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MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1961-1996.

Series A: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1961-1996.

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Gay rights, 1991-1998.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.



February 11, 1993
20 Shevat 5753

Mr. Fred S. Hoffman
6915 Lodestone Court
Alexandria, VA 22306

Dear Mr. Hoffman:

When I speak in behalf of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations it is on the basis of resolutions passed by the General Assembly of the Union, when representatives of our member-congregations debate and vote on critical issues facing our community. The Union has a long history of such resolutions on the rights of gays and lesbians, thus I do indeed speak for the UAHC and have the right to do so based on the mandate of Biennial conventions. And I do so without shame. Given the history of our people I am proud of our movement which is in the forefront of the struggle for human and civil rights for all peoples.

You, of course, have the right to disagree.

Sincerely,



Alexander N. Schindler

Feb. 8, 1993

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Rabbi Schindler:

How dare you claim to represent the view of 1.5 million Jews in applauding President Clinton's move to end the ban on homosexuals in the military!

You don't speak for me, nor for many other Jews I know.

You have a right to express only your opinion as an individual. But, of course, nobody would pay attention to you without your title as president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

You are no better than the politicized Evangelical preachers whom I'm certain you deplore.

It is you--not the Jewish War Veterans--who should feel ashamed.

But I doubt you have the grace to do so.

Most sincerely,

Fred S. Hoffman

Fred S. Hoffman

6915 Lodestone Court
Alexandria, Virginia, 22306

Handwritten signature

February 17, 1993
26 Shevat 5753

Julian H. Preisler
518 West Fourth Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Mr. Preisler:

It was thoughtful of you to convey your appreciation of my words and continued support of Gay and Lesbian Rights. I am proud of the UAHC's long and active record of advocacy for equal rights for all human beings.

It is truly good to hear from people who applaud our stance and I thank you for writing. As you undoubtedly know, opposers and naysayers are usually very quick to condemn while supporters are often reticent about expressing their appreciation; thus your letter means a great deal to me and the leaders of our Union.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander N. Schindler

February 6, 1993

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

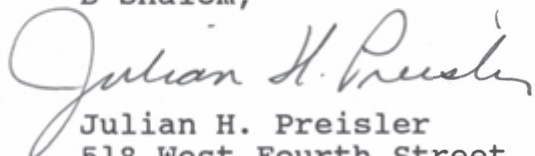
Dear President Schindler:

I am writing to you today to express my thanks for your continued support of Gay and Lesbian rights.

I recently read an article in the Jewish Exponent of Philadelphia regarding the Jewish response to the controversy over Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military. The article mentioned your support for the repeal of the ban. It also mentioned a strongly worded letter that you sent to the Jewish War Veterans of America.

You have consistently expressed your support for equal rights for Gays and Lesbians even when that support has met with much controversy. You may remember a letter that I sent to you approximately three years ago expressing my thanks; I thought that it was important to let you know again that your support is appreciated. You are a courageous person and I hope that the day will come when all can live in peace without fear.

B'Shalom,



Julian H. Preisler
518 West Fourth Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

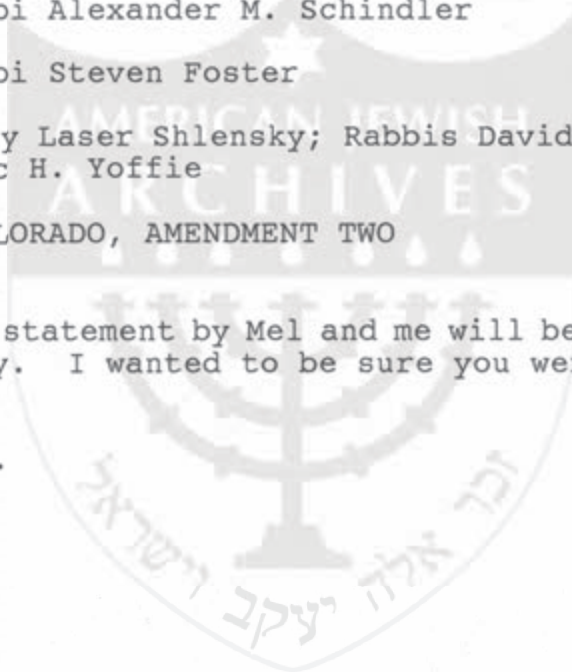
Amosov

December 28, 1992

From: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
To: Rabbi Steven Foster
CC: Evely Laser Shlensky; Rabbis David Saperstein and
Eric H. Yoffie
SUBJECT: COLORADO, AMENDMENT TWO

The enclosed statement by Mel and me will be released to the press shortly. I wanted to be sure you were aware of this development.

Warm regards.



December 28, 1992

Statement on Colorado's Anti-Gay Amendment

By: Melvin Merians, Chairman of the Board
and
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

We are profoundly disappointed at the passage by the State of Colorado of Amendment Two, which bans ordinances protecting gays and lesbians from discrimination and which bars any legal claims of discrimination by homosexuals. In adopting such a measure, Colorado became the first state in the Union to permit what might be called "open season" on gay men and lesbians. Not surprisingly, incidents of gay-bashing have risen sharply since the Amendment was adopted.

Discrimination is wrong, whether it be on the basis of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, age, physical handicap -- or sexual orientation. To any historically conscious Jew, this Amendment raises dangerous warning signals. The history of our people is rife with the pain of bigotry resulting in discrimination -- and worse.

We believe that all gay people are entitled to protection from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. Colorado's Amendment Two denies these fundamental rights to gays and lesbians and prohibits any attempt to mitigate discrimination in the future.

The UAHC supports state and federal legislation to protect the basic rights of gays and lesbians and we will urge UAHC constituents to join those working to repeal Amendment Two.

Unless Amendment Two is speedily reversed, we intend to call on our constituency to refrain from meeting in the State of Colorado as long as Amendment Two is in effect. Any such meetings would pose the risk of embarrassment and humiliation to those of our members who might be gay or lesbian. It would also signal a disregard for their rights and the rights of all gays and lesbians on the part of the UAHC. We cannot be party to such an eventuality.

Colorado was wrong to enact this discriminatory legislation. It should be repealed.

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Join those working
Constituents to

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12/24/92

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cc: ~~Brit~~ ^{Sw} ~~et al~~ ⁵
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Adopted by the...

ADOPTED BY THE 59th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

October 29 - November 3, 1987
Chicago, Illinois

SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION OF LESBIAN AND GAY JEWS

God calls upon us to love our neighbors as ourselves. The prophet Isaiah charges us further: "Let my house be called a house of prayer, for all people..." (Isaiah 56:7). And, armed with the other teachings of our faith, we Jews are asked to create a society based on righteousness, the goal being tikkun olam, the perfection of the world. Each of us, created in God's image, has a unique talent which can contribute to that high moral purpose; and to exclude any Jew from the community of Israel lessens our chances of achieving that goal.

In consonance with these teachings, in 1977 the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolved to support and defend the civil and human rights of homosexuals, and we have welcomed into the UAHC congregations with special outreach to Lesbian and Gay Jews. But we must do more.

Sexual orientation should not be a criterion for membership or participation in an activity of any synagogue. Thus, all Jews should be welcome, however they may define themselves.

Service of lesbian and gay Jews as Rabbis is currently under consideration by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It has appointed a Committee on Homosexuality in the Rabbinate to consider all aspects of the subject. The committee is directed to present a final report at the 1989 CCAR convention. Representatives of the UAHC and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion are serving on the committee.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations:

1. Urge its congregations and affiliates to:
 - A. Encourage lesbian and gay Jews to share and participate in worship, leadership, and general congregational life of all synagogues.
 - B. Continue to develop educational programs in the synagogue and community which promote understanding and respect for lesbians and gays.
 - C. Employ people without regard to sexual orientation.
2. Urge the Commission on Social Action to bring its recommendations to the next General Assembly after considering the report of the CCAR committee and any action of the CCAR pursuant to it.
3. Urge the Committee on Liturgy to formulate liturgically inclusive language.

ADOPTED BY THE 54th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

November 18-22, 1977
San Francisco, California

HUMAN RIGHTS OF HOMOSEXUALS

AMERICAN JEWISH

WHEREAS the UAHC has consistently supported civil rights and civil liberties for all persons, and

WHEREAS the Constitution guarantees civil rights to all individuals,

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law. We oppose discrimination against homosexuals in areas of opportunity, including employment and housing. We call upon our society to see that such protection is provided in actuality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we affirm our belief that private sexual acts between consenting adults are not the proper province of government and law enforcement agencies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge congregations to conduct appropriate educational programming for youth and adults so as to provide greater understanding of the relation of Jewish values to the range of human sexuality.

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ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

of the

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

November 2 - November 6, 1989 - New Orleans

GAY AND LESBIAN JEWS

In North America today, it is estimated that 100,000 Reform Jews - and 500,000 members of the larger Jewish community - are gay or lesbian.

Over the last fifteen years, the UAHC has admitted to membership four synagogues with an outreach to gay and lesbian Jews. Hundreds of men and women who once felt themselves alienated from Judaism and unwelcome in mainstream congregations have joined these synagogues, adding their strength and commitment to our religious community.

In 1977, the UAHC General Assembly called for an end to discrimination against homosexuals, and expanded upon this in 1987 by calling for the full inclusion of gay and lesbian Jews in all aspects of synagogue life.

While that resolution urged that congregations not discriminate in employment, it did not address rabbinic employment, pending the report of the CCAR ad hoc Committee on Homosexuality and the Rabbinate. The CCAR committee continues its work, and we eagerly await its report.

Within the larger context of UAHC congregational life, however, we have yet to shed the destructive anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudices and stereotypes that preclude a genuine embrace of the heart.

Our union of congregations must be a place where loneliness and suffering and exile end, where gay and lesbian Jews can know that they are accepted on terms of visibility, not invisibility; that we place no limits on their communal or spiritual aspirations.

THEREFORE, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolves to:

1. Reaffirm its 1987 resolution and call upon all departments of the UAHC and our member congregations to fully implement its provisions.
2. Embark upon a movement-wide program of heightened awareness and education to achieve the fuller acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews in our midst.
3. Urge our member congregations to welcome gay and lesbian Jews to membership, as singles, couples, and families.

4. Commend the CCAR for its sensitive and thorough efforts to raise the consciousness of the rabbinate regarding homosexuality. We urge the CCAR to pursue its own mandate with vigor and complete its tasks as soon as possible in order to respond to the communal and spiritual aspirations of gay and lesbian Jews.



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100 CABLES: UNIONUAHC



איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

April 1, 1993

Dr. Melvyn H. Klein
President
Temple Sinai
3509 South Glencoe
Denver, Colorado 80237

Dear Dr. Klein:

Thank you for your letter of March 22. We recognize that our UAHC congregations in Colorado have been overwhelmingly supportive of the Union position against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. We are deeply grateful to our lay leaders and rabbis in Colorado who worked so hard to oppose Amendment Two.

Your letter raises a number of important issues. At the request of the UAHC Board of Trustees, we had earlier referred most of these matters to the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, the movement-wide body which deals with issues of social policy. We have asked the Commission to examine all the implications for the Union of the Colorado vote. At its meeting in April, it will consider the current status of efforts to repeal Amendment Two, how the Union might be helpful to our congregations in Colorado and elsewhere which are fighting discriminatory legislation of this nature, and whether the Union should consider, now or in the future, a policy of refraining from holding national or regional meetings in states where legislation such as Amendment Two has been adopted.

Any recommendations for action by the Commission will be referred back to the National Board of the UAHC. The Union board is meeting in Nashville on May 21-23, and will consider Commission proposals at that time.

The Commission, of course, is anxious to have input from Reform leadership in Colorado prior to making its recommendations. A letter from Evelyn Laser Shlensky, Chairperson of the Commission, should reach you in the next few days, asking for your views on a number of questions. We hope that you will share with us any thoughts that you might have in addition to those already expressed in your letter.

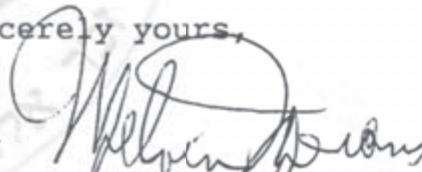
Please note that Mel Merians will be in Denver on April 9 to speak at Temple Emanuel. He would be happy to meet with you early in the day on April 9 to discuss further your concerns. Please let us know if you are available on that date.

We thank you again for your interest.

Sincerely yours,



Alexander M. Schindler
President



Melvin Merians
Chairman of the Board

AMS:da

cc: Evelyn Laser Shlensky
Religious Action Center
Rabbi Stephen Pinsky



Temple Sinai

Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin, D.D.
Rabbi Avi M. Schulman, Associate

tell quick to mega answer

Loretta Cawelti, Executive Director
Dr. Melvyn H. Klein, President

March 22, 1993

Mr. Melvin Merians
Chairman of the Board, UAHC

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC

Dear Mr. Merians and Rabbi Schindler:

The Board of Trustees of Temple Sinai, Denver, Colorado, at its regular meeting on February 17, 1993, directed me to respond to the news release from UAHC dated 12/29/92, and entitled "Reform Jewish Leaders to Ask Ban on Meetings in Colorado if Anti-Gay Amendment remains." Our board is also "profoundly disappointed at the passage by the State of Colorado of Amendment Two..." Many of our members worked actively to prevent adoption of this measure and many more were financially supportive of the anti-Two position. Unfortunately, a series of events and circumstances arose which encouraged the unpredicted approval of this amendment.

Despite our revulsion for the intent and the very existence of Amendment Two and despite our respect for the basic position you have enunciated for UAHC, we must voice our chagrin at a few issues that arise. First, you do not acknowledge that some Colorado communities (Denver, Boulder, Aspen) had already drafted anti-discrimination initiatives based on sexual orientation, establishing them as leaders in this area nationally. Colorado is not a hotbed of anti-Gay activity nor have reliable sources reported that "incidents of Gay-bashing have risen sharply" since passage of Two. The question posed to Colorado voters has not yet been posed to other jurisdictions, but we have no reason to believe that homophobia is a regional or local phenomenon. If the question is then obfuscated by confusing language and a subtle, well-financed and professionally-directed campaign, we would expect this discriminatory movement to find fertile soil in many other states.

Second, you are incorrect in your assessment of Amendment Two when you allege that gays and lesbians are denied the fundamental rights of protection from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodation. In fact, gays and lesbians enjoy the same rights as all other Coloradans in this area. The restriction applied by Amendment Two precludes the development of laws, rules of regulations which would specifically protect groups on the basis of sexual orientation.

Third, you allege that you "will urge UAHC constituents to join those working to repeal Amendment Two." We have been working all along to defeat this proposal and we welcome your support in our efforts. Our congregation (approximately one-third of the Reform Jews in Colorado) has yet to be contacted by UAHC employees or officials regarding this issue.

Fourth, we are not certain how to react to your intention to call on your "constituency" (we presume we are part of that group) "to refrain from meeting in the State of Colorado as long as Amendment Two is in effect." We suppose you understand that it would be impractical for us to meet in Oregon or Arizona or New York since all of our 838 families do live and work in Colorado. Furthermore, we would not be likely to raise the \$70,000 in dues we pay to UAHC annually which would impact your budget and impair our standing with UAHC. If we were no longer members of UAHC, we suppose we could resume meeting in Colorado, but we cannot believe that is the outcome you are advocating.

If you meant by your proscription on meeting in Colorado that UAHC regional and national meetings not be held in our state, we also take umbrage at your suggestion. Many communities within the state are quite liberal, progressive and contemporary with regard to treatment of sexual orientation issues. Our congregants and those of other Colorado UAHC congregations are overwhelmingly supportive of the basic UAHC position. We do not understand why we must be a target of a discriminatory UAHC policy to overturn an equally discriminatory state law.

Lastly, many of our congregants earn their living in the tourism and convention industries. The strategy of boycott is hurtful to many Coloradans regardless of their positions on Amendment Two. We find it hard to support a policy so lacking in focus.

Let us suggest a compromise position. Why not allow your constituents to meet in Colorado and use that opportunity to proclaim to the citizens of our state, the staunch opposition our organization holds to Amendment Two and the discriminatory tenets upon which it is based. Furthermore, we would suggest that UAHC partner with its member congregations in Colorado to develop an

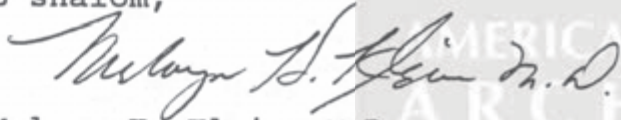
Page 3

ongoing program to work for the repeal of this law. We would expect to see a significant budgetary line made available for this effort. Instead of allowing ourselves to be run out of Colorado, let us stand and fight this injustice.

For our part, we will continue to work against Amendment Two. We will also continue to work for the ideals of Reform Judaism. We plan to apply to the UAHC Midwest Council for designation as the host congregation for the 1996 Biennial Convention. The Board of Trustees of Temple Sinai would be disappointed if an imperfect national UAHC ruling were to interfere in that attempt.

We look forward to your response.

B'shalom,



Melvyn H. Klein, M.D.
President
Temple Sinai Board of Trustees

cc: Rabbi Stephen Pinsky, UAHC Midwest
Commission on Social Action
UAHC, Board of Directors



Hansxue

✓
cc Judy

April 2, 1993
11 Nisan 5753

Rabbi Robert N. Levine
Congregation Rodeph Sholom
7 West 83rd Street
New York, NY 10024

Dear Bob:

Many thanks for sharing with me your Letter to the Editor of the New York Times. It is a fine statement and I am delighted that you took the opportunity to convey it to the press. I hope they print it!

You probably know that Judy opted for the internship at Central Synagogue. She worked with Peter when he was in California and he has been a fine mentor to her. Central opened up quite suddenly and Rodeph Sholom was Judy's first choice - and mine for her - until Central became available. It was really a matter of Judy saying yes to Peter rather than no to you.

With warm regards from house to house and best wishes for a zissen Pesach, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

bcc: Judy - You might write a note to Bob, too. Love ya..

**FAX
TRANSMITTAL SHEET**

To: RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
FAX: 570-0895

From: Rabbi Robert N. Levine
Congregation Rodeph Sholom FAX: (212) 877-6525

Date: April 2, 1993

Number of Pages including Cover sheet: 2

Dear Alex,

I wanted you to see the letter just sent to The New York Times.

Have a happy and meaningful Pesach.

Robert





Founded in 1842

CONGREGATION RODEPH SHOLOM

Robert N. Levine
Senior Rabbi

April 1, 1993

EY
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Letters to the Editor
The New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

To the Editor:

Perhaps leaders of the American Zionist Youth Foundation should reread the stirring command of the Passover Seder "Let all who are hungry come to eat... this year here, next year in Israel." Sentiments of categorical inclusion are missing in the AZYF's strenuous efforts to ban a local gay and lesbian synagogue from marching with banner in a Salute to Israel Parade (NY Times, March 23).

If "Congregation Beth Simchat Torah" cannot be unfurled in the spirit of love, will chassidic sects which do not recognize Israel's existence also face exclusion?

Fifty years ago Nazis marched gays and Jews together. That tragic parade has taught the AZYF precious little about this one.

Robert N. Levine
Senior Rabbi
Congregation Rodeph Sholom
7 West 83rd Street
New York, New York 10024
Tel.: 362-8800 or 362-8864



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Alexander M. Schindler
RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

April 20, 1993
29 Nisan 5753

Faith Haaz
7367 Hollywood Blvd. #106
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Dear Faith:

There is really no need for you to thank me. I only did what was right and that hardly merits gratitude. But of course I am grateful for your letter and I am glad that what I said gives you a measure of comfort.

I do hope that your parents will be able to overcome their dismay. You are no different than you were as the child they loved.

I know that you, in turn, will be understanding of them. It isn't easy to overcome those demons in the soul, and the fact that they are in theirs is no fault of theirs.

Again, my thanks for your thoughtful note.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

April 12, 1993

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I have been meaning to write to you for many years and I finally could put it off any longer. My name is Faith Haaz. I am a 22 year old Jewish lesbian, and I must thank you for all of your support.

In 1987, as president of my youth group, and active member of the Southern California Federation of Temple Youth (SCFTY), I was sent to Chicago for the UAHC Biennial Convention where a resolution was passed concerning the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian Jews in Reform synagogues. Though I had not come out of the closet, the proactive support of my sexual orientation was uplifting and made me feel secure in my tradition.

Upon returning from the UAHC Year In Israel program in 1989, my synagogue again sent me to the Biennial Convention in New Orleans. It was here, that I was present for the CCAR decision regarding gay and lesbian rabbinical school applicants and I listened with a growing sense of pride to your support of this resolution. I came out of the closet three months later.

Though my parents were not understanding, I read an article you wrote soon after. It seems that every time I doubt, I find an article or a quote by you Rabbi Schindler, that encourages me to explore a new and accepting synagogue, or to try to speak to my parents again.

You have set the tone for the Reform movement and in your compassion I am a stronger Jew. I thank you from my heart for all of your support because I feel that you knew I was here hoping for that voice of compassion.

I hope that someday I will meet you again to thank you in person. Until then...

B'shalom,



Faith Haaz
7367 Hollywood Blvd. #106
Los Angeles, CA 90046

04/22/83

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

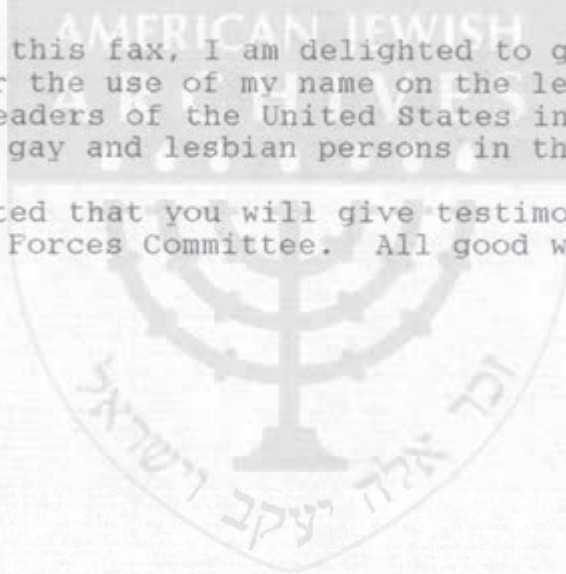
Via Fax: 216-736-2120 One Page

TO: Paul H. Sherry
United Church of Christ

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

By means of this fax, I am delighted to give you approval for the use of my name on the letter to religious leaders of the United States in regard to the ban against gay and lesbian persons in the military.

I am delighted that you will give testimony before the House Armed Forces Committee. All good wishes.





Office of the President
216-736-2101
Office of the Secretary
216-736-2110
Office of the Treasurer
216-736-2114
700 Prospect Ave., East
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Handwritten signature

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

FAX COVER SHEET

FAX # (216) 736-2120

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

*Please reply
by fax
that they
can use
my
name.*

TO:

Heads of Communities

FAX:

Quick Serial 69-70-71-72

FROM:

Paul H. Sherry

DATE:

4-22-93

MESSAGE:

See Attached

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER PAGE): 3

United Church of Christ



Office of the President
216-736-2101
Office of the Secretary
216-736-2110
Office of the Treasurer
216-736-2114
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

United Church of Christ

DATE: April 19, 1993
TO: U. S. Religious Leaders
FROM: Paul H. Sherry

I have been asked to offer testimony before the House Armed Forces Committee in early May on the subject of the ban against gay and lesbian persons in the military. In that testimony I will be sharing the position of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ which supports extending full civil rights to gay and lesbian persons and I will also speak out of my own personal convictions on the more specific issue of military service. I believe it would strengthen the testimony if I could share the names of colleagues among religious leaders who concur with the conviction that the ban should be lifted. The primary purpose, of course, would be to indicate to the members of Congress that there is a significant segment of the religious community that supports a rescinding of the ban as a matter of justice and civil rights for gay and lesbian persons. I propose the following language in the context of my more detailed and personal remarks:

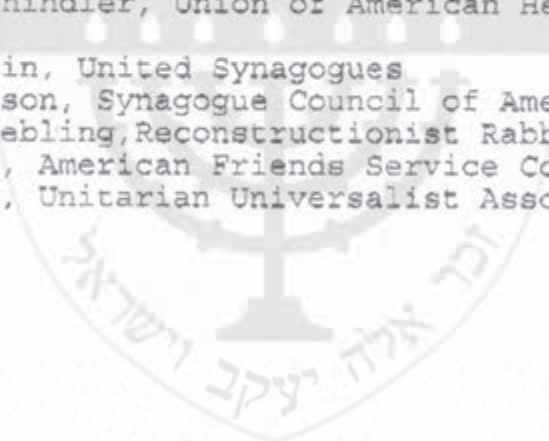
I have also been asked by many of my colleagues among religious leaders to convey to you their support for ending discrimination against gay and lesbian persons in the military. While each of us would want to speak out of a distinctive theological tradition, and is accountable to policy bases formulated by differing structures of authority, we share a common conviction that the civil rights guaranteed for all citizens should be guaranteed for gay and lesbian persons as well. This means that gay and lesbian persons should have the same right to military service as heterosexual persons, and should be held to the same standard of conduct. The religious leaders who have asked me to convey this conviction to you include: [add names and titles]

If you are willing to include your name, please respond by April 30. You may reply by FAX (216-736-2120), or call my assistant for ecumenical concerns, the Rev. John Thomas (216-736-2119). Thank you.

DISTRIBUTION

Paul H. Sherry Letter to U.S. Religious Leaders
April 19, 1993

Bishop Frederick C. James, African Methodist Episcopal Church
Bishop Reuben Speaks, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Dr. Daniel E. Weiss, American Baptist Churches in the USA
Dr. C. William Nichols, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Bishop Ceasar D. Coleman, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Dr. Donald E. Miller, Church of the Brethren
The Rt. Rev. Edmond L. Browning, Episcopal Church
Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom, Ev. Lutheran Church in America
Dr. Jeffrey Newhall, International Council of Community Churches
Dr. Gordon Sommers, Moravian Church in America
Dr. E. Edward Jones, National Baptist Convention of America
Dr. Theodore Jemison, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
Dr. James Andrews, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Dr. Charles Adams, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Dr. Edwin Mulder, Reformed Church in America
Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, United Methodist Church
The Rev. Troy Perry, Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan
Community Churches
The Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, National Council of Churches
Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Union of American Hebrew
Congregations
Rabbi Jerome Epstein, United Synagogues
Rabbi Jerome Davidson, Synagogue Council of America
Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Ms. Kara L. Newell, American Friends Service Committee
Dr. William Schulz, Unitarian Universalist Association



COPY



April 26, 1993
5 Iyar 5753

Wayne C. Kreuscher
President
Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation
6501 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis, IN 46260

Dear Wayne:

Rabbi Schindler was already out of the city on Friday when we received your letter of April 20, as was Rabbi Eric Yoffie. Therefore, I write to acknowledge receipt of this letter and the fine resolution passed by the Board of Trustees of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation on equality for homosexuals.

Eric and Alex are in Washington for the Consultation on Conscience of the Religious Action Center and a meeting of the Commission on Social Action. As you know, the Union is on record with a number of resolution concerning the rights of gays and lesbians. Nonetheless, I faxed your letter to Eric so that he would have it in Washington for the Commission meeting so its contents may be shared with our Social Action leaders.

With warmest regards and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President



INDIANAPOLIS HEBREW CONGREGATION

6501 North Meridian Street • Indianapolis, IN 46260-4299 • (317) 255-6647

April 20, 1993

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear ~~Rabbi~~ ^{Alex} Schindler:

The following resolution, prepared by the Temple Social Action Committee, was overwhelmingly passed by the Board of Directors of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation on April 19, 1993:

"We believe that all citizens are entitled to equal rights and equal protection under the law.

"The recent surge in ballot propositions, designed to prohibit states or cities from passing ordinances to protect homosexuals from discrimination, is profoundly disturbing. The most regrettable of these measures is Colorado's Initiative 2, which passed by 53 percent last November.

"We applaud President Clinton's courageous stand on homosexuals in the military and his prompt action to investigate military policy, aimed toward ending the ban. The facts are that gay soldiers have served with valor in every U. S. war since the days of Valley Forge. And yet, their role in the military is still being questioned. Except for physical and mental deficiencies, conduct is the only valid criterion for evaluating fitness to serve in the military; the same code which applies to heterosexuals should also apply to homosexuals.

"We support the effort by gays and lesbians to achieve acceptance and dignity through honesty. In the workplace, their skills are utilized in every trade and profession. In the arts, their brilliance and creativity have made a lasting contribution. It is disheartening that intolerance and prejudice are still rampant in the world. Those who would condemn homosexuals should realize that gays and lesbians are our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, our neighbors and co-workers.

Jonathan Stein
Rabbi

Laurence Milder
Rabbi

Janice Roger
Cantor

Elaine Arffa
Executive Director

Marcia Goldstein
Education Director

Janice Schachter
Pre-School Director

Wayne Kreuscher
President

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President, UAHC
April 20, 1993
Page 2

"Our goal is true equality for homosexuals and we urge strong action
in this cause."

Sincerely yours,


Wayne C. Kreuscher, President
Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation

WCK/ss

CC: Melvin Merians, Chairperson
Union of American Hebrew Congregations Board

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, Vice President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Evelyn Laser Shlensky, Vice Chairperson
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Paul Uhlman, Jr., President
Midwest Council, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Rabbi Steven E. Foster
Congregation Emanuel, Denver, Colorado

Ted Fleischaker
The Indiana Word, Indianapolis, Indiana

Rabbi Stephen H. Pinsky
Midwest Council, Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Dr. Robert M. Rankin
San Francisco, California

THIS LETTER HAS BEEN MAILED TO THE FOLLOWING:

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Daniel R. Coats
411 Senate Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dan L. Burton
120 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Andrew Jacobs
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky
420 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phillip R. Sharp
2217 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Roemer
415 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jill L. Long
1632 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Buyer
103 West Broadway
Monticello, IN 47960

The Honorable John T. Meyers
2372 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank McCloskey
127 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton
2187 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515





COPY ✓

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

May 3, 1993
12 Iyar 5753

David Taffet
Congregation Beth El Binah
P.O. Box 64460
Dallas, TX 75206

Dear David:

Thank you so much for your wonderful letter of gratitude for the support of the UAHC. It was really gratifying to see the remarkable participation of the UAHC congregations and synagogue members at the recent march in Washington. I thank you for your thoughtfulness in taking the time to write as you did. Letters of appreciation mean a great deal to all of us of the Union.

With warm regards and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



CONGREGATION

BETH EL BINAH

P. O. BOX 64460, DALLAS, TX 75206

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

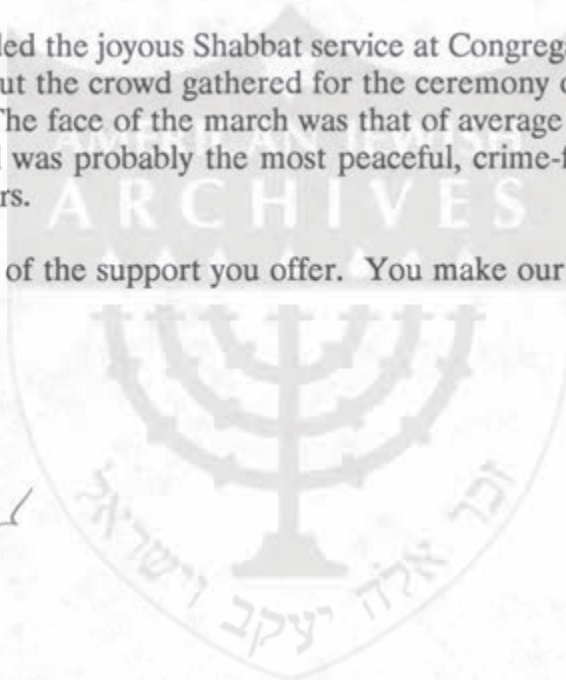
As a new regional UAHC board member and a Congregation Beth El Binah board member, I would like to thank you for your courageous and righteous support of The March on Washington. A dozen members of our congregation participated. The large turnout of rabbis and UAHC members from around the country proudly and prominently marching with UAHC signs was exciting.

Over 700 persons attended the joyous Shabbat service at Congregation Bet Mishpachah and chupahs stood throughout the crowd gathered for the ceremony of commitment at the IRS Building on Saturday. The face of the march was that of average Americans from all walks of life and the weekend was probably the most peaceful, crime-free weekend Washington D.C. has enjoyed in years.

Again, thank you for all of the support you offer. You make our congregation proud to be members of the Union.

Sincerely,

David Taffet



COPIED

May 7, 1993
16 Iyar 5753

Frederick C. Stark, Jr.
8 Calalou Court
Toms River, NJ 08757

Dear Mr. Stark:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on homosexuality
with me.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



A Position Paper on Homosexuality by Frederick C. Stark, Jr., B.A.
Columbia University and retired Program Analyst.

It is completely obvious that Nature created sexual organs only for reproduction. Male organs cannot reproduce with male organs, and female organs cannot reproduce with female organs. Nature intended reproduction to occur only by means of sexual intercourse between a male and a female (orgasms occurring only with the penis in the vagina). Therefore, obviously, homosexuality is completely against the laws of Nature. It is perversion. It is unnatural and abnormal. As far as sex is concerned, males were meant only for females and vice versa.

Certain other human activities are also out of conformity with Nature but not nearly so much as is homosexuality. For example, contraception is not in conformity with the laws of Nature, but if it were not practised, there would be too many children for couples to support and too many people for the world's resources to sustain. Medical science is not in conformity with the laws of Nature, because when it attempts to cure injuries and diseases, it is fighting against the normal processes of Nature, but people would be fools, if they did not utilize it. The difference between homosexuality on the one hand and contraception and medical science on the other is that if people do not practise homosexuality, no harm will result, but if they do not practise contraception and medical science, harm will definitely result. Human beings should not differ from the laws of Nature with respect to homosexuality but they should with respect to contraception and medical science. Nature gave human beings intelligence with which they have created contraception and medical science with which to do themselves good, but it took no intelligence to create homosexuality, and it is harmful.

Homosexual acts are extremely rare among animals unless human beings have deprived them of access to the opposite sex of their species. Some homosexual men have had operations to give themselves women's breasts and have then dressed like women and offered themselves for prostitution to normal men! Many lesbians beat up other lesbians, and instances of female homosexuals strongly verbally abusing other homosexual women are common. Violence and verbal abuse are also very common among male homosexuals. Some males of this group have engaged in the mass murder of other male homosexuals.

Homosexuals insist that they are homosexuals, because they inherited a gene that predisposed them to homosexuality. Even if that is so, that is a character gene and people can overcome such genes with free will which all human beings have. Genes that cause muscular dystrophy, Huntington's Chorea, etc. cannot be conquered by free will, but character defects such as drug addiction, alcoholism, being mean, being a bully, being a thief, etc. can be, and an enormous number of people have conquered bad character traits in themselves that they were born with and exhibited when they were babies and children by using their free will and forcing themselves to do what is right. We are not psychological robots. We can change ourselves for the better. Actually, at least, the overwhelming majority of homosexuals have artificially chosen to be homosexuals. For them it's just a fad to be a homosexual. They are only looking for a different type of sexual pleasure. Those individuals can turn themselves back into being heterosexuals by exercising their free will. As a matter of fact, a very large number of homosexuals have become heterosexuals, because they came to the realization that homosexuality is wrong.

The attempt of homosexuals to equate themselves with other groups such as the Blacks, women, the Jews, the Hispanics, the aged, etc. who

have been discriminated against in the past is invalid and an insult to those groups, because those groups are naturally occurring segments of society and are in conformity with Nature, but homosexuals are out of conformity with Nature. You cannot stop from being Black, a woman, Jewish, an Hispanic, old, etc., but you can stop from being a homosexual.

Homosexuality constitutes an attack upon the family which is only a man and a woman legally married to each other and any children that they may have, and the family is by far the best foundation for a civilization. Also, homosexuality is adding to the corruption and decadence that already exists in the world. Because of these facts, homosexuals should be punished by appropriate prison terms and/or fines. Perhaps, three months in confinement and/or a \$500 fine for each offense would be fitting. If the offender is well-to-do, the punishment should be a jail term, since a fine will hardly act as a deterrent in such a case.

Homosexuals (they refer to themselves as being gay which is a complete perversion of the meaning of that word) should not have the right to adopt children, care for foster children, be teachers in schools below the college level, etc., because, if you give them such access to young people, they may very well be able to persuade that very impressionable group to embrace their unnatural, perverted life style. Also, people should not be obliged to rent rooms to them in private homes where their way of life may be very obnoxious to the home owner. In addition, they should be kept out of military service, because their presence there would be very disruptive. ETC.

If homosexuality were to be accepted worldwide as normal behavior and everyone became a complete homosexual (not a bi-sexual), which is what at least the overwhelming majority of the homosexuals want, hardly any children would be born, because very few lesbians are willing to bear children even if impregnation is brought about by artificial insemination, since bearing babies as well as having sexual relations with men is very alien to their ideas, and, of course, no one should be forced to have children. As a consequence, within about one hundred years the human species would disappear or be exceedingly few in numbers. With respect to the latter, the gene pool would be so small that genetic (hereditary) diseases would afflict and exterminate the remaining population. Considering the evil that the human species has engaged in during all of its existence that might be a good thing, but perversion is completely the wrong means by which to bring about that end. Besides it may be that if the human species continues on in reasonable numbers, perhaps in some future century it may really become worthy of existing. If it were just the United States that became homosexual, within about a century there would be no or almost no Americans left and some totalitarian foreign power similar in size and strength to the United States as it presently is could easily conquer the entire world, and freedom, democracy and civil rights would no longer exist anywhere on the earth.

There is no such thing as homophobia. Normal people are not afraid of homosexuals. The correct word is homoloathia. They loathe homosexuality and the perverts who engage in it.

Frederick C. Starks, Jr.
8 Calalon Court
Toms River, N.J. 08757



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

May 17, 1993
26 Iyar 5753

Joseph R. Rackman, Esq.
Squadron, Ellenoff, Plesent,
Sheinfeld & Sorkin
551 Fifth Avenue
24th Floor
New York, NY 10176

Dear Joe:

I read your column on "Marching for Israel or
Homosexuality?" Kol Hakavod!

Fondly,

Alexander M. Schindler



Marching for Israel or Homosexuality?

By JOSEPH R. RACKMAN

"OY GAY" read the headline last month in the tabloid *New York Post* concerning the report that members of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, a gay and lesbian synagogue in Manhattan, want to march in the annual New York Salute to Israel Parade on May 9th.

While often I write about certain Jewish issues from a strictly theoretical perspective, this time the issue hit closer to home, as I am one of the Board members of our local Orthodox day school and whether our children (including four of my own) should participate in the parade would be a subject for discussion at a Board meeting the next day.

My initial reaction was to support a resolution by our Board to inform the organizers of the parade, the American Zionist Youth Foundation, that if members of that



congregation were to march as members of a gay and lesbian synagogue, then our school would not participate in the parade.

At work, I discussed the situation with a fellow lawyer, a Christian, in order to gain her perspective. She asked whether marching in support of Israel is a political or religious act. I responded that from my own religious perspective, it is clearly both.

"Well, if it's religious," she asked, "Can you say that a homosexual is no longer Jewish? In the Catholic religion, if you are a homosexual, you are excommunicated. So, maybe to be a homosexual is not to be Jewish and, therefore, you can exclude them from the parade."

"It doesn't work that way in Judaism," I responded. "In order to be excommunicated, you have to have mastered the entire body of Jewish law and lore and about the only person who was ever properly excommunicated was Spinoza. I used to have religious teachers who would taunt me by noting (in response to some uncalled for remark) that I would never know enough to be excommunicated."

"Well, in that case," she said, "if they are still Jewish, I guess they should be included in the parade."

It was not the answer I wanted to hear. I find it discomfoting to expose my children to a banner which would be held by the congregants, proclaiming that there is a gay and lesbian synagogue with the implication that this lifestyle is acceptable. It is not that one should throw stones at homosexuals, as much as the implicit approval to the lifestyle that I would deny. The argument, simply stated, as told to me by a fellow Board member is that, "I do not wish to condone a group that openly advocates something that goes against my religious beliefs."

It was that argument, which I initially agreed with, that began to trouble me. My children have marched in the Salute to Israel Parade these past years with Conservative, Reform and secular Jews with whom I hold profound theological differences. It did not bother me that we all marched together.

Just the opposite, it was exhilarating to see the solidarity of Jews of so many different opinions uniting in support of the State of Israel. Does this mean that in prior years I was condoning Jews who do not believe in Revelation or the need to keep the Sabbath?

Additionally, any person with one Jewish grandparent is automatically entitled to Israeli citizenship — this is Israel's Law of Return. It is the essential post-Holocaust principle, that there be a safe haven for every Jew. There is no exception to this rule for homosexuals. They, too, automatically qualify for Israeli citizenship.

Finally, we must also be influenced by the effect of diminishing the numbers attending the parade. In Washington, D. C., we have enough political channels to be able to communicate that the reduced attendance — if that is the end result — did not reflect less vigorous support for Israel and was solely the product of our own foolishness. Yet consider how the story will be reported in Tehran, Amman and elsewhere — that this year was the poorest showing in memory by American Jews in support of Israel. Our enemies will misread this as a lack of resolve on our part and grow even more obdurate. In sum, we must march.

The only concern I have is with the motivation of the marchers from Congregation Beth Simchat Torah. Is their concern support for the State of Israel or their own orientation? The proof will come from their behavior in the parade. If their banner just has the name of their congregation, that is acceptable, but if added below is a description of their sexual preferences — a gay and lesbian synagogue — it is not acceptable. In fact, Sharon Kleinbaum, the rabbi of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, informed me that she had offered (weeks ago) not to march with any words on their banner other than the name of the congregation.

Yes, if the congregants march with chants designed to draw attention to their cause, then they will not have marched on that Sunday to show solidarity with Israel as much as to publicize their own cause and disrupt this major show of support for Israel. In that event, it would not perturb me if next year they are banned from marching in the parade.

As it turned out, the Board never considered the issue. Instead, after a meeting of a number of Orthodox day school principals who threatened to boycott the parade, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah withdrew its request for a parade permit. Subsequently, the American Reform Zionist Foundation announced that it would invite Rabbi Kleinbaum and her congregants to march with them holding a banner proclaiming that "ARZA is proud to march with congregation Beth Simchat Torah."

The saga continued, as this past Thursday the council of Orthodox day school principals announced that they would boycott the parade. Hopefully, at our Board meeting this Thursday, we will reverse that decision and our school will march along with other Orthodox day schools that reverse the actions of their principals so that Jews can unite in support of the one tie that (besides anti-Semites) binds us together — the State of Israel.

The writer is a partner in the Manhattan law firm of Squadron, Ellenoff, Plesent, Sheinfeld & Sorkin.

A word about our editorial deadline: All copy for calendar items and synagogue listings must arrive at our offices 10 days before the date of publication. We will try to publish as many press releases as possible. We also welcome any personal news, such as wedding and engagement announcements, births, anniversaries, bar and bat mitzvahs, and obituaries. There is no charge for these items.

We welcome comments from our readers in the form of Letters to the Editor. All letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. Please type all letters. Letters may be edited for length and grammar.



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Homosexual

May 28, 1993
8 Sivan 5753

Joseph R. Rackman
Squadron, Ellenoff, Plesent, Sheinfeld & Sorkin
551 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10176

Dear Joe:

Thank you for sending me your follow up column. How very nice of you to do so.

Alas, I do not have the strength to convene the kind of meeting which you suggest. It is not really worth the effort, there are too many other important things to discuss. Not that Jewish unity and the appearance of it is not of significance, but I strongly suspect that over the years, the Israel Day parade marchers became smaller and smaller and many of the Orthodox groups were indicating their unwillingness to continue with this effort - at least so I have been told by some of the march organizers. The presence of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah merely provided them with an excuse to absent themselves.

Besides, I scarcely think that Lamm will join me. The last time he was asked to share a platform with me, I was there but he conveniently walked in, "lost his way," and made it just as I was through. As a courtesy to him, I left the platform and joined the audience. I never made any fuss about it.

Fortunately, when it comes to more serious arenas, Jewish unity still prevails. When we go to the White House or to the State Department, we speak with one voice. I remember at a not too recent meeting at the State Department, as I got through attacking the administration, Moshe Scherer arose to say "Mr. Secretary, I want you to know that I

fully agree with Rabbi Schindler. . . . " Even while I know that in his synagogue and in the pages of Allgemeine Journal, he hardly calls me a rabbi.

I really do believe it is time to end this parade which costs a fortune and isn't worth a candle. Perhaps we ought to reserve Javitz Hall and have a major celebration of Israel Day which will infinitely better. We can display Israel as the finest of art and music and song and dance and with many booths displaying Israeli products.

My own analysis of the fault incidentally, lies not with the gaboyim who understandably had to bark at one another once the matter became public, but rather the shmoseem who lacked common courtesy in answering original letters. You ought to know that Sharon Kleinbaum wrote a letter in January indicating her eagerness to march in the parade and made it clear that the banner would list merely the congregation without making any reference to the gay and lesbian status of many of its members. She failed to get an answer to that. She sent a similar letter in March - still no courtesy of an acknowledgement. Then she preached a sermon and the matter became public and the fat was in the fire.

I obviously backed her immediately. What else could I do? And this, even though the congregation is not Reform. As a matter of fact, it was originally organized by some Yeshiva Bachureem, graduates of the Yeshiva of Flatbush and a good one third of the members of the congregation continue to be Orthodox. They are not affiliated with the UAHC.

The lesson I draw from all this is that much of our problem comes not from the gaboyim but from shmoseem - - clerics are ever more officious than are presidents.

In any event, I admire you.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

SQUADRON, ELLENOFF, PLESANT, SHEINFELD & SORKIN

551 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10176

(212) 661-6500

HOWARD M. SQUADRON
THEODORE ELLENOFF
STANLEY PLESANT
IRA S. SHEINFELD
IRA LEE SORKIN
DAVID ALTER
MICHAEL R. KLEINERMAN
HARVEY HOROWITZ
NEAL M. GOLDMAN
ELLIOT G. SAGOR
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JEFFREY W. RUBIN
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ALAN KATZ
JOSEPH R. GAGLIANO, JR.
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OF COUNSEL
DAVID GRAY CARLSON
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DAVID MILLER
JACOB M. USADI

TELECOPIER
(212) 697-6686

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NUMBER

(212) 476-8456

May 20, 1993

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Thank you for your note concerning my prior column, but I cannot accept the compliment without making you aware of my most recent column, which is enclosed (which will also appear in this week's *Long Island Jewish World*). I still stick to my fundamental point, that the Orthodox committed the original sin, but I fear that no one came out of this fiasco well. If I had the clout, I would bring together a group of the fifteen (or so) Jewish leaders who were involved in this soap opera to focus upon what everyone did wrong (especially focusing upon confessions instead of accusations), to see if out of that convocation some lessons for the future can be discerned.

Unfortunately, unless someone like yourself (along with, say, Rabbi Lamm) convenes such a group, we are destined to keep repeating our mistakes. As they said on "Mission Impossible", if you undertake this project, I will disavow any knowledge of it and this letter will self destruct in ten seconds.

Very truly yours,

Joseph R. Rackman

JRR/ig

Q:\SSDATA1\PNGENERL\27336.1

Handwritten signature

June 2, 1993
13 Sivan 5753

David Taffet
Congregation Beth El Binah
P. O Box 464460
Dallas, TX 75206

Dear Mr. Taffet:

Unfortunately, Rabbi Schindler is on the West Coast and has not seen your letter which we received via FAX yesterday. He will return for a day or two of meetings in the New York area but will not be at his desk prior to his departure for a number of Jewish organizational meetings in Israel. As you can see, he has a frenetic schedule.

I'm not certain that Rabbi Schindler has read the MOMENT article, but in any event, he simply will not have the time to respond. It was good to note that a letter will be forthcoming from your congregation and there will undoubtedly be others who write to convey their concerns about the manner of handling a very sensitive issue. I do hope they publish such responses.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Edith J. Miller
Assistant to the President



Dear Rabbi Schindler,

My congregation is quite upset about the current issue of "Moment" magazine.

In his opening "Perspective" piece, editor Hershel Shanks shows his bias when he states, he's "against discrimination against homosexuals in most situations." Of course, as Reform Jews, we oppose any discrimination at all. He also states, "Homosexuality is by no means the only form of deviant sexual behavior," equating gays and lesbians to child molesters and sexual abusers among others.

The religious discussion is limited to an article entitled, "Two Views: Homosexuality and Halachic Judaism" with a Conservative and an Orthodox view offered. Nowhere is the Reform position given and, although the Conservative view is fairly pro-gay, it is not even as positive as I would expect from Dallas' largest Conservative synagogue which actively works with our AIDS Resource Center.

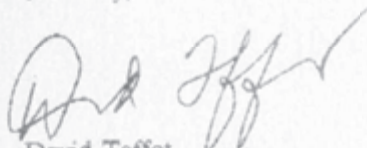
Not only is a Reform rabbi not given equal time, but none of the gay and lesbian synagogues are profiled. However, a Conservative rabbi is given space to object to the existence of the gay and lesbian synagogues. PFLAG is barely mentioned, stating that more than half the members in New York are Jewish. What is omitted is that most of PFLAG's founders were Jewish parents concerned about the rights of their children! In Dallas and across the country, not just in New York, Jews remain a major part of PFLAG.

Quoted briefly in one of the articles are Rabbi Sapirstein and Rabbi Kleinbaum, but their quotes are obviously abbreviated because both are normally quite eloquent on gay and lesbian rights. A third Reform Rabbi, Sue Ann Wasserman, also must have been quoted out of context. Several years ago, Rabbi Wasserman held the hand of my college roommate as he was dying of AIDS. When she spoke, her commitment to gay and lesbian rights was obvious as was her passion which was absent from this article. Quoted extensively, however, is a Rabbi Philmore Berger, the one Reform rabbi the magazine was able to find who is clearly uncomfortable with gays and lesbians.

While Dallas is not known for being liberal, gays and lesbians seem to be more readily accepted by our Reform Jewish community and our families than the author of the article, "Out and Jewish." For example, the writer bemoans the fact that "most gay and lesbian couples would not feel comfortable kissing each other 'Good Shabbos' in synagogue." Whether we are performing our own bimonthly service at Beth El Binah or attending Temple Emanu El, we kiss the person standing next to us 'Good Shabbos' whether it is our lover, another gay or lesbian, a friend or a stranger. In Dallas, 'Good Shabbos' has nothing to do with sex.

While we will be writing to the magazine ourselves, we hope you will respond to "Moment" with your usual, brilliant flair, offering the Reform point of view. Thank you and we appreciate the love and support you always offer.

Sincerely,



David Taffet
Congregation Beth El Binah

cc: Rabbi Larry Jackofsky, UAHF Southwest Region
Rabbi Debra Robbins, Temple Emanu El, Dallas
Rabbi David Stern, Temple Emanu El, Dallas

Att: Rabbi Schindler
212 570-0895

From: David Taffet
Congregation Beth El Binah
800 374-7771 214 443-9919 (fax)





COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

October 11, 1993
26 Tishri 5754

Dr. Robert M. Rankin
5 Red Rock Way
San Francisco, CA 94131

Dear Mike:

I finally finished my Biennial Address and I hope that you will like the section on gay and lesbian Jews.

I am making reference to the adoption issue, but unfortunately I am deleting the section on rabbinic officiation. I know that you will be disappointed that this is so, but my trusted advisors, all of them devotees of the cause - Saperstein, Yoffie, and above all Al Vorspan - advise me against it in the strongest terms. The reason is simple, I am doing battle with a rabbinate on several other fronts and they prefer that I postpone this issue perhaps for the next Biennial address.

I hope you understand and in understanding, forgive.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

cc: Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mental Health Clinic

427 13th Street

Oakland, CA 94612

June 8, 1993

In Reply Refer To:

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex,

As you requested, Sharon and I have written a section for your presidential address. First the text, then the commentary. This is what we suggest:

"I will speak now of Jewish families, families created by lesbian and gay couples who are denied the right of legal marriage.

I have known many such couples, my friends--and so have you. They live in committed relationships, loving, nourishing, and sustaining. They create Jewish homes where candles are lighted on Shabbat; where festivals and holidays are celebrated; and where children are given a Jewish education, not alone from their religious school teachers, but from their parents as well. These are families--Jewish families--in every sense of the word.

And yet they are denied the legal and financial benefits of marriage. Their relationships are regarded as something less than authentic, because the partners, however loving, are of the same gender.

I want our movement of Reform Judaism to lead the way to change in these areas. I want us to sanctify what has already been made holy by the love of the individuals themselves.

I therefore call upon our rabbis to perform ceremonies of commitment for these couples when asked to do so, demanding always the same evidence of maturity and good judgement demanded of heterosexual couples.

I call upon the rabbis and lay leadership of the Union to support lesbian and gay couples who seek to adopt children, judging them by the same standards of fitness required of heterosexual couples.

And let us urge our elected officials to pass laws providing health benefits for gay and lesbian partners, benefits that are automatically available to heterosexual spouses. Since we can hardly ask others to do what we do not do ourselves, let us begin by offering such benefits to members of the staff of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The gay and lesbian Jews among us, my friends, have shown us the beauty of family life. They represent the best of family values, and of Jewish values as well. Let us now support and celebrate their achievements, in our Movement, and in our communities."



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mental Health Clinic

427 13th Street

Oakland, CA 94612

- 2 -

In Reply Refer To:

What we've written raises a number of questions, Alex. First, do you want to include adoption in your call for an end to discrimination? It's a crucially important issue for an increasing number of couples, and we want the Union to take a stand on it. You know better than we, whether this is the time.

Second, the issue of health benefits for the spouses of gay and lesbian UAHC staff members: neither Sharon nor I know whether those benefits are already provided. If not, I think we have to start at home before we ask others to join us.

This, then, is our reply to your request. But I can't end this letter without telling you how grateful Sharon and I are for your leadership on these difficult and complex issues.

Or perhaps they aren't so complicated after all. Maybe they are just a simple call for justice. Either way--we are grateful.

Have a wonderful and relaxing summer, Alex. I'll see you at the Biennial, if not before.

Sincerely,

Mike Rankin, M.D.

cc Rabbi Kleinbaum



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

November 16, 1993
2 Kislev 5754

Steven M. Cronenwalt
1346 Forest Street
Denver, CO 80220

Dear Steven:

It was thoughtful of you to write and I am gratified by your words of appreciation.

A letter such as yours brings me great nachas and certainly is a wonderful counter to some of the brick bats I have received over the years for my outreach to lesbian and gay Jews. Thank you so much for writing as you did.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Steven M. Cronenwalt

1346 Forest Street
Denver, Colorado 80220

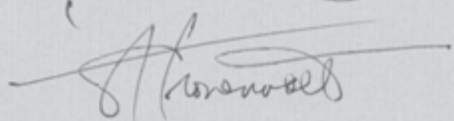
7 November 1993

DEAR RABBI,

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT
OF LESBIAN & GAY JEWS OVER THE YEARS.
IT HAS BE A VERY BRAVE AND LOVING THING
TO DO. IT IS WONDERFUL TO BE PART OF
A RELIGION THAT WELCOMES ME AND LOVES ME
FOR ALL OF WHO I AM. I FEEL SUPPORTED,
UNLIKE FRIENDS FROM OTHER RELIGIONS WHERE
HATE OR GUILT IS SPREAD. I AM PROUD TO
BE A Reform Jew IN THE U.S. IT IS THE
OPEN ARMS I FEEL THAT BRANANT ME BACK
MANY YEARS AFTER MY BAR MITZVAH AND
STEPPING AWAY. I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER
OF A SYNAGOGUE NOW FOR OVER 10 YEARS.
SOMETHING I WOULD NEVER HAVE EXPECTED.

THANKS, G-D BLESS YOU & KEEP YOU.

PISC


S. Cronenwalt

P.S. THANKS FOR
THE SPEECH AT THE
SAN FRANCISCO.
BEANWATER.



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

March 11, 1994
28 Adar 5754

Mr. Albert B. Wilson
P.O. Box 279
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

Dear Al:

Thank you so much for sharing with me the paper you had discussed with Aron Hirt-Manheimer. I read your comments and was deeply touched.

Aron tells me that he has been in touch with you about this matter and will be featuring a letter from you in response to a forthcoming article.

As you undoubtedly know, we now have a committee on outreach to gay and lesbian Jews. The staff director is Rabbi Julie Spitzer of our Mid-Atlantic Council and I am taking the liberty of sharing your letter and paper with her. I am certain she will find your comments to be of great interest.

Rhea joins me in sending fondest regards from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

CC: ALL TO
RABBI SPITZER



Keystone State
Life Insurance
Company

P.O. Box 279, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
215-825-6760 or 809-776-8518 FAX 215-825-4855

Albert B. Wilson

March 4, 1994

Aron Hirt-Manheimer, Editor
Reform Judaism
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

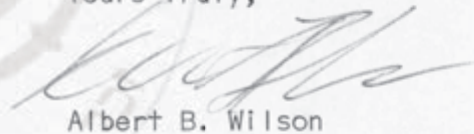
Dear Aron:

Enclosed is the paper we discussed in San Francisco. I hope it suits your purposes as well as mine.

I have already discussed and shown the paper to Richard Address and Larry Jackofsky and have the benefit of their editorial input. They also wish to meet with me to see what kind of regional program we can set up.

I await hearing from you. Thank you.

Yours truly,



Albert B. Wilson

cc: Alex Schindler

"Expanding Our Commitments To Gay And Lesbian Jews"

In San Francisco our President Rabbi Alexander Schindler giving his Biennial Presidential Address, spoke to the title stated above. I quote, "We are pledged to the concept that we are one family. We will not speak of 'them' and 'us', as though gay men and women were descended from a distant planet. They are our fellow congregants, our friends and committee members - and yes, our leaders, both professionals and lay. Some of them are our sisters and brothers, our daughters and our sons. Ours is a commitment to the re-forming of Judaism for the Jewish people, for all Jews and not just for some."

When I arrived at the Biennial my first message was to call my daughter. I already knew what the message was about. My gay son's lifelong partner, my "son-in-law" for fifteen years, had died of AIDS. The problem is just not intellectual to me.

I also have a gay daughter, a committed Jew whose lifetime partner is a Jew by choice. They have adopted two boys, both mixed race children, who have already had Orthodox conversions. There will be no question of their authenticity, but how is the Reform movement going to handle the Jewish education of these families?

I now have done some research on this type of family, over a dozen cases. The gay men have a much harder problem with adoption. They usually adopt abroad (South America) or take learning or physically disabled children. The children are preponderantly mixed

race though I know of three or four who are white.

Those congregations reaching out to the gay and lesbian communities do not have religious schools in most cases, not enough demand. Our "straight" congregations are not yet ready for gay couples let alone the education of their children, even the all white ones.

Rabbi Schindler is correct in his statement, "We must change." The couples I have talked to seem to have a common position, they do not feel wanted in our congregations, and the children even less so!

The UAHC is trying very hard to make our congregations into "caring communities". It is a difficult and endless task. We live in an alienated world, most of us don't even recognize the problem is ours, not theirs.

Every congregation must work for the caring, loving, and cherishing of those families, rather than continuing to keep their heads in the sand. The future will only be better if we make it so.

Our leadership recognizes and suggests solutions to us. However, until we as individual Jews, know that is our duty to change the world, for a better life for our children and grandchildren, that there be no strangers or estranged in our congregations, no "them and us."

The ability to change for the better is a self fulfilling Mitzvah, may we all try our best to use it.

March 14, 1994

Albert B. Wilson
Keystone State Life Insurance Company
P.O. Box 279
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444

Dear Al:

Thanks for sending me your article on the difficulties of gay parents and kids in finding acceptance in our congregations. The article, in our view, is not fully developed and needs to include more anecdotes to illustrate your points.

We are planning to run an article by Rabbi Harold Schulweis on Judaism, the synagogue, and homosexuality. Please consider adapting your article as a letter to the editor in response to the Schulweis piece, which I enclose.

I would be pleased to adapt your article as a letter, if you so choose.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Aron Hirt-Manheimer

cc: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler ✓

[Handwritten signature]

March 22, 1994
10 Nisan 5754

Ann Abrams, Librarian
Temple Israel
Longwood Avenue at Plymouth
Boston, MA 02215

Dear Ann:

You are right! That sentence was inelegantly expressed and your phrasing would have been more correct. But my intentions were proper. I meant to counter and dispel the image of the "corrupting homosexual," of the counsellor or teacher or rabbi who would fashion children in his or her image.

I enclose copies of two speeches I gave on the subject in recent years which will give you some better notion of what my fuller views are (which, incidentally, I have been reiterating in all my speeches as I travel around the country).

I do believe that I have put "my money where my mouth is." (That struck me as an inelegant and unfair expression on your part).

It is my hope, we will have an opportunity to encounter each other at some time.

Have a sweet Pesach.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

March 11, 1994

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President, UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

I'm writing to you regarding your speech at the recent Biennial on "Expanding Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Jews", which I read in the Spring edition of Reform Judaism. As a lesbian, Jew, Reform synagogue librarian and teacher, I eagerly approached this piece, anticipating good news for me and my fellow gay and lesbian Jews, and also I'd hoped to use it for a high school class I'm teaching about social justice and Judaism, looking at gay/lesbian rights as one example. Unfortunately, after a promising beginning, I arrived at this line: "And too often, they are adjudged unfit to adopt children, even when they meet and exceed the standards required of heterosexual adoptive parents, and notwithstanding the studies that show that children of same sex couples grow up with absolutely no greater likelihood of being homosexual." (My underlining). I had been anticipating (naively?) your saying something like "notwithstanding the studies that show that children of same sex couples grow up with absolutely no greater likelihood of having serious problems..." or something more in that vein. The remark you did make negates the spirit of everything else you said. The implication here is that there is something negative about children growing up to be gay/lesbian.

The other remarks excerpted from your speech were on the mark. But if you are going to say "We are pledged to the concept that we are one family..." then there has to be a genuine embrace, a genuine celebration of all. Put your money (in this case, power in the Reform movement) where your mouth is: create blessings (or say "Shehechyanu") for gay and lesbian Jews when we come out; sponsor Jewish coming out celebrations (complete with an oneg!). When I came out to the Rabbi I work with, he gave me a hug. How many gay/lesbian Jews who work in the Reform community, or are congregational members can tell such a story? Why is it such a rare story if the Reform movement is so committed to welcoming gay men and lesbians?

Thank you for the work you've done. But there's much more to do, and although, as the saying goes, it's not on you to finish it; but if you're going to do it, please do it with the same sensitivity you'd apply to anti-semitism, or to any other human rights struggle.

Sincerely,


Ann Abrams

Librarian, Temple Israel, Boston
Longwood Ave & Plymouth St.
Boston, MA 02215

bec of her
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answer to
Rankin

see above

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838 Fifth Ave.
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Ann Abrams
Librarian, Temple Israel, Boston
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איחוד
ליהדות
מתקדמת
באמריקה

#15

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

PATRON OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
100 WEST MONROE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60603-1902 (312) 782-1477 FAX# (312) 782-1642

GREAT LAKES REGION

Rabbi Alan D. Bregman
Director

Gerard W. Kaye
Director of Camping &
Youth Activities

Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute

Mimi Dunitz
Assistant Regional Director

April, 1994

To: Interested and Significant Persons
From: Rabbi Alan Bregman

As you may know, I have been dealing with a complex and difficult situation at Temple Israel in Minneapolis. An assistant, newly ordained rabbi recently came out as a gay man. While the congregation has dealt with it as best it can, it continues to generate issues that are complex and deep. Much of it is a result of the congregation not having been prepared to have a rabbi who is gay on its rabbinic staff.

In dealing with this situation, it occurs to me that we have done precious little to prepare our congregations to have gay men and lesbian women as their rabbis. We are a Movement that has affirmed the right of gays and lesbians to seek ordination. Yet, it seems to me that we have not prepared our congregations to accept and hire them as rabbis.

If my memory serves me correctly, when the Movement decided to ordain women as rabbis, we had a well thought out plan of sensitivity and education in order to facilitate their becoming congregational rabbis. Do we not have that obligation to the gay men and women who also seek to be rabbis in congregations?

I am not certain what the mechanism can be and ought to be but I would hope that the appropriate person would organize such an effort.

Chairman
Melvin Merians

President
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

President-Great Lakes Region
Lois Rose

President-Chicago Federation
Judith Brody

B.J.E. Director
of Reform Education
Dr. Betsy Katz

Assistant Camp Directors
Tamar Ehrlich
Joe Prass

Office Administrator
Jo Ann Sandoval

Gay Lesbian

MEMORANDUM

COPY

April 25, 1994

FROM: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
TO: Rabbi Alan Bregman
COPY: Rabbi Joseph Glaser, Rabbi Fred Gottschalk,
Mr. Melvin Merians, Rabbi Daniel B. Syme,
Rabbi Eric Yoffie, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman

Janet M

You raise a good point in regard to our congregants accepting ordained gays and lesbians as their rabbis. The problem is far wider than what you encountered in Minneapolis. In the present graduating class there are many rabbis to be, who have come out of the closet and once they do, they have a deuce of a time even getting an interview no matter how qualified they are, from an academic and experiential standpoint. Of course, the CCAR Task Force on the subject forewarns them that this might be the case. I offered to write a letter to the interviewing congregations, but on further thought and after consulting with Janet Marder, who is really expert in these matters, I decided not to do so.

After New Orleans, when we asked our congregations to accept gays and lesbians as fellow congregants, I did ask Janet to head a staff task force to educate our congregants, and she organized workshops in all of the regions to help. By and large, we have been successful on this level.

But now we are talking about gay and lesbian rabbis, and that is an infinitely more complex an issue, for the myth that gays are bent on converting everyone to their life-



Union of American Hebrew Congregations

SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212) 249-0100

style still is widespread in our midst and must be countered. But since rabbis are involved, a movement wide effort is required and I see no reason why it shouldn't be initiated by all of us under the aegis of the Conference.

I have no way of knowing to whom you sent a copy of your letter, but I am sending my response to you (together with a copy of your note) to Fred and Shelly in the hope that we can initiate the kind of movement wide response that you envisage under the leadership of the CCAR.

I will do the same with Eric and Danny, so that we can bestir them to move forward.

Thanks for calling our attention to this need. I should have thought of it myself . . . incidentally, if you continue to encounter difficulties in Minneapolis and need someone to bounce your problems against, I found Janet to be most astute and caring in her counsel.





COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

July 7, 1994
28 Tammuz 5754

Ret. Lt. Colonel Moses Lennon
101 Executive Center Drive
Citrus 4-608 Fountainview
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Dear Mr. Lennon:

On my return from a lengthy journey, I found your letter of June 6th and I read it with a good deal of pain. Needless to say agree with you. The attitude manifested toward homosexuals at Yad Vashem is an abomination, inexcusable. But the struggle for justice has never been an easy one in all of human history and I guess we are going to have to continue to fight. It is clear too, that you are among those who choose to do so.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



#8
COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

June 13, 1994
4 Tammuz 5754

Ret. Lt. Colonel Moses Lennon
101 Executive Center Drive
Citrus 4-608 Fountainview
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Dear Mr. Lennon:

Your correspondence addressed to Rabbi Schindler arrived here at a time when Rabbi Schindler is out of the country on an extended travel schedule. He is not expected back at his desk until mid-July.

I write to assure you that your correspondence will be held for his return and to explain the delay in his response to you.

Thank you for your patience.

Sincerely,

Marian Brewer
Rabbi Schindler's office

ITEM 1

June 6, 1994

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President UAHC
Executive Offices
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Please forgive me, but I am impelled to write to you on a grievous matter of greatest consequence. The inclosed Items 1, 2, 3 should leave no doubt as to who I am, what I am, and where I come from.

At this moment I have in front of me, an article in the Palm Beach Jewish Journal North, issue of Feb. 2-Feb. 8, 1993, with headline in large extra dark lettering, "Schindler's letter critical of JVV's stand." I cite from the article, "Schindler... recently wrote a letter to a JVV spokesman... saying he was appalled that such an antediluvian attitude still persists within a group that calls itself Jewish." I cannot describe my feelings of humanity, honor, pride at that time, inspired by your views supportive of Gays and Lesbians in the military.

Who would have thought 16 months later that the disease of "antediluvian attitude" would breakout at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem (please see Items 2, 3). For Yad Vashem to so debase, so dishonor, so desecrate the Holocaust - I was saddened by The New York Times of May 31, 1994, photograph and accompanying report. I was shocked at the enormity of what happened.

What is a Jew to do about the tragedy of this situation?
What if the Rabbis and their congregations do not

speak out? The cry "Never Never Again" unites all the victims of the Holocaust. Would Yad Vashem have us silence this cry in the case of Gays and Lesbians? Does this cry belong only to Jews as victims and not to Gays and Lesbians as victims?

this, my own cry to Yad Vashem: Why? Why?

My Gratitude My Respect

Moses Lennon
Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret)



ITEM 2

The Post 10/27/84 (PALM BEACH)

Statements on Religion in Israel

I am a retired career military man, having served in the U.S. Air Force, from private to lieutenant colonel. Assignments took me from New York to California to Florida, to India and Burma, to England, Germany and Washington, D.C.

I was, in a sense, a wandering Jew, a wondering Jew, ever proud of being an American, ever proud of my Judaic heritage. I have been very much aware that the record of the American Jew in opposing anti-Semitism has been praiseworthy. But why are we silent today at the divisive role of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel when it recently forbade attendance at reform and conservative worship in Jerusalem during the High Holy Days?

This orthodoxy continues to oppose pluralism in the religious life of Israel and to claim that theirs is the "one and only," the only "true" religion — sad reminders of the cruelties against humanity by religious extremism through the ages. Who has been the eternal victim, if not the Jew?

Freedom of worship has been one glory of American democracy. Too bad the chief rabbis never learned this lesson. Their action is frightening. In denouncing other-than-orthodox Judaism as illegitimate and alien, and saying that reform and conservative prayers are not acceptable to God, are they telling us that only they can have a special "in" with God and He told them so?

Remember the outcry when a fundamentalist preacher announced that God did not listen to prayers of Jews? The chief rabbis keep strange company. Except that in this instance orthodox Judaism is "pure." And the rest of us are outside the pale.

Is this a new kind of anti-Semitism? We are quick to condemn anti-Semitism in others and rightly so. Why the embarrassed silence when Jew does it to Jew? Why the double standard?

The Nazis made no distinction between orthodox Jew and reform Jew and conservative Jew. So why does the highest religious establishment of Israel? The flames of the Holocaust made no distinction. The ovens burned us equally the same.

Anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism no matter how and whence it comes. When one day the chief rabbis of Israel assemble before the throne of judgment, they will find a mercy which they deny to so many of us.

Moses Lennon
Palm Springs

Letters to the Editor

Argentinian Injustice Ignored: 'Never Again' Has Happened Again

To the Editor:

Recently there occurred two events which were fraught with great significance for the Jewish American community, two events which were related to each other.

One was the 60 Minutes TV program of May 6 which included the segment of the mothers of Argentina, the "mothers of the disappeared ones." Theirs were the children, schoolboys and girls, university students, young professionals, journalists, trade unionists, and others, whom the previous government of military dictatorship feared, because they represented the future and the hope of a democratic Argentina.

These courageous mothers—worn, tired, yet with grace, beauty and dignity—walked the streets and city squares in eloquent silence, a silence which spoke loud to the world and exposed a despotism and a barbarism which the Argentine generals tried to hide. Most of the disappeared ones have never been found. But the mothers still continue the vigil until they find out what happened to their children. The protests of the mothers had no popular sanction. The so-called "nice" people everywhere paid no heed. The established church did not support them.

Many of the mothers were Jewish. But the Jewish community of Argentina generally ignored the cause of the mothers. And this, only 35-40 years after the Holocaust. So soon did these "nice" people forget. By their indifference and lack of concern they aided and abetted the military dictatorship. And in this forgetting, they were joined by "nice" people everywhere.

And that includes the secular and the religious leadership of the Jewish American community. Where were the rabbis, the rabbinical councils, the sermons? Where were the educational institutions, like the day schools, the Talmud Torahs, the Sunday schools, and their teachers? Where were the mass protests and the silent marches? Nothing! Nowhere!

Those who were charged with the responsibility of educating our children and adults on the meaning and the lesson of the Holocaust failed us when the first test came in Argentina in the post-Holocaust period.

With respect to the 60 Minutes program, I wonder how many parents discussed it with their children. If not, why not? I wonder how many saw the interconnectedness with the Holocaust. I wonder how many rabbis

were so moved as to note the connection and then resolved to make it the subject of a future sermon. I wonder how many teachers changed their lesson plans on the teaching of the Holocaust by adding the story of the Jewish mothers of the Argentine. I wonder, I wonder!

Then there were the annual gatherings in remembrance of the Holocaust. There were the tears and the sorrows. But there must be more to it than the religious observance of mourning. It must also be a time of a coming together, to tell and re-tell the story of what happened, how it happened, why it happened, and how to prevent recurrence.

It would be tragic, if Jews, the people of the Holocaust, were to forget that the victims of the Nazi terror also included, in death and in survival, Gypsies, gentiles, the physically sick, the mentally ill, homosexuals, social and political activists and others.

Only as the Jew—and that includes me—identifies himself to oppose every injustice, every oppression, every violation of human rights, wherever it appears and whoever it includes—his heritage, history and religion require him to do so—only then is the lesson of the Holocaust learned. Otherwise the crime and the criminals are still the victors.

The words of the German clergyman, Martin Niemöller come to mind:

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

If as Jews, we ever forget this, then a searing tragic lesson becomes a terrifying prophecy. The cry "Never, Never Again!" belongs to all of humanity. Or else, it belongs to none.

Moses Lennon
Lt. Colonel, USAF (Ret.)

Moses Lennon, who calls himself a "Jewish Don Quixote" is a graduate of Harvard who had an extensive career in the military and also as an educator-trainer for disabled veterans. He retired to this area in 1975 and serves on the board of the Palm Springs library.

ITEM 3



Reuters

They Also Died

At the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, more than 100 homosexuals from 12 countries gathered yesterday to remember the tens of thousands of homosexuals who were killed in Nazi death camps.

Officials at the monument refused to approve the observance, and a few Orthodox Jews shouting "AIDS!" and "Homos! May God save you!" disrupted the gathering, where one man embraced his friend.

Homosexual

February 2, 1995
2 Adar 1 5755

Perfer

Mr. Herbert Berne
133 Citation Drive
North York, Ontario
Canada M2K 1T3

Dear Mr. Berne:

This is in response to your letter of January 25 and to set forth for you the position of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations concerning the homosexual community.

For your perusal, I enclose herewith a number of UAHC resolutions, the first having been passed in 1977 and the latest is dated October 1993. This particular resolution stemmed from my Presidential Address to the 1993 Biennial in San Francisco, a copy of which is enclosed, and I call your particular attention to Page 16. My recommendation was presented by the President's Message Committee to the Plenary which adopted the resolution.

Human rights has long been an important agenda matter for the UAHC; we have been in the forefront in seeking to effect civil and religious rights for all peoples, no matter their sexual orientation.

Quite a few congregations which were originally formed to provide special outreach to gays and lesbians who did not always feel welcome or comfortable in main stream congregations. Over the years we have found that these congregations tend to be warm and welcoming places of worship which include many heterosexuals. We have also found that with understanding and awareness of the rights of homosexuals, mainstream congregations have become far more open and accepting of gay and lesbian members.

Mr. Herbert Berne
133 Citation Drive
North York, Ontario
Canada M27 1T3

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



Herbert Berne
133 Citation Drive, North York, Ontario, Canada, M2K 1T3
Phone & Fax (416)221-1458

January 25, 1995

Rabbi Alexander Schindler,
Union of American Hebrew Congregations,
838 5th Avenue,
NEW YORK NY 10021-7064
USA

Dear Rabbi,

I am enclosing copy of Rabbi's Arthur Bielfeld column "No Problem" in our Toronto's Temple Emanu-El January 1995 Bulletin.

As one of the silent straight majority of members of our temple who oppose this contemplated official temple recognition of their relationship inside the temple I am looking for guidance from the Union.

If the Union has taken a stand on this issue and has published any position paper I would appreciate receiving same.

Rabbi Bielfeld ignores the eventual outcome of this policy. Hardly any potential new members with children will join a temple which is perceived to be "gay". That, coupled with the outflow of members who cannot tolerate the "carrying on" of these couple's will lead to the temple becoming gay so that any remaining straight members will feel out of place. Nor in these circumstances can the temple support a religious school. Not to long after this takeover Rabbi Bielfeld will be pushed out, since he has stated that he is not gay. The irony will be that he is not acceptable in a gay temple.

Ontario Roman Catholic's are the largest single religious group in this province. They will be mightily peeved at this and we don't need any more enemies.

Anti-Semites will have a field day. Degenerate Jews etc.

There is also, least but not last, the religious prohibitions.

In short, in the pursuit of social action, he is advocating that members should commit hara-kiri! Voluntary!

Finally, if he keeps pushing the envelope, it will comes down to a choice of either straight members leaving the temple or Rabbi Bielfeld,..... good-bye Rabbi.

Thank you,

Herbert Berne

Whatever happened to that wonderful English expression: "You're welcome"? Have you noticed that it is vanished, along with President's Choice Raspberry Tartes, letter writing, phone conversations uninterrupted by call-waiting, and many of the other civilities of our society? Today, if you say: "Thank you" to a friend or sales clerk or telephone operator, they're likely to answer you with a cryptic "No problem!"

Why has "You're welcome!" gone out of fashion? Was it expressive of a more genteel time when courtesy even between strangers was a way of preserving civil order? Or was it simply an archaic formality, a mindless phrase handed down from the days when gentlemen would doff their hats as they passed ladies on the sidewalk?

"No problem!" has a more ominous tone. It seems to suggest that under normal circumstances there is a problem, but in the particular instance: Not to worry. You're not bothering the salesperson you've just thanked. She can handle your request. Today, everything is a problem. Traffic is a problem. Reaching a live person rather than a voice box is a problem. Getting an accurate readout of your bank statement or financial account is a problem. There's scarcely an aspect of our daily lives that doesn't threaten us with its complexity. Perhaps it's something of a compliment when a sales clerk reassured us that our request or our purchase hasn't added to his daily quota of woes.

This dour undercurrent of expectation took on personal relevance when I returned from my sabbatical, having shed some excess poundage by hiking and more judicious consumption of food. Over and over again, friends would ask me: "Rabbi, are you all Right?" "Rabbi, are you well?" Now, to be sure, when you haven't seen someone for some time who has lost considerable weight, it can be a bit of a shock. (Though, I have been practicing girth control for nearly a year, much of that time while in residence at the Temple.) Instead of offering a factual observation such as: "Rabbi, you've lost weight!" or, "Rabbi, you look terrific!" (Halevay!) - many people have been worried that there was something wrong with my health.

I really do appreciate their concern. I know that it comes from the heart. But there's another part of me that detects a deeper anxiety about the state of our collective health. Each time we feel an inexplicable pain or lump in our skin or a persistent cough, fear's icy fingers close around our hearts. Did you hear about so and so? What if...? Is it my turn?

This anxiety triggers a frenetic response. We rush from one activity to the next trying to do almost everything as if tomorrow might be our last day. It's not just the five-second sound bite that has quickened our lives. We seem in need of constant distractions. We channel surf as we watch T.V. We run from movie to movie, from play to play, from concert to concert gorging ourselves on culture as if it were a commodity. We travel around the world checking off cities and countries on our itinerary as though it were a grocery list. Of course, we are stimulated by all this activity. Yet there's something a little desperate and unsatisfying about it. In the end, it's like eating Chinese food. After an hour, we're hungry all over again!

The American political commentator, Walter Lippmann, expressed something profound when he wrote: "It is a mistake to suppose that there is satisfaction and the joy of life in a self-indulgent generation, in one interested primarily in the pursuit of private wealth and private pleasure and private success. On the contrary, a self-indulgent generation in large part is an unhappy one. We are very rich, but we are not having a very good time..."

If Lippmann is correct, and I think there is more to his observation than some of us care to admit, he might give us pause to think about why we are here this morning. And the heat generated by budgets and dues schedule and *shul* politics is largely a bit of comic relief from the more serious aspects of our purpose. Why are we here? We're here because we know that this synagogue connects to our past, and the past is really a key to our future. Amidst all of the hub-bub of our lives, our Temple has been a home to many of us. We've come here with our griefs and our joys. We've shared our doubts and disbeliefs, but also our prayers for ourselves and our hopes for our children here. We've shared this Social Hall, our Kiddush Room and our Sanctuary for more that a quarter of a century.

There are some good things happening in this synagogue, perhaps even some important things. Let me tell you about one of them. I've been meeting with a group of gay and lesbian Jews. I'm also meeting with their parents. Some of them are members of our Congregation. And what I'm hearing warms my heart even as it chills my blood. You see, they want to find a place for themselves in the synagogue, in this synagogue. And they haven't been able to do that because we haven't made them very welcome. They're a thoughtful, articulate and gutsy group of Jewish men and women who know instinctively that this place belongs as much to them as it does to us - and they want it back. They want it back on terms they hope will be acceptable to most of us. What are these terms? To begin with, they want to be accepted both as gays and as Jews; as Jewish persons whose sexual orientation happens to be towards members of the same sex. They want to be able to express that orientation as naturally as you do by giving each other a kiss after a Shabbat service without causing embarrassment to themselves or to the Congregation. When someone makes an unkind or thoughtless remark, they'd like to hear a member of our Congregation step in and tell that person why it is inappropriate or wrong. They'd like to know when their civil rights are threatened by hate mongers or gay bashers or whatever you want to call them, that members of our Temple will speak up just because we are Jews and because we know what it is to be prosecuted for no other reason than that we are who we are. They want to be reassured that they are no "no problems" - that when they say "thank you" we'll say "you're welcome" and mean it! When that happens, I can promise you an explosion of energies and involvement in our synagogue you'd scarcely believe possible.

And one thing more. When that happens, we'll all feel better about ourselves and this Congregation than we've felt in a long, long time. Or, to paraphrase David Nichol on behalf of President's Choice: My name is Arthur Bielfeld. And you have my word on it!

(Note: Due to time constraints, these remarks were not fully delivered at the recent Annual Meeting.)

Homosex
Reaching Out to Gay and Lesbian JewsFor Edie Miller
800 words*Try to
cut it
down
better?*
Dick Coker
by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

At the advent of the Hebrew month of Elul, as Jews began the season of soul-searching that culminates on Yom Kippur, I installed Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum as spiritual leader of the 1200-member Beit Simcha synagogue in New York. The occasion was both joyous and solemn -- yet beyond the sanctuary walls rumbled ugly, distracting noises.

The "family values" rhetoric of the Buchanan-Robertson axis of the Republican party was still resonating in the air. Worse, the hate-words had taken shape in Oregon and Colorado as November referenda that could ban legislation that protects gay and lesbian Americans against discrimination and violence.

To any historically conscious Jew, this upsurge of inflammatory political passion gives pause. As a refugee from Nazi Germany, I was disturbed by the combination of recession and scapegoating that seemed, in late summer, to be forming the backdrop for our election year. For Rabbi Kleinbaum's congregation, however, the danger was not mere memory. The congregants of Beit Simcha Torah are predominantly gay, lesbian and bisexual Jews, and their new rabbi is a lesbian. The anti-gay hatred that is being fomented in our country is aimed directly at these human beings.

Aimed at their efforts to be safe: the referenda would deny special protection from the arbitrary street attacks that every gay man and lesbian fears. Aimed at their families: the referenda would deny gay and lesbian couples the benefits of marriage. Aimed at

their livelihood: the referenda would deny people the right to be judged on the job on the basis of merit and deed, not irrelevancies like their sexual orientation.

Such elemental rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" have never been assured for gay men and lesbians by Federal legislation, and therefore must be won and protected over and over at the local level. But with anti-gay prejudice yet to be recognized by most people simply as prejudice (akin to racism or anti-Semitism), rather than as a righteous, biblically sanctioned passion, it takes only a fanatical minority to bring forth ballot initiatives such as Measure 9 in Oregon, which constitutionally classifies homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse."

Happily, Colorado's anti-gay initiative is losing in the polls. In Oregon, too, opposition to Measure 9 by the State Catholic Conference, among other major players, should help tip the balance towards tolerance in a close contest. (The role of the church in Oregon is gratifying, given the July statement by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which urged Catholic adherence to a narrow concept of "gay rights" that excludes adoption, legalized marriage or other heterosexual prerogatives.)

I could not, however, play Pollyanna to my audiences at Beit Simcha Torah. Too many of them, I knew, have been attacked or harassed on the street; too many bear the scars of job discrimination or of suffocating in the "closet"; too many of them live as endangered strangers in America.

I knew, too, that within a month of her installation, Rabbi Kleinbaum would be contending with Yom Kippur -- a climax of

responsibilities for any rabbi, but especially troubling for those who confront the Biblical condemnation of their sexual orientation (*Leviticus* 18:22 and 20:13) as part of the traditional holiday reading. While many synagogues substitute *Lev.* 19:1-18, addressing issues of social justice, the condemnation of homosexuality nevertheless hovers near, imposing interpretive acrobatics for Jews concerned with harmonizing their ethics and the traditional texts. (Such acrobatics, I might add, have often been needed to reconcile social progress with religious text. Were not the Quaker abolitionists of the 19th century denounced with invocations of the "curse of Ham," *Genesis* 9: 25-27?)

Finally, Beit Simcha Torah must also contend with the tepid advocacy of liberal Jewish leaders, who have generally limited ourselves to a stance of "civil rights, yes; affirmation, no." We support to "domestic partnership" initiatives, but we draw the line at urging religious and legal sanction for gay and lesbian marriages, even for those that produce children. We acknowledge that gay men suffered alongside us in Hitler's concentration camps, but we fail to use gay activists as speakers at Yom HaShoah commemorations. We include "gay synagogues" among our numbers, but fail to make gay and lesbian Jews feel included in any synagogue. Failing to cross these boundaries, we are failing to lead America forward in the same bold way we did on issues of race, gender and religious freedom in the past.

In installing Rabbi Kleinbaum, I spoke in the first person plural: "We." It was an affirmation deeply rooted in Jewish symbolism -- "for as any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you," I told the congregation, "the Star of David contains within it the

triangle." Based on that essential geometry, it is time for American Jews to unlearn homophobia, in thought and deed, at the ballot box and in their communities.



Howard

October 5, 1992
8 Tishri 5753

Mr. Howard Metzger, Associate Editor
Jewish War Veterans of the USA
1811 R Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Metzger:

By curious coincidence, the enclosed chanced to cross my desk. It appears that now even Bill Buckley is on my side! Can the Jewish War Veterans be far behind?

With best wishes for the New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

SECRET

Conservatives should back basic rights for gays

The publication of Marvin Liebman's *Coming Out* Conservative triggers reflection on the political aspects of the movement, especially in the light of Ballot Measure 9 referendum ing up for a vote in Oregon in ember.

need to record (and do so gladly) Liebman is one of my oldest and st friends. For 35 years he was the cipal administrative organ behind -communist and anti-socialist nizations, serving them as money r, public relations counselor, and ather.

Two years ago he wrote a public r to *National Review*, the journal I edited, in which he declared self a lifelong closet gay, and ged that much of the conservative ement was threatened by bigots wish to pursue policies designed equestration of the gay community. Liebman's views were given in an rview last week to *The Village ce*, from which this excerpt: The Berlin Wall came down, unism fell, and the cement n't there anymore. So the servative movement had to find ther enemy — that's how they rate. They couldn't do Jews, gh they would have liked to. They dn't do blacks — too



William F. Buckley Jr.

well-organized. So they've focused on homosexuals poisoning society. The rhetoric is almost word for word what they used about the communists: schools, Hollywood, media elite. Those code words used to mean Jews, but now they also mean gays."

This is overheated hogwash, spoken by someone who is in pain. Still, there is no gainsaying the extraordinary lengths to which some anti-gay militants are ready to go.

Measure 9 in Oregon would constitutionally classify homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse" and allow discrimination against homosexuals, removing all legal protections from them, pronouncing their practices as morally offensive in a category with "pedophilia, sadism and masochism."

Are Oregonians really prepared to ask the state to codify all capital sins? If so, why not throw in sloth and greed?

Among other institutional

opponents of Measure 9 is the Catholic Church, and it is probably safe to say that it will not be voted into law.

But what impact, then, will such movements have? Liebman relates in his book that he has not lost a single friend in the conservative movement in virtue of his materialization outside the closet. On the other hand, he has indeed become what one rightly designates a "gay activist." And here is a quandary facing not only the voters in Oregon but everyone.

What "rights" ought the community in general concede to gays without renouncing the conviction that homosexuality is an aberration? And, a *modus vivendi* having been reached, will gay activists agree to coexist even though, implicitly and even explicitly, they are thought of as unnatural?

American conservatives should make elementary concessions. These should include professional security for gays in all public employment, and in private employment except those occupations in which teachers are expected to act as role models: specifically, in schools for children.

The law shouldn't stand in the way of gays who elect to leave their estates to their same-sex companion, denying the right of relatives of the deceased to charge "undue influence" in order to break the testamentary mandate. On

the other hand, such companions should not seek identical privileges given to spouses under the Internal Revenue code; nor should they seek acceptance of the kind reserved for matrimonial relations between men and women — to refer to a gay couple as "married" is to overtax the metaphorical reach of a term designed to describe a conjugal relationship.

Surely common sense and experience call for eliminating the discriminatory provisions that now hypothetically keep gays out of the military and out of the sensitive agencies (though candidate Clinton says he will rescind these regulations). There is simply no record of distinctive gay vulnerability in these services to justify categorical, as distinguished from particular, exclusions.

Liebman's readable book has much to tell us about the tortures of the double life to which most irrepressibly gay men and women are confined. But though he may not be aware of it, my friend Marvin should know that in order to leave the closet, it is not necessary to walk onto the stage.

William F. Buckley Jr. is the editor of *National Review* magazine and host of the weekly television show "Firing Line."

Cef

August 31, 1998
9 Elul 5758

Rabbi Lisa A. Edwards
Beth Chayim Chadashim
6000 West Pico Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90035

Dear Lisa:

Many thanks for your most gracious letter. I am delighted that BCC's Twenty-fifth anniversary lived up to your greatest expectations.

Thank you for sharing a copy of Alex's moving remarks at the *simcha*. I am pleased to have them as we are in the midst of gathering together archival materials for the American Jewish Archives and this speech will become a part of the AJA. With our impending move to new headquarters we have a great opportunity to make certain all manner of historical documents from the Union's files become a part of the Archives. Certainly the correspondence and materials from the creation of BCC and its affiliation with the UAHC are an important part of American Jewish history!

With warm regards and best wishes for the coming New Year, I am

Sincerely,

Eric H. Yoffie

Rabbi Alexander Schindler's Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Address

On March 29, 1998, at Leo Baeck Temple, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President Emeritus of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, gave a sermon in honor of Beth Chayim Chadashim's Twenty-fifth Anniversary. This is Rabbi Schindler's historic speech.

Thank you all for your warm words of welcome and for presenting me with this plaque bespeaking your regard. This honor comes as a pleasant surprise to me. After all, I came here to celebrate *your* communal simcha not to be celebrated. I came here to honor you for your attainments, not to be honored myself. There is a part of me, of course, which delights in all this adulation. But there is another part of me that knows better, knows that honor cannot be gained without the toil of a more genuine merit.

If the truth be told, I played a far lesser part than others in gaining the admission of Beth Chayim Chadashim into our national family of congregations. The Union's admission procedures call for that determination to be made first on a regional level, and those who led the battle here, in the trenches as it were, deserve the far greater credit. I think now especially of my colleague, Erwin Herman, then the Director of the Union's Southern California Council who devised that adroit strategy which culminated in BCC's entry, the very first gay/lesbian congregation of any faith to be welcomed into its parent religious association.

Extravagant though your words were, I am grateful for them and I reciprocate your sentiments of regard with a full heart. The sons and daughters of BCC are fortunate to have Lisa Edwards as their rabbi. I say this on the authority of one of her colleagues who said of her, that she is "a remarkably gifted person...an insightful Torah teacher...a passionate and eloquent speaker...a sensitive listener and counselor...and a person of sterling character..." These words were spoken by none other than Janet Marder who led BCC so splendidly during five of its formative years and, therefore, also played a significant role in the making of this festive occasion.

“ *Gay liberation...affirms but one principle
as a valid measure of our relationships...
the recognition of the likeness of God
in each and every one of us.* **”**

How appropriate it is that this gathering convenes at that time of the Jewish calendar year when we prepare to observe the Festival of Passover which marks the Exodus from *mitzrayim*, from Egypt. The masters of the midrash, those perceptive preachers of old, related the Hebrew name for the land of Egypt, *mitzrayim*, to the phrase *bein hamitzarim* which means to be in straits, to be enclosed, to be trapped in an oppressively narrow place, not just physically but emotionally as well.

In this sense, the prospering of BCC, with its proud history of outreach to lesbian and gay Jews, to bisexual and transgendered Jews, is a Pessach story in the truest sense: a story of liberation for those who were shunned and persecuted, and a story of liberation likewise for our entire religious community whose adherents are coming to realize that we are all of us one family, that our fates and freedoms are inextricably intertwined.

The UAHC's acceptance, twenty-five years ago, of BCC marked a reaffirmation of one of our Reform movement's most authentic and prophetic beliefs: the belief in an open-door Judaism that carries a universalist message of the profoundest import for all peoples. We understand that a closed-door Judaism will serve only to narrow the boundaries of our Goshen, our Pale of Settlement. We recognize that it is only an open-door Judaism that will allow us all to make the Exodus from *Mitzrayim* to Sinai.

That same open-door spirit has been writ large in the gay liberation movement during the past quarter century of its upsurge. At its finest, that movement is about human liberation, about freeing us from the barbed-wire definitions and brand-name formulas of human love and sexuality. Gay liberation, especially as it has been expressed in religious communities, affirms but one principle as a valid measure of our relationships: that of *betselem elohim bare outanu*, the recognition of the likeness of God in each and every one of us.

But, alas, the irresistible prophetic spirit that split the sea of American racism in the 1960's has yet to split the sea of American homophobia, notwithstanding the resourcefulness and soulfulness and suffering of the gay and lesbian communities. Anti-gay prejudice remains an upright fencepost throughout the American landscape.

Nor is it only a much-scarred whipping post of the Christian right. Even "enlightened" Americans who claim racial and religious tolerance as an ideal they prize above all else, nonetheless have not bested the demons of homophobia in their soul. The majority of them, as pointed out in a recent New York Times Magazine piece,

will nevertheless describe homosexual life as immoral, shameful, perverted, and somehow wrong. Homophobia, it seems, is the only prejudice that remains respectable, that has not been delegitimized, that has not been cut off from its wellsprings. It is the "last frontier," as it were, of inveterate hatred.

“Homophobia...is the “last frontier,” as it were, of inveterate hatred.”

Much the same has to be said of the American Jewish community which prides itself to be the most rational and enlightened segment of American society. How many genuine initiatives have we seen from our Jewish defense agencies against gay and lesbian bashing and hate crimes, or in support of gay and lesbian rights? How many of our communal organizations approach their hiring decisions without regard to the sexual preference of candidates? How many discussions of sexual orientation in Jewish life still founder on the hard rocks of halachic prohibition—even while that same halachah is reinterpreted, or minimized, or ignored in so many other respects by America's Jews.

Yes, and I regret to say it, even in our Reform Jewish community you will often encounter more lip service than action against the blight of homophobia. Let us admit it! Our resolutions on this subject have been infinitely more forthright than our deportment. In spite of past declaration urging the contrary, the singling out of homosexuality from the whole human constellations as a loathsome affliction remains a widespread sentiment in our midst.

True enough, twenty-five years ago, we admitted BCC, this first congregation with an outreach to gay and lesbian Jews, into the UAHC, and we have added several since. Gay men and lesbians by the hundred who had felt themselves alienated from Judaism have joined these congregations and have added their strength and commitment to our religious community. But in most of our mainstream congregations we have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews. We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our synagogues. We have not dispelled the myth of the “corrupting” homosexual, of the rabbi, or teacher, or youth leader, who would fashion children in his or her sexual image. We have not consciously included gay and lesbian parents as part of the Jewish family circle.

Yes, and even though the UAHC as well as our Rabbinic Conference has passed resolutions calling on

Continued on page 9



Proudly displaying BCC's charter with the UAHC are Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Rabbi Sanford Ragins, Cantorial Soloist Fran Chalin, Past BCC President Tom Johnson, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, BCC President Josh Wayser, and Judge Jerry Krieger.

our state and federal governments to legalize same-sex marriages and to grant them the same benefits extended to heterosexual couples, our own *balabatim* who secretly or even openly judge gays and lesbians to be promiscuous in their relationships nonetheless cannot overcome their aversion to same-sex unions, and the CCAR is still reluctant to sanction rabbinic officiation when gay and lesbian couples are prepared to pledge their lives to one another and to establish a stable and loving Jewish home.

Aye, we are still slaves in the land of Egypt, in *Mitzrayim*! We continue to see our lives only from within that narrow place in which we live...and, as the Santa Cruz Haggadah so felicitously puts it “from within this self-generated version of reality, we lose sight of alternative possibilities, we see no avenue of change; we see only “*Mitzrayim*.”

But do not lose heart. There are avenues of change at hand. I know from my own experience that it is possible to be educated and to change fundamentally. I had to wrestle no little before besting those demons within my soul. Certainly, the deeds of BCC confirm the validity of this conviction.

As you know, often issues of sexual difference are met with well-meaning and yet condescending referral to research suggesting the innate nature of sexual preference. “They can't help themselves,” these good people say “they just can't help themselves...”

Well, my friends, from what I see you are helping yourselves quite well: Helping yourselves to Judaism, to Jewish community, to Jewish song and celebration! Helping yourselves to the leadership gifts of an insightful and compassionate rabbi...Lisa Edwards. Helping yourselves to the energy, courage and good humor of Tracy Moore, the Temple's “First Lady” may she live and be well *ad meah ve-esrim shana*.

You are helping yourselves to the wealth of Jewish music and liturgical song, as exemplified by your sensitive cantorial soloist, Fran Magid Chalin, as well as by your new “gay geszunt” traveling band. You are helping yourselves to the treasures of Jewish study, to vibrant, participatory religious services and to all manner of affirmative social action projects not the least among which is the birthing of “*Nechama*” which subsequently became the LA Jewish AIDS Services. In a word, you are an example of the caring community at its finest.

Why, you even contributed magnificently to our religious community as a whole. After all, you were the first congregation in the land, and world for that matter, to create a gender-sensitive prayer book. And it was under your aegis that Debbie Friedman wrote and first performed her poignant song “*Lechi-lach*,” which since its creation has served to lift the spirits of countless worshipers through the length and breadth of this land.

Continued on page 10



It is the rest of the Jewish community which loses out when it withholds its full solidarity, by failing to make your simcha our simcha, by failing to recognize the triangle that lies within the Star of David, by failing to cross the boundaries of Otherness, the fringed boundaries at which compassion gives way to identification.

“ *It is the rest of the Jewish community which loses out by failing to recognize the triangle that lies within the Star of David.* ”

I have said this before, but it bears repeating here: by withholding identification with its own gay and lesbian children, the Jewish community opts for amnesia. It exiles itself from Jewish history.

We who were *marranos*, who chameleon-like clung to the closet of sham conversion to live without molestation—how can we turn away from the demand for gay and lesbian visibility without confining Jewish memory to a narrow place?

We who ingested anti-Semitism until it turned to gall in our systems, we who have had to overcome fear and self-loathing to live and to celebrate Jewish lives—how can we withhold our solidarity from the gay and lesbian communities without consigning Jewish memory *bein hamitzarim*, back to that oppressively narrow place?

We who were irrationally despised while being subjected to all sorts of “scientific” theorizing about who we are and why we are—a theorizing that ultimately paved the way to the gas chambers—how can we participate in judgments about what is normal and what is not, judgments that can serve only to excommunicate one group of people and keep the rest in a narrow corridor of behavior?

No, we cannot claim to have left Egypt, Mitzrayim, the Narrow Place, until we have split the blood-stained sea of homophobia and crossed over to a safer shore! What, then, have we to celebrate today?—We celebrate progress! The Sea may not yet have split, but we are dancing on its near shore in full confidence that the ultimate destination of our Exodus will eventually be reached.

Twenty-five years ago, after all, the membership roster of Beth Chayim Chadashim read like a novel by Franz Kafka, with initials instead of surnames. Your past President, Fred Shuldiner, was for years known only as Fred S. The courage required in the early years of your communal being to attend services at BCC, let alone to become a member, was simply overwhelming. Today, by contrast, your president Josh Wayser’s intelligent leadership can be publicly acknowledged, without fear of endangering his job or his safety.

Twenty-five years ago, BCC had to fight a battle to join the UAHC. Today, your former president, Les Zendle, is a

UAHC national Board member and co-chair of our Committee on Older Adults, and your Stan Notkin is actively engaged in the work of our regional committee on the Changing Jewish Family.

Twenty-five years ago, Leo Baeck Temple lovingly provided you with a meeting place. Today you are conducting a successful fund raising campaign to remodel your own beautiful communal home into something even more functional and beautiful.

Twenty-five years ago, the winner of this year’s Erwin and Agnes Herman award, was a television side-kick named Zelda who could never land a boyfriend. Today, Sheila Kuehl is Speaker Pro Tem of the California State Assembly, and her failure to land a boyfriend is freely called lesbianism. Yes, we have very much to celebrate, much with which to nourish our spirits for the strugglings that lie ahead.

Oh, would that I had the power like Moses, to lift my arm and split the sea for all of us. I would like nothing better than to join the members of this singing congregation, all of us crossing over to the other shore, secure in our rights as Jews and as free human beings, and there together to lift our voices in joyous song unto the Lord.

But, alas, I have no such power. I can only offer myself as your ally and admirer.

I can speak up for marital rights, and parental rights, and job benefit rights, regardless of sexual preference within Jewish life and beyond Jewish life.

I can serve as a comforter for those in this community who have passed through the valley of the shadow of death time and again during these past two decades, accompanying partners friends and loved ones on their difficult final journey.

I can offer my prayers that a full cure for AIDS will be found within the lifetimes of everyone in this synagogue.

I can be a rabbi for all Jews at every moment of life and to confer without hesitation the affirmations and the sanctifications that you all so richly deserve.

The Midrash tells us that the splitting of the sea was less of a miracle than the Exodus from Egypt, for only the Exodus is mentioned in the first of the ten commandments. “Thus it is,” the rabbis taught, “that the rescue from Egypt transcends all the other miracles that God performed for Israel.”

Through BCC, therefore, you have already performed this greatest of all miracles. You rescued yourself from the isolation, the shame, and the anger of living in the closet, in the narrow place, in Mitzrayim. You have claimed for yourselves the right to full Jewish citizenship. We thank you for your attainments and we admire the beauty of your spirit.

May such a spirit suffuse our entire religious community. Then we will have the kind of future all of us dream to have.

Kein yehi ratzon... Thus may it be God’s will.

“ *What, then, have we to celebrate today?—We celebrate progress!* ”