

21/64

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR //

Just as the last century's challenges of being Jewish in America bonded us together, will there be something in the 21st century that unites us in our prosperity and unfettered access to America?

In a recent discussion with sociologist Steven M. Cohen, I was reminded that 50 years ago, the American Jewish community had four political goals: to end anti-Semitism in America, to mobilize bipartisan support for Israel, to rescue Jews living in politically dangerous countries, and to foster public acknowledgment of the Holocaust.

To the credit of the community—its institutions and their leaders—much has been accomplished in all four arenas. To the chagrin of the community, we have not yet articulated a collective platform for what's next.

Just as the last century's challenges have bonded us together, will there be something in the 21st century that unites us in our prosperity and unfettered access to America? With a trend toward what de Tocqueville called "American individualism," can there be one silver bullet, or do we need many responses to today's individual needs?

At the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, we never assume we know all the answers to complicated questions of Jewish life. Instead, we support research to make sure we are asking the right questions, and we encourage a myriad of innovative responses because we never know from where the next leading answers will emerge.

In volume 3 of the newsletter, we described our research comparing young Jews to their counterparts in other communities. *OMG! How*

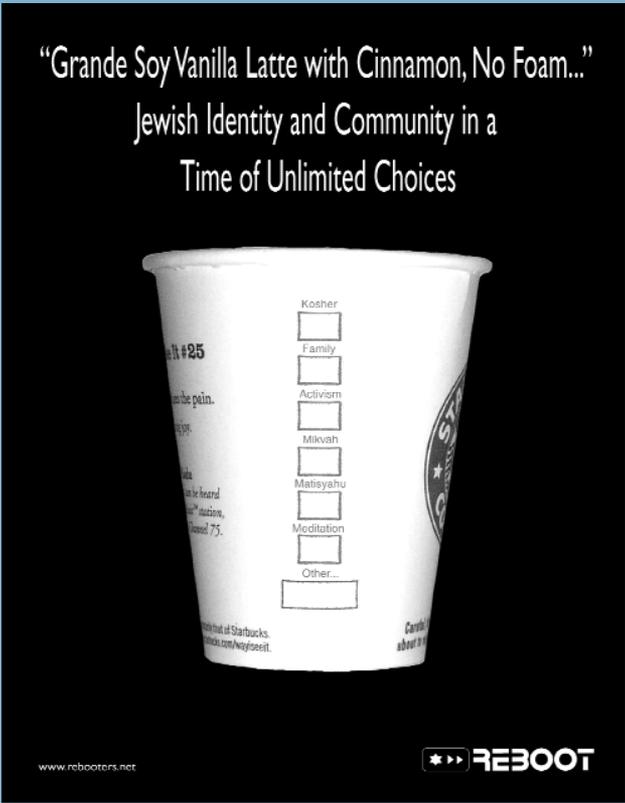
Generation Y is Redefining Religion in the iPod Era compiled research conducted by Anna Greenberg of Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. Greenberg surveyed 1400 youth aged 18-25 from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, African American, Asian American and Latino American backgrounds to examine issues of religious identity, practice and civic engagement in each of these religious and ethnic communities. If you didn't catch it, you can download it from www.rebooters.net.

After this broader look, we then conducted more specific research to see how the newly framed dynamics of Generation Y play out in the Jewish community. In this issue of the newsletter, we highlight the findings of the *Latte* report, his next phase of research conducted in partnership with The Nathan Cummings and Charles H. Revson Foundations. If the complete report on Generation Y Jews would be of interest to you, don't hesitate to e-mail us for a copy. Only by hearing from the next generation will we be prepared to articulate our communal goals for the next century.

Best,



Jeff Solomon



In the book *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*, sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow discusses America’s shifting religious paradigm. He writes: “At the start of the twentieth century... [Americans] were cradle-to-grave members of their particular traditions, and their spirituality prompted them to attend services and to believe in the teachings of their churches and synagogues. Organized religion dominated their experience of spirituality, especially when it was reinforced by ethnic loyalties and when it was expressed in family rituals. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Americans piece together their faith like a patchwork quilt. Spirituality has become a vastly complex quest in which each person seeks in his or her own way.”



THE LATTE REPORT //

The Latte report asks Jews aged 18-25 about their religious identity, religious practice, and involvement in Jewish life.

In new research to be released this winter, Anna Greenberg's conclusions regarding young Jews in America resonate with Wuthnow's analysis. In a follow up study to *OMG!* (released this past May), the *Latte* report asks Jews aged 18-25 about their Jewish identity, involvement in Jewish life, as well as their participation in civic life more broadly.

The findings are based on interviews with a total of 72 young Jews. 35 of these interviews were conducted one-on-one, recruited nationwide through a number of sources. The remaining 37 young Jews were split between six focus groups located in New York, Los Angeles and Atlanta. These group interviews lasted approximately 120 minutes.

WHAT WE HEARD //

Jewish observance, synagogue attendance and holidays are practices followed primarily while growing up or living at home.

The majority of Jews we spoke to are more self-confident regarding their Jewish identity than are the generations before them. These Jews did not grow up amid anti-Semitism, post-War traumas, or working hard to make ends meet. The majority grew up in more prosperous American households than their parents and grandparents and did not experience exclusion based on their religious identity. Therefore, their feelings about their Jewish identity are generally positive, and the memories of their childhoods are filled with Jewish holidays and celebrations at home.

So what happens after leaving home? We heard time and again in the focus groups and one-on-one interviews that Jewish observance, synagogue attendance and holidays are practices followed primarily while growing up and living at home. Once they leave for college, young Jews live in a pluralistic American society where they have mixed friendship networks and other pressures competing for their time and attention. Therefore, their adult lives are defined by their own choices, and getting good grades and holding jobs are often more important than religious observance.

WHAT ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS? //

Most young Jews do not know of the plethora of Jewish institutions available to them or cannot distinguish between the different options.

Given the amount of financial support contributed to Jewish communal organizations, aren't those leaders able to reach young adult Jews?

Unfortunately, we learned that most young Jews do not know of the plethora of Jewish institutions available to them or cannot distinguish between the different options. Furthermore, when they do associate "Jewish community" with something, it evokes the idea of traditional institutions from childhood

such as their synagogues, Jewish youth groups or JCCs. Again, they associate these images with growing up, not with their adult lives.

In some cases, younger Jews actively reject organized Jewish life because they disliked those childhood experiences and found them alienating. Some feel they neither know enough about Judaism to participate nor would find people "like me" in those encounters.



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IS THERE HOPE? //

Can we take what we have learned about this generation and create opportunities for involvement and participation that resonate with them?

While the findings show that the majority of young Jews are not engaged in religious and institutional Jewish life, they are incredibly positive about their Jewish identity and are interested in activities that fit into the social milieu of their adult lives.

For example, young people are talking with other friends, Jewish and not Jewish, about what it means to be Jewish; some are attending classes and subscribing to publications that engage them on an intellectual level about Judaism; some are using online communities to look for Jewish peers; and some are self-organizing Shabbat dinners, holiday celebrations and other rituals to infuse their daily lives with Jewishness.

Knowing what we now do about the lives of young, 21st century Jews, we must ask ourselves: can we take what we have learned about this generation and create opportunities for involvement and participation that resonate with them? Are there informal observances, highly personalized experiences and other

forms of Jewish life that can be inclusive of their multiple identities, busy lives and often non-Jewish friends and partners?

We cannot be dismayed that Jewish life does not look like it did 50 or 100 years ago because our children and grandchildren are the products of our successes in American society. We can, however, help them create a rich Jewish life that celebrates our past and our tradition, yet takes into account their 21st century lives.

THE LATTE REPORT

For a hard copy of the *Latte* report please e-mail info@2164.net or download it from www.rebooters.net.

