PUTTING OUR VALUES INTO ACTION / THIS IS OUR JUDAISM

These are momentous times, and our involvement in them is expressed in many ways. The articles and photos in this issue of Humanorah show some of the different ways we as a movement are putting our values into action how we are defining our Judaism from celebrating our volunteers to joining public marches and demonstrations on human rights issues. As individuals and as communities, we live our Humanistic Jewish values in small and not-so-small ways.

View photos of our communities in action. In addition, we are drawing new Humanistic Jews to us, partly through our growing presence on social media. See pages 11-13 to learn about the “coming in” experiences of new Humanistic Jews.

We begin with “Why I Took Part in the Women’s March,” by Paul Golin, *originally published in The New York Jewish Week:*

The best part about being in a sea of 400,000 people at the Women’s March in New York City on Jan. 21 was the recognition that I’m not alone. There are a hundred million or more Americans who feel like I do about the march’s key issues. In fact, on many of those issues we are in the majority. That our political establishment does not reflect the will of the people is the great challenge we face in the coming years.

I marched for both personal and professional reasons. Professionally, part of my role as executive director of the Society for Humanistic Judaism is to identify and activate around those moments of convergence between Judaism and secular humanism. I felt strongly this was one of those moments.

Judaism has always valued respect and dignity. While historically those values have been applied unevenly (to use a charitable word) particularly to women — and still are to this day in sectors of the Jewish community — those baseline values in our tradition can and should be built upon.

During the march, Myrna Baron of the City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism told *Haaretz,* “As Jews, we have a moral obligation, when we see injustice, to speak out.” A disproportionate number of the great feminists in history have been Jews, and I don’t believe that is coincidental.

Humanism, the idea that people are responsible for solving human problems without expecting divine intervention, holds among its highest values the equality of all people. Women’s rights are central to its ideals. Ours is the only movement with a foot firmly planted in both Judaism and secular humanism.

The march was also highly personal. Though not a woman myself (full disclosure), I try to be an ally. I’ve learned a bit about what it means to be a good ally to marginalized populations, including to shut up, listen, and follow rather than insist on leading. I was happy to follow what was an amazingly large, organized, and peaceful protest.

Aspiring allies can also talk to those within our own category of privilege about why we choose to support the cause. So, to my fellow males I ask, do you call yourself a feminist? If so, have you taken a deep dive into what is still holding us back from full gender equality, as a society and individually?

Continued on page 2
Golin, continued from page 1

The obvious answer for why men march is because “I have a wife,” “I have a mother,” “I have a daughter.” While I am lucky enough to have all three, and of course I march for them, it’s more than that. I don’t want to benefit at the expense of someone else’s disadvantage, oppression, or suffering.

It’s tough to convince people that they have an unfair advantage when life doesn’t feel fair to them to begin with. Ours is a culture where everyone feels persecuted, even rich white male presidents.

You may hate your job, but a woman doing that same job would likely make 20 percent less. Perhaps it doesn’t look that way — you may know of women in the same position making the same money or maybe even more money — and that’s the challenge of seeing yourself in the larger picture and believing statistics (a.k.a. actual facts not “alternative facts”).

Fear is a great motivator for continued inequality, and economic fear is particularly motivational these days. But the economy is not a zero-sum game. The U.S. population doubled since 1950 yet unemployment is not 50 percent. Let’s envision the gains our economy will make when women are equal participants and share equal power in society.

Ours is a culture where everyone feels persecuted, even rich white male presidents.

Equal pay is tied to the many larger sociological issues around traditional gender roles. I’d like to believe Jewish men have a more nuanced relationship to strength and power, based on our people’s history. But there are plenty who do not, or who overcompensate because of that history. I know from my own personal experience that privilege is not easily recognized or accepted. It’s an ongoing process of learning and self-reflection.

Continued on page 3
I’ve come to recognize and admire the women in my life who’ve proven stronger than I’ll ever be. My grandmother, who rebuilt a family and life in America after losing her parents, all siblings, and two children in the Holocaust. How did she go on?

My mother, who raised two young children as a single parent while still building a successful executive career. I still don’t know how she did it, and it’s even more remarkable to me now that I have two young children of my own. My aunt, who refuses to let her cancer battle modify her love and kindness, especially toward her grandchildren who she’s there for all the time despite enduring physical pain.

I’ve never been tested like they have, and frankly, I hope I never will be. If and when it happens though, it is their examples of strength to which I’ll turn. Which is why I know it’s an absurdity to suggest men are inherently stronger than women.

I didn’t ask to be part of a system of inequality, but I am, and I want to change it. Doing so will make the world a better place for all people, regardless of gender. The Women’s March was a wonderful show of solidarity by those who won’t let the clock turn back on the progress made these past decades, even as we recognize we still have a way to go to achieve full equality. We must learn from the Jewish experience, to expand equal treatment rather than slam the door behind us.

By Paul Golin

Originally published in New York Jewish Week, January 26, 2017
The Rallies continue in New York and Detroit: with marchers from City Congregation & Birmingham Temple

Rabbi Peter Schweitzer holds a sign at the I Am A Muslim Too rally in Times Square on Feb. 19, 2017. (Credit: Charles Eckert)

Rabbi Peter Schweitzer of the City Congregation for Humanistic Judaism at a rally against the Trump administration’s order shutting the borders to those coming from seven Muslim-majority countries. Hella Winston/Jewish Week

Steve Blum, Birmingham Temple, and his daughter, Rebecca, at their first ever protest. “We joined thousands at Detroit Metro Airport. The picture is of my great-grandfather Mordechai Jacobovicz who immigrated to Detroit in 1907 from Warsaw, Poland. Several protesters inquired about the picture and they were all delighted with our explanation.”

Humanist Jews — Uncredited
Launched in November 2016, post-election social action work is happening on many fronts. Our efforts began with Sunday morning meetings, attended by 40 members, to brainstorm and narrow our plans of action. Jennie Guilfoyle is heading up our new efforts, coordinating with Peter Kahn, our Social Action Committee chair. Here is a February 2017 update:

- We gathered information on the amount of Machar member contributions made directly to Planned Parenthood in fall 2016, since that organization is threatened with federal government defunding. We’re excited! Machar members donated $6,630!!

- At the Machar Hanukkah party and Jewish Cultural School, Machar members collectively donated 13 large bags of winter coats and other winter outerwear to the International Rescue Committee, which was grateful to receive these items for distribution to refugees in Silver Spring MD. Thanks to new member Sara Baum for leading this effort.

- Machar member Sara Baum also attended a local meeting convened by HIAS, For the Refugee, on the topics of how congregations can support refugees in our local community. She will submit a proposal to congregation leadership with some ideas for how Machar can support HIAS and refugees.

- At the January 21 Women’s March in Washington DC, Macharniks were ready with Machar and SHJ banners, though usually it was too crowded to unfurl them! We couldn’t even keep together through the afternoon. What an upbeat and energized crowd! But thanks to the thoughtful comments of long-time member Joan Prival, we were covered in Cosmopolitan magazine, in an article called “13 Women Who’ve Been Fighting For Women’s Rights For Decades on Why They’re Still Marching.” Control click the link to see part of the Machar group behind the photo of Joan in the Cosmopolitan article.

- We are looking into reaching out to a local mosque and seeing what their needs are, perhaps sharing a meal together to build bridges

- We are exploring support of immigration legal services for immigrants who may be facing deportation, especially state-identified DREAMers (qualified for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors act) and those on President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

- We do these things to honor Machar founders and social activists, Joe and Millie Goodman, who celebrated 50 years of marriage in fall 2016.

It’s nice to be organizing in new ways and have group energy to respond to issues as they occur.

Sara Baum, Marlene Cohen, Jennie Guilfoyle

GOT EMAIL?
Send your email address to info@shj.org and begin to receive the SHJ e-newsletters with timely news about SHJ communities, the Society's activities, and links of interest.
Oraynu Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Toronto, ON, raised over $50,000 for the sponsorship of a refugee family from war-torn Syria, through both direct fundraising and our “Soup It Up for Syria” event held in February 2016. Our Ismaili Muslim family of three -- parents Lina and Tamer, and their 10 year old son Nour -- was assigned to us through Jewish Immigrant Aid Services.

A small group welcomed their arrival on November 24, 2016, at the airport. Many other Oraynu members got to meet them on Sunday November 27th when they joined us to view the “Syria: A Living History” exhibit at the Aga Khan Museum.

It was a very moving experience finally to witness their arrival, after all they had endured, both in Syria and in Turkey where they waited to be approved for immigration. We will be providing not only financial support, but also material assistance to help them settle in.

Here is a note sent to our Rabbi by Thanaa, a sister/aunt of the family who was already living in Canada, just prior to Passover:

“Passover affirms the great truth that liberty is the inalienable right of every human being.” — Morris Joseph

‘It is ever so fitting that the Festival of Freedom has you and your community fulfilling the freedom and rights of those who are suffering today. You have taken your history and the suffering of your people, and made every effort to ensure that human beings may not suffer in any way. May you always be blessed with happiness, prosperity, peace, and good health on Pesach and always!’

Jews in particular understand the plight of those who must wander. Our hearts have been moved by refugee crises all over the world and lately, in particular, by the horror of the Syrian refugee crisis. As we see images of families drowning on their way to seek safety, we have a heightened empathy. It wasn't so long ago that it was our own people seeking safe refuge.

Oraynu decided to sponsor a family to come to Canada because we knew that it was just, it was necessary, and it was in our power to act. We not only drew on our tradition of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, but we actualized it. We put out the call for donations at the beginning of Chanukah 2015, and by the end of the Festival of Light, we had exceeded our fundraising goal and our expectations. The generosity of our community spoke volumes about who we are and what we believe. I have never been so inspired or more proud to be working in this incredible community.

The Jewish traditions of Tzedakah (justice/charity) and Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) are crucial to the Jewish experience in two directions: outwardly and inwardly. When we work to improve the world, it has an impact on those who we serve. We know that the problems of the world are created by humans and can only be resolved by humans who wish to act for change. The effect is also, however, internal. When we do good, we feel good. When our community stands for goodness and peace, we find more goodness and peace in our own lives. We do not give and act simply because it is good for us; the need is external. But the benefit is both external and internal. When we give, we get.

Rabbi Denise Hardlanski

EDITOR’S NOTE: If your congregation would like to sponsor another Syrian refugee family’s entry into Canada in partnership with Oraynu, or join two or more congregations together to sponsor a family, please be in touch with Paul Golin at SHJ. Please consider that besides the significant financial resources mentioned above, Rabbi Handlarski told us it will also require a team of volunteers willing to dedicate many, many hours to work through the process.
Marching for an End to Police Shootings

Police Shootings Spur March, Rally in Downtown Detroit

“Tachae Davis proudly strode down Woodward in July 2016 as the sun set over the downtown Detroit skyline Monday, shouting “Justice!” near traffic roaring past.”

The activists in the group Fighting Imperialism, Stand Together joined about 25 others who streamed from the Spirit of Detroit statue to Campus Martius, demanding an end to deadly encounters with police. With them on that hot day in July 2016 was Rabbi Jeff Falick, leader of SHJ affiliate, The Birmingham Temple.

Follow the link here or above to the entire article in the Detroit News.

SJCPS Marches in Seattle

A dozen Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound members participated in the Seattle Women’s March on January 21. There’s already been so much news reporting about this march that there’s no need to describe it in detail here. Instead, I will mention a few of my favorite moments and let other SJC members who marched share their thoughts about it as well.

My first favorite moment was when we finally made it out of Judkins Park and off of the side streets leading out of the park and started walking west and downhill on S. Jackson St. The view of the seemingly endless sea of people, signs and pink “pussy” hats stretching all the way down the mile-long hill from 20th Ave. S. to 4th Ave. S. was such an inspiring sight! Another favorite moment, one that actually happened several times, was whenever the crowd let out a roar, and what a thunderously load roar it was! I enjoyed the camaraderie of marching as a group and got a kick out of the wry humor of many of the signs that marchers carried and sympathetic shopkeepers along the route posted in their windows. Even though we were marching for a very serious reason, the whole experience left me feeling very energized and uplifted.

Rachael writes: Marching was an affirming and amazing experience! I was able to talk with others, gather their stories, and share my own. We marched with millions of people nation and worldwide. We are not alone. And we will create change! Our representatives, senators, local and state legislators are looking to hear our stories. Sadly, facts don't seem to convince ideologies, but stories do. Please share your story about how you, or a friend will suffer if Obamacare is repealed without replacement - maybe that you have a pre-existing condition and need to know that you will not be without health insurance if you change jobs. Share your stories widely, with friends and with those who will fight for us. If you know someone in a swing state - let them know your story and how they can help.

Billy writes: One takeaway, reinforced by the ensuing days' events, was that this strength of protest is going to need constant repetition. And indeed, just eight days later, Judy B. and I found ourselves at Westlake joining the protest of the refugee ban. The banners which most resonated with us Jewish attendees read, "First they came for the Muslims. And we said, 'Not this time!'"

Irina writes: So many people and so many causes have united. We have to keep up the pressure and we have to stand united with other groups and causes. The good news was that so many people ARE opposed to the agenda of hate. [This] affirms my faith in humanity.

By Judy Blinder
In the current climate of extreme political discord within our country, Kahal B’raira, Boston, MA, continues to aim for inclusivity and accessibility for all people who identify with the history, culture and future of the Jewish people, no matter what their political stripe, their abilities, or their origins.

And so, we look for ways to make a difference together. KB members feel it is as important to raise our voices, and also to be visible in our community through our actions. We have found that community service is as universally persuasive as attempts to influence public policy. This past MLK Jr. Day, we worked with many like minded people in a Day of Service in our hometown of Cambridge. Others of our congregation worked in their local communities.

Our congregation is enriched by the full contribution and participation of people with all abilities. In reviewing our policies, we have seen that barriers to a person with a disability might be overlooked, even by those sensitive to these situations. Accordingly, we have developed a checklist to support committee chairs and other congregants organizing KB events. Find it on our website by clicking here. Reaching full accessibility is a goal.

Members of KB have also participated in a workshop Strategizing Next Steps: Moving Our Jewish Organizations to a Culture of Racial Inclusion sponsored by Reform Congregations. As our congregation becomes more diverse, we need to prepare for what may be the major issue of our time – living together in a diverse society.

We face these challenges by joining together publicly to make our voices heard, and we act on the personal level as well. To make the world a better place, we look to each other and to ourselves.

Jon Levine
At Or Emet (Twin Cities, MN), Sally Sudo spoke of childhood memories of imprisonment in an internment camp for Japanese-Americans. Her family lived behind barbed wire monitored by armed guards in watchtowers. Lies were used to justify internment, not unlike today’s effort to paint Muslims as a danger.

General DeWitt, who supervised the internment, asserted there was offshore signaling to Japanese submarines by Japanese-Americans. The FBI and FCC reported this to be false and advised DeWitt. These “purported facts” were part of the basis on which the Supreme Court supported the military necessity of the camps.

Often lying was by euphemism. They were not “evacuated” or “relocated” as if from a natural disaster, they were forcibly removed with no choice in the matter. The actual evacuation order spoke of “all Japanese persons, both alien and non-alien” for it no doubt felt sensitive to state “both citizen and non-citizen.”

At that time, Asian immigrants could not become citizens, although their children born in the US were. This meant of 110,000 Japanese-Americans sent to the camps, two-thirds were American citizens, the balance prohibited from citizenship by law.

While the Holocaust and Japanese-American internment had different intents, many of the actions in the early stages were disturbingly similar.

The Alien Registration Act in 1940 registered any non-citizen age 14 or older, documenting those first-generation Japanese-Americans.

Homes of those of Japanese birth were raided and assets frozen. They were taken to camps and held without trial. As with the Jews, these were the community leaders and it began to break down the community.

Anyone who was 1/16th Japanese was classified as Japanese, much as the Nuremburg laws determined Jewish blood.

Contraband, including cameras and binoculars, was confiscated. Similarly, Jews overseas gave up optical equipment, bicycles, typewriters, records and radios.

Japanese-Americans were forced to abandon homes and businesses. With no more than two weeks’ notice, they could bring one suitcase each. Stored property was often stolen in their absence. Many who supported their removal sought economic gain with bargain sales presenting opportunities. In total 200,000 acres were confiscated or sold under duress to the FSA. In the camps the detainees earned $12 to $19 a month, not enough to pay property taxes.

The environment was dehumanizing with initial housing in former stables. In the camp Sudo’s family with ten children was allotted two rooms with no refrigeration or running water. Much of their time was spent waiting in lines for food. Latrines and showers were communal with no walls for privacy.

It was not until 1988 that detainees finally received an apology. We need to take the lessons from this distressing chapter and assure that we never use bigotry and lies to diminish who we are as a nation.

by Susan Weinberg, Or Emet
sqweinberg.blogspot.com

What Democracy Looks Like: Putting Her Values Into Action

Susan Weinberg writes in an article for Minnpost Community Voices: “I am not a protester by nature, at least not the “in the streets” variety. Part of my aversion is I don't trust a crowd mentality, on the left any more than on the right. In today’s environment, I am rethinking my resistance to crowds and protest.

“After the election, when my husband and I were deeply distressed, he did a lot of preaching to the choir. That's me. I kept saying, "We should be out in the streets!" This “choir” was ready to sing, my crowd aversion quickly forgotten. When things are so wrong, my instinct is to take to the streets to declare it.

“It was a small step from that sentiment to attending the Women's March in D.C. It was a joyous and inclusive crowd. Marching to the chant of "Tell me what democracy looks like. THIS is what democracy looks like" felt absolutely right. I chanted with fervor, believing those words….”

To read more of Susan’s article, click here.
The Society for Humanistic Judaism: Who are we? How do we get that message out there? How do we broadcast our vision? Social Media! Our primary tool in the social media toolbox is Facebook. SHJ has an official page, several groups and a page for its youth group. Facebook PAGES are where to go to see posts (i.e., articles) from the organization, with comments from members and others. GROUPS are where members can exchange information through their own posts (articles, photos, etc.). Closed groups are for a very specific group of people and public groups are open to a larger bunch of people. Supporting our presence on social media by “liking,” “sharing,” “commenting,” or “retweeting” is a way members can help us become increasingly visible.

Here are links to where you can find us:

The SHJ’s official page is Society for Humanistic Judaism - with over 2500 “fans,” about 1900 of those in the U.S. The number of “reached” people is even higher!

The other SHJ page is HuJews – National Youth Organization for Humanistic Judaism - which is the teen and college program of the movement and has over 19,000 page “likes.”

The various closed groups of the SHJ are: SHJ Affiliate Leaders Group, SHJ Board of Directors, HuJews! and SHJ4Kids. The names indicate whom these are for and who should belong to them. If you are not a member of a group and think that you should be, you can search, find and request to join.

The SHJ’s Public Group on Facebook is now called Humanistic Judaism Discussion. This group is open to members of the SHJ, members of SHJ communities and anyone interested in Secular Humanistic Judaism: Judaism Beyond God. It now has 130 members from the U.S., Canada, U.K., Europe and more. SHJ members who are part of this discussion group try to create a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers who have their own journeys in Judaism to share and who ask questions about Secular Humanistic Judaism.

Because different people like and use different social media, and different social media appeal to different demographics, the SHJ’s toolbox goes beyond Facebook. SHJ is on Twitter (@humanisticjews and @paulgolin), Pinterest (Society for Humanistic Judaism) and You Tube (youtube.com/user/societyforhj).

With more active volunteer help, there are hopes to expand in the future into Instagram, a blog, and podcasts.

Arthur Liebhauer

Calling All Social Media Volunteers! Contact info@shj.org!
Editor’s Note: One outcome of the Society for Humanistic Judaism’s presence on social media has been the gathering in of new, or relatively new Humanistic Jews of choice. The interactions by members of the Facebook discussion group are generally stimulating and heartening. This has been a happy way to welcome new people, answer their questions, and draw them into our tent. Here are the personal stories of four such new and not-so-new members, our SHJ president, Richard Logan, Dustin Hausner, Will Melnyk, and Jeff Lipkes. Will and Jeff are currently organizing new communities.

**RICHARD: MY JOURNEY WITH JUDAISM**

When I was a kid, there were three close adults in my life, my parents and our roomer Dr. David Laband, physician at the Dannemora NY prison. This Jewish doctor was a hero of the Japanese occupation of Singapore, having saved the lives of hundreds.

I remember my parents never abided anti-Semitism and my Methodist minister father always preached that Judaism was foundational, not oppositional, to Christianity. He also brought Rabbi Max Wall to church camp every summer, and I learned about Torah.

In my senior year we moved. Fortuitously, our Lit teacher was Mr. Silverman on sabbatical from Horace Mann. He made that year *The Dead Poets’ Society* and taught us to think large and aim high. We read *Catcher in the Rye* (over town opposition), and drove to seek J.D. Salinger – unsuccessfully – in New Hampshire.

In my freshman year at Harvard in 1960 the most interesting students were red diaper Jewish fellows from Stuyvesant High School. Their radical politics alone were an education. I roomed with them until graduation and met activists like Chomsky, Joan Baez, Todd Gitlin, and I. F. Stone … and Jewish girls.

My roommates taught me how deeply valued education and verbal intelligence are in Jewish life, and I learned to respect Jewish intellectual culture from exceptional professors like Erik Erikson, George Wald, and Jerome Bruner.

At the University of Chicago doctoral program in Human Development the chair was gerontology pioneer Bernice Neugarten. My first major professor was the brilliant Lawrence Kohlberg of moral development fame. (Kohlberg had helped ferry Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine.) My next major professor was anthropologist Robert LeVine. I also took a seminar in psychoanalysis from the intimidating Bruno Bettelheim, concentration camp survivor. The subject of the day often became being psychoanalyzed on the spot if you made a slip of the tongue.

At the U of C I also met my wife Carol – talented, beautiful … Jewish. Thanks to her Chicago relatives I learned the marvels of the Jewish table.

Next, thanks to Bob LeVine, I was teaching at the University of Nairobi. Carol and I went to a few services at the synagogue next to campus – High Holidays of course.

Then came teaching at Vassar, where my mentor was child development authority L. Joseph Stone.

UW-Green Bay followed, where we joined the Conservative temple with some of my colleagues and studied Judaism with Rabbi Vineburg.

On one return research trip to Nairobi I worked with NGO giant Erica Mann who had fled Nazi Romania. She had founded many women’s cooperatives and embodied *tikkun olam*.

Most who touched my life were secular, like my Marxist roommates, and I had seen many secular Jews at the front for justice. A secular humanist all my adult life, when I experienced the smart and caring people of an SHJ congregation, it was natural to affirm that I was a Humanistic Jew. Today, Humanistic Judaism embodies what I find worthy, and I hope that I am helping carry on the legacy of many good people.

*Richard D. Logan*
WILL: A LIFE JOURNEY INTO HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

How do I describe a lifelong journey that was for so much of the time unknown to me?

I am 70 years old, and a former priest in the Episcopal Church. But my journey toward Judaism began when I was in high school in New York. My closest friends were Jewish, and I became, without intention, a part of their family experience.

Years later, studying for ordination, I immersed myself in the Hebrew language and Scriptures. A professor proclaimed his job was to turn us all into "convinced Jews," and with me he nearly succeeded. (Thirty-eight years later, posthumously, he has succeeded.)

In 1996 I helped lead a pilgrimage from our parish church to Israel. The land took possession of me. This was intensified by a personal trip to Hebron, to see the Tombs of the Ancestors and the Oak of Abraham. Upon return I talked with a Rabbi about conversion, but did not follow up at that time.

I am a violin student; my teacher is a Czech Jew. The violin I play now was played in 1945 in the Carpathians by her relative who survived Terezin and Auschwitz. He gave it to her before he died. Playing this violin is deeply meaningful to me. It has opened up pathways into my being through which so much of my past experience began to flow in.

I am now writing my third novel, which will trace the journey of this violin from its making though the pogroms in Czechoslovakia, the concentration camps of Terezin and Auschwitz, to the western Carpathians at the war’s end. As I studied the history of this time, I was drawn more and more into a sense of identity with the Jewish people. I realized I must write as a Jew. I realized I am a Jew. I have since discovered that a great great grandmother on my father’s side was a Polish Jew in Galicia. That was a joyful discovery, though in a sense it hardly matters for my Jewish identity.

I no longer subscribe to the doctrines and beliefs of any theistic religion. A deep reverence for the natural world and the human condition seems to me to be a profound faith in itself. Humanistic Judaism has given me a home in which to honor my journey.

Will Melnyk

DUSTIN: HUMANISTIC JUDAISM FOR THE ACTIVIST

I grew up in a Conservative Jewish family environment. Throughout my life I always identified as Jewish, but always felt disconnected because of my Dyslexia and being Agnostic.

For most of my life I have focused my energy on community involvement and actions to benefit all people. Over the years I have been involved in leadership roles in multiple organizations focusing on history, politics, government, Disability rights, LGBTQ rights, and a variety of other subjects. There was always a part of me that wanted to feel more connected to my Judaism, but due to the differences in my beliefs and the teachings I felt a disconnect. I explored many religions and ideologies to see which worked for me.

In the last few years I have learned about the Society for Humanistic Judaism and felt for the first time that I can be an Agnostic Jew and that would be acceptable. In recent years I have become more connected to and supporting Jewish causes. I have worked in a Holocaust Museum, been on Birthright, and interned at J Street.

I am getting involved in the Society for Humanistic Judaism because I think it has the potential to be a voice for a strong and diverse community of Jews who have not been able to speak out before. The Society for Humanistic Judaism is a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting community that will continue to help others and be a force for positive action to benefit all people.

Dustin Hausner
My path to Humanistic Judaism was circuitous, but also, in a sense, circular. I grew up in LA and was sent as a child to Sholem Sunday school, still in existence and affiliated with Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations. But the teaching was uninspiring, though I enjoyed the songs, and I was not exposed to the principles expressed with pungency and wit by Sherwin Wine. So my Jewish identity was precarious.

My elementary school was 95% Jewish, and I remember being embarrassed that my mother gave me regular “hametz” sandwiches during Passover. I ate them quickly in the company of Willie Wong before ambling over to my Jewish friends holding aloft the symbolic matzo that my mother also included in the lunch bag.

A more satisfying exposure to Judaism came from a summer camp run by Wilshire Boulevard Temple, the major Reform congregation in L.A.—called Wilshire Boulevard Church by the kids from Conservative homes. But my flirtation with Classical Reform Judaism didn’t last. I liked the organ, but was turned off by the rabbi, Edgar Magnin, “rabbi to the stars” and the rabbi at Nixon’s inaugurals, and I didn’t protest when I was sent the next year to the secular JCA summer camp. Here the lesson from Sholem School was reinforced: to be a good Jew, you just needed to be a Liberal Democrat.

In college and after, I drifted away from Judaism. I was barely aware that I felt closest to other Jews, and remember being surprised when a friend pointed out that our entire cohort of grad students in the history department at Princeton was Jewish. Nor, until very recently, did I think twice about the fact that the majority of Mill scholars—I wrote my dissertation and first book on John Stuart Mill—were Jewish. Mill is probably the most “Jewish” British political economist and philosopher.

So I remained unaffiliated and never gave a passing thought even to attending High Holiday services.

Two things changed. My wife and I accepted jobs at USF in Tampa and moved to a suburb where there were no Jews. My department was just as goyish—I had no Jewish colleagues. At some point I began to miss the company of Jews.

At the same time, I was disturbed by the rising tide of antisemitism, and abandoned a book I was working on in order to write about the books that have influenced anti-Semitic intellectuals. In the course of my reading, I came across an essay by Rabbi Adam Chalom which dispassionately explained Humanistic Judaism. A light bulb went on. I then read Rabbi Wine’s Judaism Beyond God, and a second did. This is what I believed. I ventured out to the SHJ website, joined the Sarasota community, and have begun one in Tampa. I’d found a spiritual home.

Jeff Lipkes
Expressing Gratitude

As I was reflecting on the topic for this issue of Humanorah, the word that continually presented itself to me was “gratitude.” Secular Humanistic Jews, and all secular people, often wonder to whom we might direct this gratitude. This has never been an issue for me and since I am clearly rooted in this world, it seems obvious that my gratitude is expressed to the people around me.

Beginning shortly after the election, SHJ began to receive an increase in requests about our organization and the existence of local communities. Individuals were seeking community who had not felt the need for it just a few days before. On Saturday, November 12, I received the following email: “Rabbi Jerris, Particularly after the election on Tuesday when a man who... was elected president, I want to get more involved in Jewish life again despite being nontheistic. It is frightening and myself and others I think having a community would be helpful. I would be proud to be the contact person... and get our community going.” Adam D.

I realize how lucky I am to have such a strong tie to a community of people who supports many of my ideas and vision of how to live a good and morally valid life without a god. I share this sentiment of gratitude with all of you who do so much to make Secular Humanistic Judaism meaningful and available in more than twenty-five communities in North America. In addition to our existing communities, we are now listing new communities in formation. We are ready to assist others in creating a presence where we do not currently have a community. Please contact, me, Rabbi Miriam Jerris, and I will help you.

Publicly expressing gratitude is one of the most powerful things that humans can do to show appreciation. Each year the Society for Humanistic Judaism acknowledges a member or members of SHJ who have made a significant contribution to Humanistic Judaism and the Society through the presentation of the Sherwin T. Wine Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2016, we honored, Dana and Rick Naimark, founders of Or Adam Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Phoenix, Arizona. I am profoundly grateful to Sherwin Wine and the founders of Humanistic Judaism for bringing me such a gratifying way to contextualize my life.

By Rabbi Miriam Jerris

Dana and Rick Naimark: Modeling Our Judaism

Dana and Rick Naimark, the 2016 recipients of the Sherwin T. Wine Lifetime Achievement Award, co-founded Or Adam Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Phoenix, Arizona.

At Or Adam, Rick was the principal of the Sunlight School and led, played piano and sang in the choir to name a few, while Dana chaired the Membership Committee, mentored many Bar and Bat Mitzvah students and served and continues to serve as a holiday and life cycle ceremonialist.

In addition to contributing in many ways to Or Adam, Dana and Rick were both presidents of the Society for Humanistic Judaism in the early and mid1990’s. They model activism and self-reliance, both strong values in Humanistic Judaism.

Jeffrey Schesnol, the current spiritual leader of the congregation shared the congregation’s excitement, “Or Adam is honored that our founders have been recognized by the Society for their immeasurable contributions.”

The Naimarks are the twelfth recipients of the award, created by Bert Steinberg, former president of both Kol Hadash, Northern California community and the Society in honor of Rabbi Wine.
Sometimes in the rush to get things done, important people are not mentioned. We all know who those people are, but we need at times to be really sure everyone knows who they are.

If, as you read this you think this person is very special, you would be right.

As we enjoy the programs at the services, the speakers, guests and related programs we have to remember there is a person who has been a committee of one this year, not by choice but rather due to unforeseen circumstances.

That person has been responsible for doing all the calling to acquire the person or persons for the programs, setting up dates and times, redoing dates and times because life often gets in the way and things change.

That person also has to be sure we have the equipment needed in the sanctuary for the person to speak or show a presentation, not always an easy task.

That person also has to write up the advertisement that goes out and often is not printed, who knows why? That person then has to find other ways to get the information out to the community at large, very often in creative ways.

The programs have been excellent, presenters well prepared and all of everything done has been well received and enjoyed by our congregation and many guests. Our time has not been wasted when we leave.

This willing volunteer has been a member of CHJ for many years, served on the board as well as being president. She has always worn many hats and looks good in all of them. She is not shy to say when something is just not working, she makes sure we are represented at many of the various functions around town and is always looking for new members.

Drum Roll … the one and only: Arlene Pearlman

Thank you, Thank you Arlene for all you do, for all of us.

\[\text{Arlene Pearlman} \]

\[\text{Alice D'Souza President CHJ Sarasota}\]

---

**NEWS FROM CHJ, FAIRFIELD CT**

\[\text{Attendees at our annual retreat}\]

\[\text{Sunday School Sukkot celebration}\]

\[\text{Lighting Hanukkah Candles at Sunday School}\]
Thank You for Thinking of SHJ

In memory of Julius Abrams
From Anita Willens

To Carol and Fred Fletcher
In Honor of Carol’s 75th Birthday and their 55th Anniversary
From Bob & Aviva Sandler

To Marion Phillips
In memory of her mother Anne Kahn
From Bob & Aviva Sandler

To Bonnie Axelrod
In memory of her husband, Marv
From Rabbi Miriam Jerris

To Greg Epstein & Jackie Pitch
Mazel Tov on the birth of your beautiful son, Axel Bertrand
With love, Miriam Jerris

To Leslie Bash
In memory of Norman Bash
From Bob & Aviva Sandler

To Diane Laurence
In Honor of her Bat Mitzvah
From Daniel Schooling

To Elyse Pivnick and to Billie Pivnick
In memory of Ben Pivnick
From Adam Chalom

To the staff and Board of the SHJ
In honor of the fabulous staff and board of the SHJ for a terrific year.
Congratulations and thanks for all your hard work.
From Faith Oremland

To: SHJ
In memory of David Steiner
From Helene & Michael Udell

To SHJ
Tribute to Paul Golin
From Jamie Allen Black

To Carol Logan
For a speedy recovery
From Miriam Jerris and Steve Stawicki

To Mauer Family
In Memory of Mildred Mauer
From Irwin & Norma Brewster

To Jeanette Katzman
In memory of Barney Katzman
From Gary M. Vandeputte

These Tributes Support Humanistic Judaism and Remember Loved Ones.
SHJ Tributes for every occasion Provide the programs we need.

To make a tribute gift to SHJ, click here.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 21-23, 2017
SHJ Board Meeting, Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: info@shj.org

May 5-7, 2017
Executive Director, Paul Golin, visits Kol Shalom Community for Humanistic Judaism, Portland, OR. Contact: Debi Adler Strode

May 21, 2017
Executive Director, Paul Golin, speaks at The City Congregation, New York, NY. Contact Amy Stein

June 8-11, 2017
American Humanist Association Conference 2017, Embassy Suites Charleston Airport Hotel & Convention Center, Charleston, SC. For details click here.

June 9-11, 2017
Rabbi Adam Chalom presents “Jews & the Muslim World”, IISHJ weekend seminar at Oraynu Congregation, Toronto, ON Canada. Contact IISHJ

August 24-27, 2017
Executive Director, Paul Golin, visits Beth Ami, Colorado Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Contact Sheila Malcolm

HOLIDAYS—5777 - 5778 / 2017

(Beginning in the evening)
Passover: April 10
Yom HaShoa: April 23
Yom HaAtsmaut: May 1
Lag B’Omer: May 13
Shavuot: May 30
Rosh Hashana: Sept 28
Yom Kippur: Sept 29
Sukkot: October 4
Hanukkah: December 12