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Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 80, Folder 3, Black-Jewish [Queens College], 1989.

QUEENS
COLLEGE

Office of the President

May 8, 1989

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 Street
New York, NY 10022

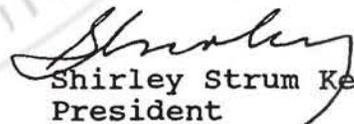
Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

Thank you so much for participating in our Black/Jewish People to People memorial to Chaney/Goodman/Schwerner. I was deeply moved by your words and the conviction that they so eloquently expressed. I know that everyone in the auditorium was transfixed as I was.

The importance of communicating to the younger generation the commitment and courage of civil rights leaders of the past is enormously important. We are at a time in which, as you say the agendas are different but the stakes are equally important. We at Queens College are determined to make an impact on our students and through the dedication of the Library Tower on the students of the future. With the help of people like you, we can make an impact.

Again thank you for your speech and thank you for being such a good friend of Queens College.

Sincerely,


Shirley Strum Kenny
President

SSK:mj
cc: June Van Brackle
Dr. E. Schwarcz

Commentary

John Lewis Boosts Black-Jewish Ties

Rabbi Marc A. Tannenbaum, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*

He was probably the most physically beaten civil rights leader in the 1960's. Like the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Bayard Rustin, he became, to informed American Jews, one of the most trusted and respected black Jewish leaders in the nation.

The "he" is Congressman John Lewis of Atlanta, organizer of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, which mobilized some 10 million voters to register.

Few Jews seem to know his full, unbroken record of commitment to the well-being of Israel and to the freedom of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews, as well as his fierce and unrelenting opposition both to racism and anti-Semitism.

On May 7, nearly 2,000 blacks and Jews came together at Queens College in New York to honor the memories of Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney, the two Jewish and one black youth who were murdered by white racists in Mississippi in 1964.

Lewis and I were the keynote speakers at that moving 25th commemorative observance, conceived by Ernest Schwarcz, a Hungarian Jewish survivor and the college's dean of general studies.

Lewis told that audience, which included hundreds of young blacks, that "without the massive moral and financial support of the Jewish people, the civil rights movement would not have succeeded."

As chairman for the past four years of the effective black-Jewish dialogue in Atlanta, he called on blacks to renew their close relation-

ships with Jews based on mutual respect and solidarity of interests.

"We are not each other's enemies," he said. "Together we have many enemies out there, and they are usually the same people who hate blacks and Jews."

My remarks concentrated on the deep trust that Dr. King and Congressman Lewis established with American Jews.

When Lewis was recently in Moscow with a U.S. congressional delegation meeting with members of the Supreme Soviet Parliament, he told the Russians that "as long as Soviet Jews

are persecuted and denied their freedom, we are all Jews."

He was the only member of Congress to be applauded by the Soviets.

He was spontaneously critical of President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg military cemetery in Germany, and he speaks regularly at high schools and colleges about the importance of all Americans understanding Jewish suffering under the Nazi Holocaust. In and out of Congress, Lewis is an ardent supporter of sustained aid to Israel.

In genuine reciprocity, many American Jews have joined John Lewis in condemning South African apartheid and have marched with him against white racists in Forsyth County, GA, and recently to the Selma, AL, bridge where he was brutally beaten in 1964.

If black-Jewish relations are restored, the reliable models of authentic friendship and trust epitomized by Congressman John Lewis — and his Jewish counterparts — will be the engine of that vital renewal. ■



Rep. John Lewis

Rabbi Marc A. Tannenbaum is international consultant to the American Jewish Committee.

A Model of Authentic Black-Jewish Friendship

BY MARC A. TANENBAUM

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(Rabbi Marc A. Tanenbaum is international consultant to the American Jewish Committee)

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A MODEL OF AUTHENTIC BLACK-JEWISH FRIENDSHIP

By Marc A. Tanenbaum

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