



The JSC Newsletter

Newsletter of the Cleveland Jewish Secular Community

www.jewishsecularcommunity.org

March 2016/5776

Editor: Allen Guth

Copy Editor: Nora Kancelbaum

Photographer: Audrey Halpern **Contributors:** Mark Weber, Don Sayre, Rifke Feinstein, Lori Berenson

Upcoming Events

Thur., Mar. 10 – Discussion Group, pg. 2

Sun., Mar. 13 – Board Meeting

Fri., Mar. 18 – Purim Celebration, pg. 1

Sun., Mar. 20 – Social Outing, pg. 2

2015-2016 Shabbat Programs Schedule Announced

March 18: Purim Celebration and Program

April 15: Speaker: Sean Martin

May 20: Speaker: Alanna Cooper

Purim / Shabbat Dinner and Program Friday, Mar. 18, 2016

First Unitarian Church, 21600 Shaker Blvd. E.

**Topic: Arts Education: Changing Lives,
Creating Futures.**

**Speaker: Marsha Dobrzynski, Executive
Director of the Center for Arts-Inspired
Learning (CAL) and Founder, Cleveland High
School for Digital Arts**

**A pioneer of arts education in Northeast Ohio,
Ms. Dobrzynski's CAL program provides more
than 5,000 arts-in-education programs for**

**185,000 young people in 190 schools
across the region. The digital arts high
school, a first in this area, offers a
college-prep curriculum in a digitally
equipped design school in downtown.**

**Meet and mingle: 6:15 pm (note earlier
start time)**

**Shabbat Program & Purim celebration: 6:30
pm**

Potluck Dinner: 7:00 pm

Speaker: 8:00 - 9:00 pm

**Don't forget to dress up for Purim and bring
your groggers (in Styrofoam containers, of
course!). There will be a brief Megillah
reading and a contest for most creative
grogger and best costume.**

RSVP by Wednesday, March 16 to Karen
Tucker by clicking on this link,
karenltus@yahoo.com, or calling 440-227-
4164 and leaving a message. **Please do
not use the reply button to RSVP for
events.** We will be using a check-in list at all
Shabbat programs. Please let her know if
you plan to bring any guests. **New guest
policy:** First-time guests may attend
Shabbat three times without being asked to
bring a potluck dish or pay a fee.

**Last names A-R and T-Z bring a side dish
for 10. Last names Sh-Sz, bring dessert for
10. Bring a list of ingredients and pre-cut the
dish, if possible. The community will provide
chicken, challah, drinks and all serving
utensils. Please label your serving dish or
bowl with your name and phone number
to avoid any mix-ups or in case you
accidentally leave it behind.**

The Discussion Continues: Part II

The Jewish Secular Community Discussion Group will meet on **March 10th, 7:00-8:45 pm** at the **Beachwood Library**, 25501 Shaker Blvd., Beachwood, OH. The topic for that meeting will be "Explaining the Philosophy of Humanistic Judaism."

The discussion will concentrate on the views of Yaakov Malkin as expressed in his lectures and book, "Epicurus and Apikorsim: The Influence of the Greek Epicurus and Jewish Apikorsim on Judaism." He maintains that Judaism is the only national culture that has adopted the name of this Greek philosopher, using it as a term designating Jews who believe in freedom to choose their way of life, without obligation to obey religious "Mitzvot." Today most Jews live as "Apikorsim." The heresy implicit in the denial of the existence of a personal God includes a denial of belief in life after death.

The discussion group is open to the public and welcomes all who are interested. For further information, contact Ken Weiss [\(216\) 577-5894](tel:2165775894).

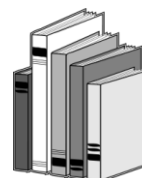
Social Scene

Mark your calendar for Sunday, March 20, 2:30 PM matinee. That's when your Social Committee is planning an outing to Dobama Theater in Cleveland Heights to see "The Revisionist," the regional premier of a play by Jesse Eisenberg that examines the relationship between a 75-year-old Polish resident and her young cousin from America. It's about establishing a relationship between two people from two different worlds. And it stars the remarkable Dorothy Silver, followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

It's not too early to make your reservations. **\$18.00 ea.** Contact Barbara Smith at (440)-442-5380 or sbarmar@att.net.

Make your check payable to: Jewish Secular Community, and send to Barb Smith, 140 Fox Hollow Drive, #206, Mayfield Heights, OH 44124

The Bookshelf



SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NOVELS OF ALICE HOFFMAN

Recently, I became reacquainted with the novels of writer Alice Hoffman (b. 1952). Up until now, I had never considered her a Jewish writer. However, her last three novels explore Jewish life and Jewish themes. These novels are: *The Museum of Extraordinary Things* (2011), *The Dove Keepers* (2011), and *A Marriage of Opposites* (2014). While I enjoyed all three of these novels, I will focus only on the last of the three mentioned above.

In *A Marriage of Opposites*, Hoffman offers us a story of a small community of refugee Jews living on the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean Sea. They arrived to escape the Inquisition and stayed to build a life there at a time when the island was under Danish control and thus offered to the Jews at least some acceptance and tolerance.

In 1795, Rachel Monsanto Pomie Petit Pizarro was born. She was the daughter of Moses Monsanto Pomie, a prominent merchant of the island. Rachel was a strong and rebellious girl who was married off to a middle-aged widower, Isaac Petit, a wealthy merchant with children of his own. Rachel became not only a wife but also an instant mother of three children.

Following the death of Petit, Rachel scandalized the small tight-knit Jewish community by marrying Frederic Pizarro, a French Jew who came to the island in 1825. Pizarro was both seven years younger than Rachel as well as distantly related to her. As a result, their union was forbidden by the local Jewish authorities and the couple and their growing family were shunned by the Jewish community. The youngest son of the couple was Jacob Pizarro who baffled his parents and siblings by showing no interest in or aptitude for the growing family

business on the island. Instead he could almost always be found painting or sketching the lush natural environment on the island. Jacob persuaded his mother and father to let him study in Paris.

This shy, nervous young man soon went by his middle name, Camille. Freed from the confining atmosphere of the island, in Paris he developed into a gifted painter and as Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) became one of the founders of modern Impressionism as well as a father figure to the four great Post-Impressionists, Georges Seurat, Paul Cezanne, Vincent Van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin. Pissarro was an out-spoken defender of Captain Alfred Dreyfus who was convicted of the trumped-up charges of treason and banished to Devil's Island. I recommend all three of these novels by a gifted writer, Alice Hoffman.

– Mark Weber

On Being a Jew

I am very proud to be a Jew:
Who knew?
I don't believe in god;
Many would consider that odd.

But we are a people with an ancient history,
And there are portions that remain a mystery.
My take is that this and our traditions are the essence:
It even makes the Sabbath more special and pleasant.

Ultra religious Jews can argue for days
About a passage in the Torah
Or one found in the Mishnah and Gomorrah
This is of little relevance to me,
But these men are my ancestors, you see.

Traditions tie me to our historic people,
Like lox and cream cheese on a bagel.
Too pedestrian you say to be of consequence,
But I proclaim it central to what makes sense.

The contemporary world has so many issues
That one could cry enough to empty a box of tissues.
But my belief is that the acts we commit
Is the Judaism into which I fit.

What we do for our fellow humans
Is the strength of all which is spiritual and holy.
To me mumbo-jumbo is what comprises the rest,
A mishmash with so many words that don't stand my test.

When Hillel was asked to sum up the Torah
While standing on one foot, he proclaimed
"What is hateful unto you, do not do unto others."
Now I can go with that, my beliefs it covers.

A secular Jew is what I'll always be,
As the Star of David around my neck
Proclaims to any who can see.
I'll keep my faith in this way and continue to grow;
In this the seeds of true holiness can be found, I know!

– Don Sayre

Teaching What I Love

A few years back, I was, more or less, talked into leading a Yiddish class by a former member of JSC, Sondra Jacobs. A number of people from JSC would gather in my living room, once a month, and we would read transliterated Yiddish stories. We laughed, we joked and told more stories. It was great fun. And then, my good friend and neighbor Sherry Sperling convinced both me and her rabbi that I should teach a class in Yiddish at Temple Emanuel. Rabbi Denker and I had, on the few occasions we had met, spoken Yiddish to each other, so he knew I knew the language well. Sherry and Rabbi Denker prevailed, and I started, a year and a half ago, teaching Yiddish at the temple.

I've been a teacher my whole adult life and have spoken Yiddish since childhood, so it was a good fit. Little did I know how wonderful it would make me feel! Sandra Arndt, a close friend who is a volunteer at Menorah Park's library, found some wonderful lessons for me to teach and that, along with other Yiddish resources I have, made the lessons fun and interesting. There are some members of the class who cannot remember having heard Yiddish spoken in their lives and yet, today, they are reading with understanding.

Then, one day, Karen Tucker of JSC approached me to be a Yiddish leader where her in-laws, Greg Malkin's parents, live at Myers Apartments. And that opened up the opportunity for me to meet another group of exciting and interesting people. I now lead the class at Myers every other Wednesday and teach the class at TEE (as Temple Emanuel is affectionately known) every Thursday. I leave each class on a high, having met wonderful people and having spoken the language I love. I am a lucky woman!

– Rifke Feinstein

Magna Carta: The Birth of Liberty

Last year marked the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, a document that espouses the principals and ideals of liberty that have reverberated down through the centuries, and that can be found in our own Bill of Rights and in the halls of the English Parliament.

What eventually became what we know as the Magna Carta had an inauspicious beginning, writes Dan Jones, a professor of history at Cambridge University, author of *Magna Carta: The Birth of Liberty*, and recently interviewed on C-Span.

The historical document began as a series of agreements and peace treaties between King John and his barons who rebelled against the king's property and inheritance taxes, as well as taxes imposed upon them to support a costly war with France that England lost giving up land that it controlled.

John was not a great king. On the contrary, he has been described by historians as cruel, cowardly, untrustworthy, corrupt and ineffectual. Yet, King John is linked to one of history's great and most influential documents. The barons forced his hand to comply with their demands and unwittingly changed the course of history.

Why is the Magna Carta so relevant today?

It held that:

- "No free man shall be taken or imprisoned, nor exiled, nor detained, except by the legal judgement of his peers." This law was a forerunner of the due process clause of the Constitution.
- Widows have rights to their inheritance and can retain their homes.
- The king has to consult the people prior to the levying of taxes.
- The king must enforce the laws, otherwise risk civil war.

These ideas are as relevant today as they were when they were promulgated in 1215. The

leaders of China are well aware of the power of the Magna Carta. A duplicate of this document was supposed to be on display this year at Beijing University. Instead, this symbol of liberty and freedom has been relegated for viewing in the home of a government official. The Magna Carta *will* prevail.

- Allen Guth

Jottings

Toronto will host the CSJO 2016 Annual Conference to be held over the U.S.

Memorial Day weekend, **Fri-Mon, May 27-30, 2016**. The site will be Glendon College, 2275 Bayview Ave, Toronto, ON M4N 3M6, Canada (www.glendon.yorku.ca). The theme of the conference is "Our Tradition of Solidarity."

We have many interesting and erudite members in our organization; therefore, the Conference Committee asks you to please consider presenting a workshop at the conference. Contact Sarah Waslow-Washington, sarahwaswas3987@gmail.com if you have questions.

* * *

*The following letter from **Nora Kancelbaum** was published last month in the Cleveland Jewish News:*

Your Jan. 8 article on Jewish attitudes on guns had a deceptive title: "Obama's tough talk on guns divides area Jews." The article itself contained only two interviews, one with Susan Reis of the National Council of Jewish Women, who is working toward more sensible gun laws, and the other with Kenneth Kabb, who called this effort "political theater." I don't believe that two interviews with two differing opinions constitute dividing area Jews. You'd need to do a bit more research to come to any conclusion on this issue.

* * *

Last month's *Beachwood Buzz* informed its readers of **Marlit Polsky's** 2-month, 5 continent adventure in escaping from Nazi Germany with her family in 1940. It's all described in Marlit's book *America at Last* available from Amazon.

Please fill out the following food identification label and bring it along with your dish. This will allow members to:

- determine whether or not they can or want to eat the food that you brought, due to allergies, sensitivities, or general likes/dislikes
- talk to you about the dish you brought
- thank you if they love the dish you brought
- ask you for the recipe

<p style="text-align: center;">Food Identification</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Name of Food</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Brought by</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gluten Free (contains NO wheat, barley, rye, oats)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian (contains NO animal products)</p> <p>Contains other allergens, including: <input type="checkbox"/> Eggs <input type="checkbox"/> Fish <input type="checkbox"/> Soy <input type="checkbox"/> Shellfish <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Nuts <input type="checkbox"/> Peanuts <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please list carefully as those with allergies can have severe and harmful reactions.</i></p>

– Lori Berenson

The JSC Mission

The Jewish Secular Community, affiliated with the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, is a non-profit cultural and educational organization whose purpose is to:

- ✧ *Encourage Jewish identification in a non-theistic setting that draws inspiration from the traditional Jewish sources and values*
- ✧ *Educate adults in the history, culture, and tenets of Judaism*
- ✧ *Celebrate and observe Jewish holidays and life cycle events*
- ✧ *Contribute to the betterment of our society through social action and volunteerism*
- ✧ *Provide a link to a world-wide community of secular Jews*

JSC Leadership Contacts 2015 - 2016

President

Paula Stone, 440-461-3383*
pmstone118@sbcglobal.net

Vice President

Ken Weiss, 216-991-7926*
kmweiss@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Dorothy Werblow, 216-408-2840*
werblow@aol.com

Secretary

Allen Guth, 216-291-5869*
allenguth@gmail.com

Friday Night Shabbat Programs

Marcia Rosenthal, 440-423-1718*
sunchoke@sbcglobal.net

Bev Feingold, 440-442-3686*
bfeingold@sbcglobal.net

Madrikh

Mark Weber, 440-519-0220
laboraction2000@gmail.com

Holidays

Suzette Cohen, 440-449-1078*
suzettecohen@yahoo.com

Peg Fishman, 440-349-1330*
pegfishman@gmail.com

Jim Mayer, 216-371-9937*
jim.mayer69@gmail.com

Barbara Smith, 440-442-5380*
sbarmar@att.net

John Szucs, 216-932-7118*
Jsuzcs1937@gmail.com

Spike Radway, 216-691-1949
teamspike@mac.com

Christi Carlson, 216-691-1949
christolcarlson@mac.com

Marcia Rosenthal, 440-423-1718
sunchoke@sbcglobal.net

Membership

Elaine Sherman, 440-349-1524*
momsherm@sbcglobal.net

E-mail Postmaster

Scott Radway, 216-691-1949
teamspike@mac.com

Newsletter

Allen Guth, 216-291-5869*
allenguth@gmail.com

Social

Barbara Smith, 440-442-5380*
sbarmar@att.net

Allen Guth, 216-291-5869*
allenguth@gmail.com

Community Service

Sandy Guth, 216-291-5869*
allenguth@gmail.com

Publicity

Sandy Guth, 216-291-5869*
allenguth@gmail.com

Good & Welfare

Debbie Schwab
440-248-3030

*Member of JSC Board of Trustees