

In My Opinion...

By Amy Krakovitz Montoni

I don't know who is driving me more crazy, my mother or my sister.

It's this impending Bar Mitzvah. They seem to forget who is the mother of the Bar Mitzvah boy (it's me, by the way, not either one of them).

It's not that I don't appreciate their help, but they can turn a stone cold sane person into a raving lunatic in just a matter of minutes.

It started with my sister over a year ago. Who is getting which *aliyah* at the ceremony? she wanted to know. I didn't know way back then; frankly, I still don't know who will get each and every

honor just yet. But she nagged me mercilessly for months to give her the list of *aliyot* and the name of the relative assigned to each. I finally figured out that she was concerned about her own *aliyah*, and assured her that she would be getting one and told her what it was. I was being far too simplistic. That was not her ulterior motive. She is still nagging me about the list. "I don't want you to forget anybody," she says. "I don't want you to hurt anyone's feelings."

My mother, believe it or not, started on me much later, just within the last few months. For some reason the hotel for the out

of town guests is hanging her up. For weeks, she's been asking me about the information on the hotels. She isn't even staying at the hotel, but she couldn't leave me alone about it. When I finally did get all the information on paper, she wanted to know when everyone would get it. "I'm going to put these forms into the envelopes with their invitations," I told her (it was far too early to send invitations).

"Is the name of the hotel on it?" she asked. Now, really, did she honestly think I would send hotel reservation information without the name of the hotel?

(Continued on page 29)

A Study of the Ethnic and Racial Diversity of the Jewish Population

Are you Jewish and African-American, Latino, Asian-American, Native American or mixed race? Are you a Jew of Sephardi or Mizrahi descent? Are you raising a child of color as a Jew?

The Institute for Jewish and Community Research is conducting a national study on the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the Jewish community in the United States. The study is funded in part by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, the Righteous Persons Foundation,

the Geffen Foundation, the Auerbach Foundation and a number of other foundations interested in Jewish life.

The study will consist of a mail survey and personal interviews with individuals and families who are African-American, Latino, Asian-American, Native American, Sephardic, or mixed race and Jewish or who are white and raising their mixed race children as Jews. The results of the study will be presented at a conference to be held next year. The ultimate goal of the research is to

better understand the issues and enable Jewish communal organizations to create local and national support groups and chavurot for Jews of color.

The first step of the project involves identifying individuals of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds who are Jewish. If you are interested in participating in this study, or know someone who might be, please contact the Institute of Jewish and Community Research at (415) 386-4710 or e-mail to Diane@JewishResearch.org. ✪

A Tapestry of Jewish Thought

North Carolina B'nai B'rith 51st Annual Institute of Judaism

Wildacres will be the site of this year's Institute of Judaism, sponsored by North Carolina B'nai B'rith. "If you've never attended before," says Institute Chair Norman Pliner, "you might like to experience Wildacres."

The dates are August 16-19, 1999, but spaces fill quickly. It is highly recommended that reservations be made as soon as possible, as this institute always sells out.

This year's lecture topics include:

✪ Dr. Gregory Mahler covering: 1) "Israeli Constitutional Evolution and Israeli Politics"; 2) "The Israeli Electoral Process and Israeli Democracy"; and 3) "The 'Radical Right' in Israel: Are Democracy and Orthodoxy Compatible?"

✪ Myrna Goldberger will discuss "American Jews - Known and Unknown - Who Made a Difference" at these three seminars: 1) "American Jews - 18th and 19th Century: Who Made a Difference"; 2) "American Jews - 20th Century: Who Made a Difference"; and 3) "Not-So-Well-Known American Jews Who Made a Difference."

✪ Thomas Friedman on "When the Laughter Stops: A Sober Look at the Content of Jewish Jokes" - 1) "How Jokes Work - Variations and Versions"; 2) "Jews and Gentiles - Issues of Identity"; and 3) "Jews and Jews - Issues of Authenticity Within the Jewish Community."

Also featured will be entertainer Tanya Solnik, a past performer at

Wildacres who is being brought back due to popular demand. An artist that displays a brilliant variety of musical styles, including popular standards, jazz, rock and roll, country and western, and her passionate renditions of Jewish art and folk songs, Tanya has performed in nightclubs, on stage and on television. Don't miss this inspiring presentation.

Reservation fee is \$240.00 per person, double occupancy (single supplement, add \$85.00). All reservations will be made on a first-come first-serve basis.

Contact Hilda and Herbert Leamer for an application to the B'nai B'rith Institute of Judaism, August 16-19, 1999, at Wildacres. The Leamers can be contacted by writing to 100 Artillery Lane, Raleigh, NC 27615, or by phone, (919) 847-8842. ✪



Point of View

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of three rabbis active in the Charlotte Community.

This Month:
Rabbi Jim Bennett of
Temple Beth El

THE JOY OF JEWISH LIVING

Let's all rediscover the joy of Jewish living. We Jews are so good at recalling the difficult times. Just take a good look at our festival year. At Sukkot, we remember the fragility of human life, recalling the years of wandering in the desert, dwelling in *sukkot*, temporary shelters. At Chanukah we remember the struggle of the Maccabees against the Assyrians, who tried to take away our religious liberties. At Purim we vow to blot out the name of Haman, who sought the destruction of the Jewish people. At Pesach, we retell the story of the way Pharaoh enslaved us and oppressed us. This month, with Yom Ha'Shoah and Yom Ha'Atzmaut, so many Jews will reverently recall the martyrs of the Holocaust and the evil of those who again sought to annihilate us, and then we will turn and remind ourselves that "out of the ashes of the Holocaust comes the State of Israel."

When I was growing up, that is how we were taught. "Kasheh M'od Li'hiyot Yehudi," we were told again and again, "It is very difficult to be a Jew." We were shown that the story of the Jewish people is one of our constant victory over evil. Our very existence, it was made clear, is a miracle, evidence of our chosenness. Despite those who hate us, we must survive as Jews, we were reminded. Jewish survival. Jewish continuity. These, we were told, are the only things that matter.

There is so much more to our Jewish experience. The history of the Jewish people has not been merely the story of the threats to our existence. Our *raison d'etre* is not just to survive.

Our purpose is to flourish, to rejoice, to fill the world with the joy of our Jewish living, and to use that joy to bring light to the world. Being Jewish is a joyful, meaningful way of life.

Nearly all of our holidays can also be seen through this prism. Sukkot celebrates the remarkable bounty of the harvest; Chanukah tells us to rejoice at the idea of freedom; Purim teaches us to laugh and smile and celebrate, especially in light of evil's presence in the world; Passover is about new beginnings and rebirth; and Yom Ha'Atzmaut can be about Jewish self-determination and the joy of Jewish living, the miracle of the state of Israel.

Jewish children today need to be taught that being Jewish is about creativity, joy, excitement and meaning, not about survival and isolationism. Judaism needs to be infused with the spirit of Jewish living, not the fear and guilt of Jewish survival and continuity. If Judaism is rich and joyous and real enough, it will survive, and our people will continue. Our job is to fill our Jewish lives with smiles, laughter, joy and celebration. ✪

A NOTE TO THE COMMUNITY

Thank you, one and all, for your contributions in memory of my beloved brother Leonard. I really appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Mae Goldman

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