telephone: 973-734-1972.

appreciated by adults as well. We also sent each affiliate the song book entitled *We Sing A Yiddish Song* with music and words in both Yiddish and English. It's a book that can bring great fun to any gathering!

Our CSJO website has been updated...or will have been by the time you receive this newsletter. Same address, www.csjo.org, but NEW look!

CSJO has created a video library with some very interesting videos for your community's adult programming. Judy Seid, at judithseid@aol.com, is the keeper of the library. You can email her for a list of the videos we can lend out. At this time, Judy is working on creating a CD library, as well. It's your for the borrowing so just ask Judy for the list.

CSJO is busy working on our next annual conference, during the Memorial Day week-end in May, which will be held at the Newark campus of Rutgers University in New Jersey. Check the website for updates. The conference is always interesting and fun so think conference.

Again, if you have any questions about CSJO, the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, please feel free to contact me at csjo@csjo.org. I'll be happy to hear from you.

All the best,

Rifke Feinstein, Executive Director

Donations

General Fund

Anonymous
Gabie Berliner, CA
Camp Kinderland, NY
Adam & Alison Chalom, IL
Martha, Steven and Samuel Krow-Lucal, CA
Michael Prival, DC
Ruth Seid, CA

Harold Gales Community Development Fund

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Ed Klein, NY
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Max Rosenfeld Publications Fund

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Camp Kinderland, NY
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Martha, Steven and Samuel Krow-Lucal, CA
Michael Weinstein and Marsha Meckler, HI
Cary Shaw, CT

Gerry Revzin Scholarship Fund

Camp Kinderland, NY
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Michael Weinstein and Marsha Meckler, HI
Martha, Steven and Samuel Krow-Lucal, CA

Teen/Young Adult Fund

Anonymous
Camp Kinderland, NY
Martha, Steven and Samuel Krow-Lucal, CA

Beyond Tradition: Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism

A seminar of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism

March 17-19, 2006

This seminar will be conducted by Rabbi Adam Chalom, rabbi of Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation.

Register by March 10th . Questions? (847) 347-3003 info@kolhadash.com

www.kolhadash.com Hosted by Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation

What were the most important events that led to today's Jewish diversity? Who were the first Jews to connect with Jewish culture independent of Jewish religion? And how do they relate to who we are today?

Friday, March 17—at Heller Nature Center, 2821 Ridge Road, Highland Park IL NO CHARGE

8:00pm Shabbat Celebration – “Humanistic Judaism and Jewish Tradition”

Saturday, March 18—at the West Ridge Center, 636 Ridge Road, Highland Park IL

I) 9:00am-Noon Judaism: Enlightenment, Emancipation & Modern Judaisms

II) 1:00pm-4:00pm Jewishness: Socialism, Yiddishism, Zionism & Modern Culture

Sunday, March 19—at Deerfield High School, 2959 Waukegan Road, Deerfield IL

III) 9:00am-Noon Humanistic Philosophy, Secular/Ethnic Judaism & Contemporary Jewish Life

\$25/SESSION, \$60/SEMINAR IISHJ CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT \$150/SEMINAR

IISHJ MATRICULATING STUDENT CREDIT \$200/SEMINAR (MINUS \$25 FOR AIRFARE)

Beyond Tradition: Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism

Return registration with payment to:

Kol Hadash Humanistic Congregation, P.O. Box 405, Highland Park IL 60035

Sholom Aleichem Club Publications SALE! All books regularly \$12.95 now \$12

Mayn Oytser - a CD of Yiddish music, sung by Sherm Labovitz, accompanied by Alexander Botwinik -regularly \$12.

Haggadah for a Secular Celebration of Pesach - award winning Haggadah in its 5th edition!
(This edition of the Haggadah is almost exhausted.)

New Yorkish and Other American Yiddish Stories. Translated by Max Rosenfeld.

Shipping: \$3 for the first item, \$.50 each additional item.

Contact Larry Schofer at lawrence.schofer@verizon.net or 215-248-3762.



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