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Mintz, Donald, 1988-1990.

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COMMISSIONER CONTACT SHEET

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July 25, 1988

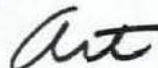
Dear Don:

It was great to have met you, and I look forward to a long-standing relationship. You impressed me with your commitment to Jewish education and what Mort is trying to accomplish.

We are getting everything in order for the meeting, and it looks like participation from commissioners will be good. I spoke with Art Rotman about your role, and to help you prepare I will be getting him a copy of Mort's talk. Your presentation will be between 12:00-12:30 p.m. and should not take more than ten to fifteen minutes. Bennett Yanowitz and Bill Berman will also be speaking during that time slot.

I hope you had a good trip to the U.K., had fun and got some rest. Looking forward to seeing you on Monday, August 1.

Cordially,



Arthur J. Naparstek
President

Mr. Donald Mintz
McGlinchey, Stafford & Mintz
643 Magazine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION WITH
DONALD MINTZ

ARTHUR J. NAPARSTEK
JUNE 1, 1989

The discussion with Mintz was abbreviated. The major point of our talk was on a national mechanism. Mintz believes a national mechanism is imperative but should not be incorporated as part of one of the national organizations such as JWB, JESNA, or CJF. Don feels that the national mechanism must be a neutral entity and not bear the burden of an existing organization's history or staff and organizational culture.

Mintz believes a national mechanism would be useful in terms of leveraging funds for local programs to play a networking role and to harness the excitement and energy of the Commission.

Don Mintz will be at the meeting and agreed to co-chair a small group with Esther Leah Ritz.



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INFO ABOUT
DM MINTZ!

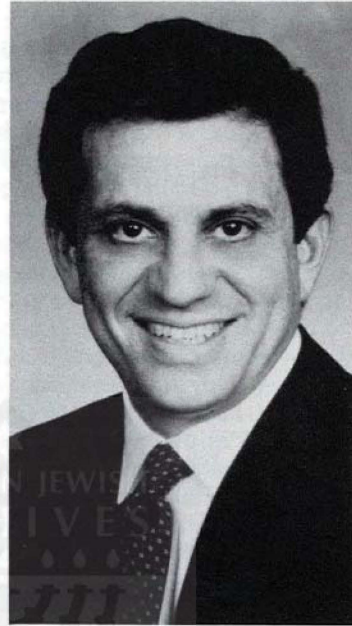
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The Challenge Of Forging A Jewish Community Center Movement

Donald R. Mintz
JWB President

Keynote Address
JWB Biennial Convention
St. Louis, Missouri
April 28, 1988





Donald R. Mintz
JWB President



The eighteenth-century English historian Edward Gibbon was fascinated by our people and made this observation in his monumental work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

The mad attempt of Caligula to place his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem was defeated by the unanimous resolution of a people who dreaded death much less than such an idolatrous profanation. Their attachment to the law of Moses was equal to their detestation of foreign religions. The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent.

The history of our people has confounded the experts for 4,000 years. From Tacitus to Toynbee, we have withstood the most insidious efforts to destroy us. We have survived.

We have survived the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, the Holocaust. Yes, we have survived.

Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, in her classic work *Jewish Survival*, put it this way:

It is consequently not the eternity of the "Wandering Jew" that should puzzle the world, but his retention of the continuity of Jewish culture and his remaining the heir, in all respects, of all Jewish generations that lived and created before him.

Ours is a rich and magnificent history—a saga of the indomitable spirit to survive, grounded in an unflagging faith, a courageous commitment to justice and righteousness, and an undeniable sense of mission. Paul Johnson, the distinguished non-Jewish historian, observed, in his recent *History of the Jews*, "No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny."

The noted Jewish scholar, Shimon Dubnov, published, in 1936, his classic *History of an Eternal People*. Dubnov's analysis was clearly retrospective as well as prospective. Eternality—it is a theme in our Torah and our history—yes, even in our poetry. Mordecai Zevi Maneh, in his lovely poem, "Eternal People," observes:

Life's relentless ways will flow
O'er many kingdoms blotted out below.
The long eternity of future years
Will see a people that was nursed on tears.
Alive and strong, its ancient spirit bright
Lighting the dark with an eternal light.

The continuity of our people continues to be an issue of burning concern for us.

There are many who have commented that the Jewish people have survived largely because of the threats and actions from external forces. Although these threats continue to this very day, the real menace, in my judgment, is not external but internal. Although we must continue to remain vigilant to those who threaten the existence of the State of Israel or dispute our right to practice our religion and pray to our God as we have done for more than four millennia, the real peril to our *Am Olam*, our eternal people, is the challenge to our unity and the challenge to our identity.

Let us examine our current reality. Religious fanaticism or fundamentalism, perhaps not seen since the Middle Ages, is sweeping the non-Jewish world, and it is even affecting us. We have watched it rear its ugly head in Israel, and this virus of fanaticism is beginning to infect the Jewish community in North America, as well. This fundamentalism, which is characterized by a disturbing irreverence and parochialism, denies the very reality of Jewish history. It says that Jews speak in one tongue, with one viewpoint, with one ideology. Any slight aberration is characterized as heresy by these zealots. This frightening ideology negates and rejects the glorious history of our people. For our history has been one of difference and distinction, controversy and contention—out of this dialectic tension has emerged a very magnificent mosaic. It is the history of Jacob and Esau, Judah and Benjamin and the other ten tribes, priests and prophets, Pharisees and Sadducees, rationalists and mystics, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, traditional and liberal. This challenge of fundamentalism and fanaticism is a challenge to the very soul of our people, a challenge to the concept of *Am Echad*—one people.

Even beyond the challenge to our diversity, which enriches and ennobles our people, there is another crisis—a crisis to Jewish continuity—the crisis of Jewish identity. This phenomenon is particularly troubling for those of us living in North America. According to the commentaries, this crisis is created by the realities of contemporary life: intermarriage, the breakup of the nuclear family, mobility, and unprecedented levels of affluence—all contributing to assimilation and the loss of Jewish identity.

Although there are a variety of studies which have examined intermarriage, the data developed to date are not yet comprehensive or complete, but the

trends are clear. Inter-marriage is increasing rather dramatically, and in most instances it results in the loss of a meaningful Jewish connection. Add to this sociological phenomenon the increasing divorce rate within the Jewish community, and particularly the growth of single-parent families, and the challenge to the traditional Jewish family which has been the centerpiece of Jewish continuity should cause us deep concern. Add to this—Jewish mobility. Fact: 10 percent of the Jews move each year; 20 percent in the age bracket from 25 to 39 move every year.

These contemporary forces challenge Jewish connection and relationship, a key ingredient for Jewish identity and Jewish continuity.

Given this stark situation, the ultimate question is: What will our Jewish community look like in twenty, thirty, or even fifty years? Will our children and our grandchildren be as involved as we are today? Will they be as committed? Will they be as proud as we, who are here today?

But then, why are you here? Certainly, to learn more about your Center, to improve its efficiency, to improve the quality of its program. Certainly, to enjoy the spirit of family, the sense of belonging—the embrace from someone whom you have just met. But, in a deeper sense, I believe you are here to give witness to our history and to ensure our legacy—to carry on the vision of our people—to guarantee that those who follow will appreciate the richness of our heritage.

I am reminded of that wonderful piece of Midrash which tells of a young boy who approaches an old man planting a tree. It is only a seedling, and the young man says to his elder: "Why do you plant this tree? By the time it is grown and matured and bears fruit, you will be dead and buried." The old man thinks for a time and then says, "I do not plant this tree for me, I plant it for you and for those who will follow." Indeed, we are here because of our respect and admiration for those who have shaped our legacy, but, more importantly, to ensure that that legacy will be preserved and passed on for generations to follow. It was Martin Buber who observed: "The past of our people is our personal memory, but the future of our people is our personal task."

So how do we respond if we are truly concerned? How do we respond to the unique challenges of contemporary Jewish life in North America—the challenge of Jewish pluralism—the challenge to Jewish continuity?

If we had to design an ideal instrumentality or

organization to deal with these contemporary challenges, what would it look like? Obviously, we would have to design an organization that was open to all Jews, regardless of ideology or commitment, which welcomed the learned and the unschooled, reform, orthodox, conservative, reconstructionist, unaffiliated. No prerequisites. No conditions. No requirements.

It would have to attract the young and the old, male and female, deeply connected or newly arrived.

It would have to have at its disposal a physical facility that would offer a broad range of services. It should touch everybody in the community in a deeply personal manner, and, at least, be open to all.

It would have to be an institution committed to Jewish continuity and to the transmission of Jewish values.

That would be the ideal institution to respond to the unique challenges that we face in our world today. But, it should be clear to you: I have described our Center—our Jewish Community Center. Fortunately, we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We have an instrumentality, by its very nature, uniquely tailored and shaped to meet the challenges that we face. From its early days more than 100 years ago, our Center has been a dynamic institution, adapting to the needs of our people. Our Jewish Community Center has changed certainly from its early days in the nineteenth century when it was initially an institution for cultural exchange and enrichment, and then through the first part of the twentieth century when it was a vehicle for the Americanization of Jewish immigrants.

If the Jewish Community Center and all of us together—which I call the Jewish Community Center movement—are to have the kind of impact that we so desperately need, then we need to change our mindset. We need to think of ourselves as a movement.

But what is a movement? A movement is dynamic and constantly adjusting. It is not static. What is a movement? A movement has vision—not just a charter and bylaws. What is a movement? A movement has advocates, not just members. What is a movement? A movement has persistence and tenacity to purpose. It does not yield to pressure. What is a movement? A movement shapes history. History does not shape a movement. What is a movement? A movement has principles, not just purposes. What is a movement? A movement dares to be different and has the courage to face a crisis. What is a movement? A movement is constantly reaching out to include and embrace. It is not

inward-looking or elitist. We must recognize that we are a movement—that we have connection with one another—whether we live in Montreal, New York, New Orleans, or Los Angeles.

We must recognize there is an urgency for our mission and importance to our responsibility. We cannot continue to do business as usual. Although there are other very important institutions in Jewish life, the Center—the Jewish Community Center—is uniquely positioned to have an impact on Jewish continuity. You and I must be willing to assume that special leadership role and recognize that the Centers have a mission—that mission is to deeply impact Jewish continuity and to ensure that the legacy of our people will flourish in the days ahead. Yes, the efficient fiscal management of our Centers is important; we must continue to manage well. But we also must manage with a mission, with a sense of purpose, with a vision that nurtures our commitment and encourages connection.

First, we must be psychologically ready to recognize that we are now part of something very special, very urgent, very significant. We must create that consensus within each of our communities and then throughout North America so that we are supported by one another in this great quest that is so important to our people.

It is a question of will—it is between our ears and in our hearts. I am reminded of what Herzl said many years ago, *"Im tirtzu ayn zo agadah—If you will it, it is no dream."* So, first, I suggest that we must have the will. We must have the psychological readiness to understand that each of us goes beyond our own individual Centers and that we are part of a movement. We are part of a larger effort to impact, in a very serious and deep way, on Jewish life.

But, we must go beyond an intellectual and spiritual commitment to have our Centers serve as the instrumentality of Jewish continuity in our community. We must be truly committed to the substance of our mission and, therefore, must devise a strategy—a meaningful strategy designed to transmit, on an ongoing basis, Jewish values, Jewish history, Jewish celebration, and Jewish practices.

Our Centers must be a model for encouraging Jewish study and a model for Jewish celebration. We must create a Jewish ambiance. Our Centers should serve to encourage people to identify, not because of guilt, but because of the joy and richness of our heritage. The strategy must initially require each of you to buy in,

meaningfully, to Jewish education. Then our Center boards must buy in, meaningfully, to Jewish education. On your tables is a wonderful guide—"Jewish Educational Planning Guide." During the course of the convention, review it carefully. Test yourself and your Center as to whether you are meeting the objectives or suggestions in this guide. Yes, our strategy requires each of us to become truly committed to Jewish education, individually, and as Board members.

It must be reflected in the programming of the Center—the transmission of Jewish values must be the *raison d'être* of your Center. We must create an atmosphere that is positive and exciting. Most importantly, we must set criteria that will make each of us reach—that will enrich and go beyond that which we have accepted as the norm. Remember what David Hartman has told us: "We cannot stand at the margin—we must engage in that quest for content."

Even beyond that, we must set goals for reaching beyond our normal constituency. I am concerned that we are often preaching to the committed. I would dare say that there is no Jewish Community Center in North America that touches, in a meaningful way, more than 50 percent of its community, and you know that in most instances it is substantially less. How wonderful it would be for the Center leadership throughout North America, in a very carefully planned manner, to agree that each year we would touch a new 5 percent of our community—just 5 percent each year for the next five years—the unaffiliated, single parents, the unconnected, the disenfranchised—the ones that need a sense of belonging, a sense of relationship.

And finally, if we are to succeed, we not only need the will, and a strategy, but we also need the process to evaluate and judge our successes and our failures.

Indeed, we are passing through a critical phase in the history of our people, a chapter that I would submit requires unusual leadership, a period in our history that offers great opportunity. The real issue that I put to each of you today is: Do we recognize the urgency of the moment, the importance of the chapter—the chapter that we will write?

History speaks often of how events would have changed if those affected understood the ultimate consequences of their actions. There is an interesting anecdote about the Revolutionary War that I want to share with you:

While George Washington was preparing to

cross the ice-clogged Delaware on Christmas night, 1776, Colonel Rall, the Hessian commander at Trenton, was drinking applejack and playing cards. He received a note from a British loyalist warning him of the imminent attack, but it was late, Rall was groggy, and the note was in English, which he couldn't read. He put it in his pocket. Washington attacked at dawn and took one thousand prisoners in a much-needed victory. Rall was wounded in the battle. As he lay dying, the note was found and translated into German. Had he read it earlier, he admitted, "I would not be here."

Our scholar-in-residence, Rabbi David Hartman, has given us the message in his eloquent manner. It is in our pocket. The question is: Will we read it? Will we respond?

When the patriarch Jacob prepared to bless his assembled twelve sons and to offer prophecies for each, he began with these words—"*Titaharu et atz'm'chem*—Purify yourselves so that my blessing may take effect." But then the Midrash says, "And how will that be?—*Tisha'aru b'achdoot*—By remaining together in unity."

If we are to enjoy Jacob's blessing, then the Center movement has to become the vehicle for the unity of the Jewish people—a unity based upon deep commitment to Jewish values.

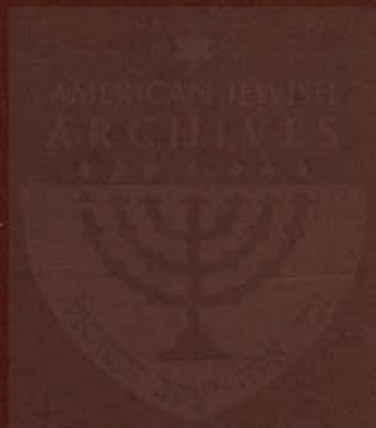
I ask you, as we move forward in the days ahead, to join with me in writing what I believe should be the most exciting chapter in the history of our Center movement.

Ultimately, the question is: Do we have a choice?

Donald R. Mintz
President

Arthur Rotman
Executive Vice-President

Solomon Greenfield
Associate Executive Director



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MESSAGE:

Mr. Mintz, Please let me know how you might
like the following reworded to reflect your current
situation.

vt levi

Donald R. Mintz, Sessions & Fishman, Thirty-Fifth Floor, 201 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70170-3500, (504) 582-1571
Mr. Mintz is Founder and Director of McGlinchey, Stafford, Mintz, Cellini and Lang and a Professor at Tulane University Law School. He was President of the New Orleans Federation and is now President of JWB.

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Mr. Mintz is a senior partner of Sessions & Fishman and a Professor at Tulane University Law School. He was President of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans and is the immediate past president of Jewish Community Centers Association of North America (formerly, JWB).