

# COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF SEPTEMBER 11

*The field of Jewish community relations has stood as a bulwark of freedom and security for the Jewish community, and for the civil rights and liberties of our society for more than seventy years. How can we respond to the pressing issues of the day, compounded by the aftermath of the horrific events of September 11?*

*Hannah Rosenthal, Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, and Nancy K. Kaufman, all experienced community relations professionals, offer insights and recommendations in the articles that follow.*

## A CALL TO ACTION Social Justice and Jewish Community Relations

HANNAH ROSENTHAL

*Executive Director, Jewish Council on Public Affairs, New York*

Social justice cannot be realized through a single project or an individual program. Promoting social justice requires sustained interest and sustained action. It calls for a proactive approach, a pervasive and contagious energy, and a fundamental recognition that change is inevitable. And to effect change is to embrace chance. Social justice is about influencing the future in ways of which we can be proud.

When a Jewish child is born, the community gathers to celebrate new life, to welcome new life into the Jewish community. And those assembled wish for three things to help that child embark on a Jewish life. For the child we wish *Torah*, *Chupah*, and *Ma'asim Tovim*.

Torah, we tell the child, is learning. Love and cherish education. Know its importance. Understand how critical laws are to the world's order and how religious and secular study help us learn how to improve and repair the world for all generations to come. It is our purpose and our immortality.

After Torah is Chupa. While this term literally means a wedding canopy, it is a symbol of Jewish tradition, Jewish life, and Jewish values. A chupa is a home. Chupa is family. Chupa communicates to us that a strong family is the fundamental building block to any community, religious or secular.

And third, the community wishes for *Ma'asim Tovim*: good deeds. It is a call to action. Jews must do good deeds for others as part of our commitment to Judaism. The Jewish way of life, therefore, is defined by Torah, or study; by Chupa, or strong family and community; and by *Ma'asim Tovim*, deeds that will improve our world.

Torah, Chupa, and *Ma'asim Tovim* define our Jewish way of life. How do we live a truly Jewish life according to these priorities that have guided the Jewish people over thousands of years? How do we integrate these values so they have a positive impact on these troubled times for our community, our country, and our world?

As Leibel Fein (2001) stated so eloquently, pursuit of social justice is fueled not only by our desire to do what is right and good, but it "serves our own internal need as much as it serves the larger purpose of *tikkun olam*. For each time we feed the hungry or clothe the naked, each time we speak truth to power, or comfort the widow or orphan, we breathe life into ancient words that are otherwise meaningless."

Nancy Kaufman affirms these sentiments in her article in this issue, "Recapturing Our Soul: A Vision of Community Relations." Kaufman rightly says that social justice calls

for community relations work at a grassroots level that results both in community building and in the eradication of social and economic injustices. The recent AMOS study entitled "American Jewish Values of Social Justice" makes clear that economic justice is at the core of American Jewish consciousness. Thus, the challenge of community relations is how to unite the national Jewish community's concern for social justice with strategies based on action (Ma'asim Tovim).

Both Kaufman and Rabbi Marla Feldman in her article, "What's In a Name?," describe the unique strength of Jewish community relations councils (JCRCs) as vehicles for social justice within the organized Jewish community. Each local JCRC provides the avenue for intergroup and interreligious relationship building. Each is charged with the task of shaping goals and programs that are effective both now and in the future. All politics are local, as the saying goes. And each JCRC is a working example of that reality. Local outreach efforts to the community at large provide opportunities for Jews to engage in tikkun olam, as well as advocate for Jewish concerns and community well-being.

JCRCs in Detroit and Boston are excellent models. Both organizations have developed literacy projects for disadvantaged people in their communities. These reading and tutoring efforts provide opportunities for volunteer engagement on a regular basis and relationship building with community partners, as well as setting achievable goals of improving an individual's reading and school performance (Torah). But the model community relations strategy does not stop there. The JCRCs also advocate for changes and improvements in the public school system and, in doing so, ensure that the long-term goal of strengthening families and community enhancement (Chupa) retains a prominent position on the Jewish agenda.

These short- and long-term strategies are developed in the community relations field through a series of planning vehicles. The "common table" method provides a forum for debate from which people from diverse backgrounds can identify opportunities for con-

sensus and collaboration on a variety of issues. To complete their role, the JCRCs must move beyond meetings, discussions, and debates to focus on a call for action (Ma'asim Tovim) that strengthens and builds successful communities. Proactive and multi-directional advocacy as a sustained effort is key to community building.

There are numerous excellent examples of effective community relations in the 123 local JCRCs represented by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA). Anti-poverty efforts at the local level, such as programs for the hungry and homeless, provide direct service opportunities to volunteers while enlisting both lay and professional volunteers to do the ongoing work of advocacy at the city councils, county boards, state houses, and the U.S. Congress. Participating in Ma'asim Tovim not only feeds a hungry person but also pushes the community system and/or government to provide food stamps, health care, job training, and other services to strengthen and build the family and to bolster the welfare of the community at large.

#### **NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL**

The community relations field participates in, and even leads, intergroup dialogues and coalitions, finding common ground with groups within and outside of our community. At a time when partnerships and joint statements are falling apart, when public leaders are turning their backs on difficult issues, when people are highlighting group differences rather than similarities, community relations work must intensify. We must forge new dialogues, craft new joint statements, redouble our efforts to collaborate, and establish new ways to build relationships. We cannot allow this unique moment of national unity and patriotism to stop us from asking the tough questions and demanding fairness and justice from the halls of power. We cannot allow fear of others to result in discrimination. We cannot permit our tendency to turn inward for Jewish continuity and renewal to isolate us from the broader community. We cannot let the success of our community relations efforts be gauged by the

amount of dollars raised. We cannot lessen our vigilance in protecting critical civil rights and civil liberties because of the tragedy of September 11 and the subsequent call for national security. We cannot defend or protect our fundamental values by subverting them.

JCRCs throughout America are employing their wisdom and expertise in community building and advocacy. They know how to assemble the diverse members of a community to discuss these difficult and complex issues. They know how to work with governmental bodies to advance social and economic justice. And they know how to bring together talented lay leaders to engage in *tikkun olam* within and outside the Jewish community.

Today, the community relations field is facing profound challenges. While social and economic justice is a key component and shared vision of JCRCs throughout the country, local Jewish communities have an international consciousness as well. Only 15 months ago, our country was aggressively participating in efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East. There was a record federal budget surplus, our economy was booming, and we had full employment across the land. JCRCs were engaged in interreligious activities promoting peace in the Middle East and elsewhere, they were working to create community coalitions, and they were focused on anti-poverty agendas at all levels of governments. With a blink of the eye, the peace process exploded, an international conference created to fight racism elicited unprecedented anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic hatred, the government surplus evaporated, and the economic bubble burst, throwing tens of thousands of people into unemployment lines.

We have entered a crucial era for the community relations field. Never before has the need been so great for the re-building, recalibration, nurturance, and development of competent and sophisticated intergroup relationships. We have not seen our civil rights coalition so frayed and disconnected in over half a century. Since 1948, we have not seen Israel as isolated in the international commu-

nity, and support for our beloved Jewish state seems to carry such a high price by extremists. To repair this fractured reality, community relations leaders are called upon to study (Torah), to build and preserve community and strengthen families (Chupa), and to reach out to those in need here and abroad (*Ma'asim Tovim*).

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) is in a unique position to help with these efforts. It serves as the umbrella for 13 national Jewish organizations, including the three main religious streams, the defense agencies, and women's and men's national groups. JCPA is also the national coordinating group for the 123 local JCRCs in the United States. The JCPA serves as the "common table," promoting consultations and inclusiveness at the national level, and is the primary resource for the community relations field, assisting with the development of consensus positions, promoting best practices on project or program development, and crafting policy decisions. Through its task force structure that includes representatives from the 13 national agencies and from local communities, the JCPA (1) holds public debate (Torah) on short- and long-term issues; (2) calls for intra- and intergroup strategy development to strengthen and build families and strong communities (Chupa); and (3) develops a recommended plan of action (*Ma'asim Tovim*) to engage the entire field and to help communities make priorities.

Since its inception almost 60 years ago, the JCPA has been part of the federation system and has served as the community relations arm of the organized Jewish community. It has gone through several name changes over the years, but its core mission has remained the same: to safeguard the rights of Jews throughout the world and to protect, preserve, and promote a just American society. By virtue of its unique structure of having national and local agencies as equal and independent partners, JCPA has the ability to motivate others to action, to mobilize communities in a coordinated fashion, and to give expression to a strongly united Jewish communal voice. Together the JCPA and the JCRCs—partners at

the local and national level—help define the priorities, the direction, and the future of the organized Jewish community and work toward a time when peace and prosperity will be a reality for our world.

## REFERENCE

Fein, Leonard. (2001, February). *Building a just society: Do we still hear Isaiah's voice?* Washington, DC: JCPA Plenum.



## WHAT'S IN THE NAME? A Case for Community Relations

RABBI MARLA J. FELDMAN

*Assistant Director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit*

When the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC) changed its name to the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), it not only simplified its acronym but also signified a sea change in the field. No longer would community relations define the agency, despite its allegiance to the 123 Jewish community relations councils (JCRCs) under its umbrella. Public affairs became the new mantra, parroting the jargon of other Jewish agencies competing for a voice on the national scene.

This new focus has extended to local communities as well. The Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Detroit, once referred to as "an association of 250 fraternal, religious, social and community relations organizations," now calls itself "the public affairs voice of the Detroit Jewish community," mimicking the national change.

While the terms "community relations" and "public affairs" seem to be used interchangeably these days, they reflect two different approaches to advancing the Jewish community's interests in the public arena. They are not polar opposites, but rather variations on a theme.

In the case of public affairs, the ultimate goal is to influence the development of public matters in a way that benefits the Jewish community, whether in the governmental arena, the media, or within the community at large. Successful outcomes are specific and measur-

able—a bill is passed (or not passed), a court issues a positive ruling, a public official issues a statement, funding is acquired for an agency, a good editorial appears in the local paper, and so on.

The endgame for community relations is to influence the community itself, to create a public arena that is hospitable and secure for Jews and reflects the values we hold. Measuring success is fuzzier and more fluid than for the public affairs model. We may not have stopped a bad bill, but we may have created a network of coalition partners and friends in the community that will continue working together. We may not solve the challenge of poverty, but our social justice programming may generate good publicity, make our non-Jewish neighbors feel good about our role in the community, and provide opportunities for collaborative efforts to advance our values in the public arena. We may not be able to prove that literacy volunteers improve reading levels, but we can be assured that inner-city youth have met and had positive experiences with members of the Jewish community, which we hope will stay with them as they grow into adulthood.

JCRCs around the country combine both the public affairs and the community relations models in their daily operations to varying degrees. Yet, the different priorities that flow from these two perspectives can sometimes be at odds. When this happens, the agency

needs to choose between them and reexamine its priorities. A few examples help clarify this process.

### **INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

How JCRCs addressed the human rights abuses in Afghanistan is a recent example of the difference between the public affairs and community relations models. When the Taliban in Afghanistan issued their edict requiring Hindus to wear identifying clothing, many within the Jewish community immediately felt a need to speak out. For those who saw images of Nazi Germany in the yellow badges forced upon Hindus, there was an anguished, gut-wrenching need to take action, lest we incur the guilt of indifference of past generations. They turned to their community relations professionals for guidance, who in turn sought the advice of colleagues at the JCPA and around the country.

When following the public affairs model, the JCRC professional will identify and act on certain criteria. Can the Jewish community have an impact on public policy in Afghanistan? (No.) Is there a bill in Congress that we can support? (Yes.) Can we influence the international community by generating correspondence to the U.N. or other influentials? (Maybe.) It was on this level that most national Jewish agencies responded to this situation and generated recommendations to the field.

When following the community relations approach, the professional will ask those questions, as well as some additional ones. What is the local Hindu (or Indian) community doing on this issue? How can we communicate our concern and willingness to help to the leadership of the local Hindu community? Who do we know in the local Hindu community who can help explore ways our communities can work collaboratively? If we do not already have relations with this religious group, might this issue become an opportunity for our communities to begin to connect with one another? Given the Muslim extremism expressed by the Taliban, how will working on this issue affect local Muslim-Jewish relations? Is this an opportunity for a larger interfaith, collaborative

approach, such as a joint statement of concern or Op Ed in the local newspaper?

While there may be little likelihood of success on the public affairs agenda, the community relations approach can yield significant benefits. New coalitions and personal relationships may be forged, laying the foundation for future cooperative endeavors. These new acquaintances may become allies on other issues central to the Jewish community's public affairs agenda, such as fighting efforts to Christianize our schools or take away the rights of immigrants.

### **INTRAGROUP RELATIONS**

One of the hottest issues debated in recent years by the JCPA is that of educational vouchers. After a year-long review of the issue, conducted not only at the national level but also around the country in communities like Detroit, the consensus was to maintain the field's prior opposition to vouchers and other mechanisms to divert public funds to private or parochial schools.

Despite the reassertion of the Jewish community's historic position on a classic church-state issue, it was evident that this position was not as clear-cut as once thought. Although clearly a minority view, supporters of vouchers are growing more vocal in their opposition to the mainstream and are challenging the long-standing assumptions about the field's core issues, including church-state issues. As they carve out their own voice within the national arena, they force the majority to prove that a consensus still exists and supports the stated position. This creates an inconvenient and labor-intensive dilemma for the field, which can no longer rely on prior policy statements or assert a position based exclusively on past experience.

From the public affairs perspective, dissenting voices dilute the clarity of the message and undermine efforts to influence the public debate on a given issue. To promote a clear and unambiguous message, public affairs professionals must minimize and isolate dissenting views, convince public officials that there is only one authoritative voice for the Jewish

community, and assert their position with enough certitude and conviction to overwhelm the non-conforming viewpoints. The statement would go something like this: "There may be a few people in the Jewish community who support vouchers, but every survey indicates that the **OVERWHELMING CONSENSUS** in the Jewish community is to oppose schemes to take resources away from public school children to benefit religious groups that can discriminate in their admissions policies."

Advancing the Jewish community's consensus positions in the public arena is an important part of the community relations field, and there is nothing wrong with being vigorous advocates for those positions. However, the intra-communal debate that gives headaches to the public affairs professional also serves as a reminder that we are not a monolithic community. The nuances of domestic public policy issues are subtle and often ambiguous. Consensus may not always be found along the bright lines that make for easy rhetoric: for or against, pro or con, support or oppose.

For the community relations professional concerned about intra-communal relations, the statement of policy is no more important than the process that creates it. Finding consensus is not only about putting words together on paper; it is also about creating space for competing voices to be heard and trusting that communal wisdom will carry the day. While everyone around the communal table may not agree with the outcome, they must all agree that the process was legitimate and fair and that the JCRC can honestly represent the community with the adopted position.

When the issue of vouchers was addressed by the Jewish Community Council of Metro Detroit, it was not an academic debate, but rather was set in the context of a pending state ballot initiative. The process of adopting a position included focus groups with stakeholders, such as day school educators, public school educators, and representatives of other ethnic/religious groups that comprise our traditional coalition partners on such matters. A diverse board of directors, representative of

the community at large, conducted the review, and multiple opinions were heard and considered.

Participants who held the minority view in favor of vouchers acknowledged that the arguments favoring church-state separation would carry the day. They did not expect the public position to reflect their views. However, they urged their fellow board members to link the position opposing vouchers with a statement about the value of day school education and the legitimacy of some governmental support through existing, constitutionally permissible services, such as transportation and secular textbooks.

The proponents of the minority view challenged the majority to give them a voice, despite the inevitable outcome. For the church-state absolutists, this presented a dilemma; they could outvote the minority view, but that would leave bad feelings and dissension in some quarters. For the sake of intra-communal relations, the proposed compromise was eventually adopted, even though it represented a subtle dilution of prior positions.

In the end, the compromise statement generated good will among the diverse group of community leaders, which strengthened the position and garnered greater support in the community at large than it might have otherwise. Rather than being isolated and feeling dismissed as they had in the past, those in the minority felt empowered and fully engaged in the process. More than anything, they were gratified that they could finally vote "yes" for something. These positive feelings have carried forward into other policy debates and increased the credibility of the Council as the "public affairs voice of the Detroit Jewish community" in all its diversity.

This same debate took place at the national level, but with a different result. The compromise proposed by the Detroit Council was adopted at the JCPA Plenum in 1998. Many community relations professionals appreciated the opportunity to expand the consensus position through compromise and satisfy the minority voices within their own JCRCs. The following year, however, this position was

reversed, with most of the 13 national public affairs agencies under JCPA's umbrella leading the charge and outvoting the local communities present. The public affairs agenda, unfiltered by community relations, offered a cleaner, more pure policy position. In this case, however, it also diminished the underlying consensus of the position.

It is interesting to note that in the current debate over President Bush's proposal to fund faith-based initiatives, the JCPA has taken a decidedly different position than most other Jewish public affairs organizations. While most agencies have asserted positions opposing the faith-based initiative on constitutional grounds, there is a minority voice in favor, similar to the voucher debate. Rather than line up with one side or the other, the JCPA has taken the more subtle approach of offering "concerns" about the proposal and engaging in dialogue with the Administration and other faith groups on this issue.

By taking this posture, the JCPA has provided an important forum for divergent views to be expressed by Jewish organizations and supplied valuable information to the field, without dictating what position communities should take. Instead of being just one more public affairs agency with a policy position, the JCPA has asserted itself as a valuable resource to the communities in the field and to government officials. Rather than weaken its public affairs voice, the subtlety of this position increased the JCPA's role in shaping the issue and advanced its place within the Jewish public affairs arena.

#### DOMESTIC POLICY

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks against America, a slew of anti-terrorism legislation has been proposed and passed, including provisions for military tribunals and laws that implicate constitutional standards for search warrants and attorney-client privilege. This creates another situation in which the public affairs approach may be at odds with the community relations model. A similar dynamic existed after the Oklahoma City bombing, which may prove instructive in the

current debate.

In the post-terrorism climate following the Oklahoma City bombing, Congress rushed to pass anti-terrorism legislation designed to reach immigrant operatives who were residing in the United States legally, yet were shielded from arrest by the liberal freedoms found in our Constitution. This legislation was endorsed by most of the national Jewish public affairs agencies, despite civil liberties concerns.

Soon after passage of the new law, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began using "classified information" to deport immigrants, denying access to the evidence by the deportees and their attorneys. When it became known that almost all of the cases involved Arab or Muslim immigrants, a hue and cry arose from civil liberties organizations. Immigration advocates opposed the use (or abuse) of "secret evidence" by the INS, creating such a stir that even presidential candidate Bush made it a platform of his campaign. The local Detroit Coalition for Responsible Immigration Policy, staffed by the Council but comprising over a dozen faith and ethnic groups, joined the chorus.

The Jewish Community Council found itself in the middle. On the one hand, the national Jewish public affairs organizations continued to support the law, asserting that its implementation was faulty, not the law itself. They justified the use of secret evidence as a *de minimis* compromise of our civil liberties, necessary to combat the greater evil of terrorism. Having rallied behind the law initially, the agencies were committed to it and resolved to see it remain intact, lest they diminish their own "tough on terrorism" message to governmental leaders. Anything less was characterized as naive and a danger to the Jewish community's safety.

On the other hand, the civil libertarians among the Council leadership and its immigration coalition partners urged a public stand denouncing the use of classified information as unconstitutional and violative of the civil rights principles endorsed by the Council in the past. In fact, every court that reviewed a deportation case using classified information

ruled in favor of the deportee and against the INS, lending credence to the argument that the law itself was fatally flawed and could never be implemented fairly.

Faced with two mutually exclusive positions, the Council had several options. One option was to support the use of classified information, remaining in line with the national Jewish agencies and dissenting from the position taken by its own coalition. Or, the Council could oppose the use of secret evidence along with its local coalition partners and by so doing, put a chink in the armor of the unified Jewish communal position. Alternatively, the Council could have remained silent on the issue, providing tacit endorsement to both positions by virtue of the divergent stands taken by the various coalitions with which it was associated.

The Jewish Community Council board of directors considered all these options and decided to break ranks with the position espoused by most other Jewish organizations. The civil rights arguments were too compelling to support the use of secret evidence, and the community relations arguments were too compelling to remain silent on the issue. Despite the implications for the public affairs agenda, the leadership of the Council could not in good conscience share the position of their multi-ethnic coalition partners without publicly joining them in speaking out.

In reality, the position taken by the Jewish Community Council probably had very little impact on the public affairs agenda itself. Some legislators may have had a little more cover to take a position contrary to the national Jewish agencies, but it is not likely that the Council's statement had a significant impact on any decision-maker's position. The national Jewish agencies were not seriously undermined by the Council's defection, and the impact of the Detroit immigration coalition's policy was not suddenly elevated by virtue of the Council's adoption of it.

Nonetheless, the Council's community relations agenda was advanced considerably. To the Latino, Asian, and Eastern European coalition partners, this was another example of

the Council's credibility and sincerity in the civil rights arena. To its coalition partners from the Arab, Muslim, and Chaldean communities, who were painfully aware of the leadership role taken by the Jewish community in passing the anti-terrorism law, the agency's willingness to take a principled stand in defiance of the mainstream was of even greater significance. For them this was evidence that working together and compromise could bear fruit, that there was something to be gained by working together, and that the Jewish community could be trusted as a coalition partner. Several years later, and despite the increased tension resulting from recent events in the Middle East, the Council's position on secret evidence continues to generate gratitude and respect from leaders of the local Arab and Muslim community and has resulted in new opportunities for collaboration.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAME CHANGE

So what does all this mean for the JCPA? It has remained essentially the same organization as it was under the banner of NJCRAC. Yet, by changing its focus from community relations to public affairs, the JCPA has positioned itself as a player in the arena of national Jewish organizations. It is carving out a new niche as a national Jewish agency with a voice of its own in the public arena. Whether this is a good or bad thing remains to be seen.

Unlike other national agencies, the JCPA can lay claim to representing the entire Jewish community by virtue of the breadth of the umbrella it provides, encompassing the diversity of American Jewish life, just as JCRCs do at the local level. Because of its diversity, the JCPA may be able to speak less often than other national entities, but when it does, it does so with more authority and credibility. However, this will only be the case if it is attuned to the nuances and subtleties of the field, if it remains open to the voices of dissent, and if it is willing to change along with the community it represents when necessary.

If the JCPA's public affairs message merely duplicates others in the national arena, then it



has not added much to the field. However, if it continues to play the role it has in the current debate over faith-based initiatives, providing a forum for debate and a resource to the field until there is a clear indication of a consensus position, then it is providing a real service to the community and fulfilling a unique role in the public affairs arena.

There are many local and national Jewish organizations that "do" public affairs, with proficiency in government affairs, media relations, and strategic planning. One need not be in the field long before becoming acquainted with the alphabet-soup of Jewish organizations and their fields of expertise. However, the role the JCPA plays as the primary service provider to community relations agencies around the country is distinctive and critical to the field.

Jewish Community Relations Councils are the only agencies that "do" community rela-

tions, answering to and speaking for their local communities alone. Those working in the field rely on the JCPA to provide community relations know-how, which is not available elsewhere and cannot be learned from a book; the JCPA must be a repository for the combined experience and wisdom of community relations professionals around the country.

Although the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council's acronym "NJCRAC" may have been cumbersome, its name indicated a recognition of community relations as the organization's primary identity. If in its new incarnation, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs abandons or even lessens its role as the Jewish community's authority in community relations, it will have diminished its most significant asset, and that which makes it unique. Only time will tell "what's in the name."



## RECAPTURING OUR SOUL A Vision for Community Relations

NANCY K. KAUFMAN

*Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston*

*Author's Note: This article was completed before the events of September 11. While the "defensive" practice of community relations has reappeared as a necessary part of community relations practice, the basic thesis of this article is more important than ever. If we are to find a hopeful path to lead us out of our despair, then the pursuit of social justice, both locally and globally, has never been more important than it is today. We must provide members of our communities with practical ways to engage in meaningful service and become effective advocates for a better society. Such action must be grounded in serious Jewish learning if it is to have the spiritual and sustainable impact for which so many people are searching. This article presents a model for moving our field in that direction.*

**A**t this, the dawn of the twenty-first century, the entire Jewish communal agenda is being reexamined and refined as part of our evolving search for meaning and connection to community as Jews and as citizens of the world. A plethora of prescriptions are being offered for our future as a Diaspora Jewish

community. In the Winter 2000 edition of this *Journal*, John Ruskey suggests, "In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our third era, we must do more; our challenge is (how) to become catalysts and resources for the creation of compelling Jewish communities that respond to our deepest needs and aspirations."

Dr. Ruskay responds to his own challenge when he suggests that we will only succeed when we do the following:

- respond to the prophetic mandate to seek justice, reaching out to those in need of physical and emotional healing
- work actively to strengthen the bonds between the organized Jewish community and those who are disaffected and disconnected
- reach across the ocean to forge strong personal ties with Jews in other communities
- deepen our connections to our faith and culture

Barry Shrage, President of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston, sounds a similar theme in a series of papers on how to confront the challenges presented as members of our community struggle for meaning and connection in their modern, busy lives: "Our challenge today must include the development of partnerships and networks that create, sustain, strengthen, and re-establish the sense of community and the shared values and common culture that make real communities meaningful, vibrant and viable" (Shrage, 2001).

This idea of building community through partnerships and networks is a familiar one to those of us who work in the field of community relations. It has been a core concept in our fifty-plus years of building coalitions between the Jewish community and the broader community to act on a host of local, national, and international issues. Historically, it has been the vehicle through which we, as an organized Jewish community, engage in political action and advocacy to help realize our biblical mandate of *tikkun olam*, perfecting the world. It is that mandate that we must better operationalize into the practice of Jewish community relations if we hope to remain relevant in the years to come. And it is that focus on perfecting the world that we must fine tune if the community relations field is to remain an effective vehicle for turning that biblical mandate into an agenda for action.

## INTEGRATION OF LEARNING AND DOING (TORAH AND TZEDEK)

The intersection between the biblical and the secular, between Jewish learning and doing, constitutes the first thesis in this article: **In this new age of community relations we must ground our action in learning, and in so doing, we will deepen our connections to each.** Both are essential to building a vibrant Jewish community committed to social justice for all, as many of our great modern-day scholars make clear. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was among the most passionate on this point when he repeatedly reminded us, "Life involves not only the satisfaction of selfish needs, but also the satisfaction of a divine need for human justice and nobility." Rabbi Heschel taught that "a Jew is asked to take a *leap of action* rather than a *leap of thought*... it is in *deeds* that man becomes aware of what his life really is.... The deed is the test, the trial, and the risk. What we perform may seem slight, but the aftermath is immense" (Heschel, 1965). Rabbi Heschel showed us how faith can be integrated with action during the 1960s when he marched with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, and then challenged President Kennedy to display "moral grandeur and spiritual audacity" in redressing racial segregation and inequality.

Barry Shrage (1999) reminds us of Rabbi Heschel's philosophy of life in this passage:

Torah, Jewish learning is the essence of our value system and our ethical tradition.... Without Torah and mitzvot, our communities will be broken. In our acts of kindness and caring for our neighbors, we build community and experience spirituality. In our concern for the poor and defenseless, in our work to repair the world, we experience the presence of God. Without God and spirituality and Torah at the core of our communities, they cannot generate passion and beauty that make community life meaningful and Jewish life possible. But at the same time, without social justice our Jewish learning is empty; our spirituality is barren, our tradition is pointless, and our encounter with God will become meaningless.

For too many years we, as community relations professionals, have too often separated our learning from our doing. Community relations was viewed as the "secular" vehicle for pursuing our values. Jewish learning was something we did in our synagogues, but not as part of our community relations routine practice. Yet, integrating the two makes our learning more relevant and makes our doing more meaningful!

The complementary nature of learning and doing is beautifully explained by Rabbi Arthur Green (1992) as follows:

We need to restore the balance of Torah, worship, and acts of compassion proclaimed by our ancient sages as the three pillars on which the world exists.

Modern Jewish life has seen an unfortunate "division of labor" in the collective efforts of Jewry. Jews most concerned with acts of compassion, especially those who extend these most universally, are often cut off entirely from both study and worship in a Jewish context....

Others in our community are devoted wholly to proper worship, to the punctilious observance of the commandments, so much so that compassion itself can sometimes be forgotten as a value, especially when it comes to extending that compassion to those outside the community of observant Jews.... From a Jewish point of view, there is something deeply disturbing about this separation; it is a rift we need to heal.

Once we acknowledge the importance of integrating learning and doing, our knowledge and understanding of each are enriched, and we can begin that journey of "recapturing our soul." Modern-day community relations is about understanding our particularly Jewish values and putting them into universal action. We come together, as a community, to do God's unfinished work of repairing the world. As Rabbi Jonathan Sachs (2000) teaches us, "The Jewish people were, from the outset, called on to live out the truth that the free God desires the free worship of free human beings.... Freedom is the political transformation that occurs only through personal

transformation.... When Moses led his people out of Egypt, he did more than remove their chains. He taught them and us what it is to stay free: Never take freedom for granted."

Rabbi Sachs goes on to explain that the Exodus was only the prelude to all that follows. The decisive event, he suggests, took place seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt when Moses received the Ten Commandments at the foot of Mt. Sinai. It was then that community relations was truly launched as a communal endeavor, rather than as a matter of individual responsibility. Rabbi Sachs explains, "The difference between revelation to a holy individual and to a nation as a whole is fundamental and defines the unique character of the Jewish project." The revelation at Mount Sinai, he suggests, was a religious moment, but it also was a political event. "At Sinai God made a pact with a people, thus creating covenantal politics.... In Judaism, revelation is political because the Jewish project is not to scale the heavens in search of God but to bring the Divine presence down to earth in the structures of our social life.... And in the transition from Exodus to Sinai, Jewish identity itself is transformed from passive to active" (Sachs, 2000).

It is the responsibility for politics and action that defines the mission for those of us in community relations. It is our role, on behalf of the Jewish community, to build coalitions and relationships with other communities to carry out the covenant we have forged with God to complete His unfinished work in the world. Pursuing social justice is at the core of our mission. The values, texts, and teachings of Judaism give us the power to transform and connect people as part of the community of meaning and purpose for which so many in our midst yearn.

#### COMMUNITY RELATIONS AS A VEHICLE FOR PURSUING JUSTICE

So, to the second thesis: **Community relations is the vehicle for engaging the Jewish community in the work of social justice, not only through traditional political advocacy but also through the engagement of Jews, as Jews,**

**in hands-on social justice work.** This thesis may be a bit more controversial than the first, especially for veteran community relations activists. Earl Raab, one of the legends in community relations and former director of the San Francisco Jewish community relations council, spoke to this very point in a 1977 article in this *Journal*. He wrote, "The main business of community relations is political freedom, not social justice....The pursuit of social justice generally is an imperative for Jews, but it is not the imperative for community relations."

While it is unclear whether Dr. Raab would still maintain this premise, I suggest that the pursuit of social justice in this next century must be a core concern of community relations agencies. Writing almost twenty years later, Raab (1994) seemed to be moving in that direction when he stated, "Jews can only live comfortably in a modern world whose values of responsibility, restraint, justice and order are compatible with their own. And, in that connection, American 'Jewish continuity' will be ill-served if we don't have the agencies which allow Jews, as Jews, to pursue those values in the general society." We know that, traditionally, Jewish community relations groups have understandably focused on defending Jewish interests. We also know that, as Larry Sternberg of Brandeis has put it, our public affairs organizations are the ideal contexts for promoting Jewish values and Jewish commitment to America. They give Jews opportunities to act as Jews on behalf of Jews, consistent with our Jewish values. They also enable us to reinforce the American values that help ensure that our nation continues to protect Jews and others from unnecessary pain and suffering (Sternberg, 1994). Thus, we have the rationale for how Jewish community relations has traditionally been practiced.

But now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we no longer need to be quite so defensive. Today's reality is quite different than it was sixty years ago when the community relations field began. Jews are now welcomed in most colleges, law firms, neighborhoods, clubs, and boardrooms. We have wit-

nessed an increasing number of Jewish elected officials and the nomination of a Jew as Vice-President of the United States of America. We have fewer worries about anti-Semitism from without, but more concern about disengagement from within. We need to turn our reactive, defensive practice of community relations into a proactive approach aimed at making the world better. We need to mobilize our community to combat persistent poverty, improve public education, build affordable housing, and help ensure that all people have the same opportunities that we have enjoyed.

So, what about the warnings sounded by Earl Raab in 1977? Raab maintained that the "precepts" of political freedom more than those of economic justice should be the touchstones for Jewish leaders. In his view political freedom was a matter of restraint: what government cannot do to a person and what government prohibits one person from doing to another. He appropriately concluded that economic justice tends to be a matter not of restraint but of beneficence: what government can and should do *for* a person (Raab, 1977).

Today's situation, however, argues for a different diagnosis and different prescriptions. We now must concern ourselves, as Jews, with the implications that poverty and economic inequality hold for society in general, as well as for us as Jews. For as Raab warned us then, if we are to continue to be relevant as a field, "we cannot afford to be totally detached from the strong consensus social action concerns of the Jewish community (any more than we can afford not to be the community's central social action body on public policy matters related to Israel)" (Raab, 1977).

The recent AMOS study of American Jewish Values of Social Justice makes clear that economic justice is at the core of consciousness for American Jews today. Reducing the gap between rich and poor, raising the minimum wage, expanding funding of poverty programs, and promoting human rights worldwide all scored between 80 and 90 percent as issues that respondents felt were critical Jewish concerns. As Leonard Fein (2001) concludes so eloquently from this data:

American Jews know exactly how central is the pursuit of justice, not only to Judaism, but to their own trajectory as Jews, to their own definition of what it means to be a Jew. Let us be honest. Our pursuit of social justice is fueled not only by our desire to do what is right, but because it also serves our own internal needs as much as it serves the larger purpose of mending this fractured planet. For each time we feed the hungry or clothe the naked, each time we speak truth to power, or comfort the widow and orphan, we breathe life into ancient words that are otherwise rendered meaningless, reduced to self-congratulatory sentiments with no contemporary bite (Fein, 2001).

The central challenge for those of us in community relations is no longer the threat from the outside world, but rather our increasing detachment from the problems of that world because of the errant notion they do not touch us directly. The demographics of our society are rapidly changing, and we are quickly becoming a minority group not only because we are Jewish Americans, but also because we are white Americans. It is our responsibility as Jews and as Americans to engage fully in that society and do all we can to repair it because its fracture affects everyone of us. Or, as Fein reminds us, "The Jewish community has no more urgent interest than the energetic pursuit of its values." Through the active pursuit of social justice we can and will fill in the blank in the invitation Fein wants to send our children: "It is important that the Jews survive in order to... in order to what? In order to survive? Lots of luck when we send out that invitation, see how many RSVP!! Most of us would prefer one that says, 'It is important to survive... in order to help repair this oh so fractured world'" (Fein, 1994). That is an offer we can all accept.

To be effective in that pursuit we must have tools and techniques through which we can build communities committed to social justice. Who better to construct those mechanisms than local community relations councils working on behalf of their federations and through such grassroots structures as synagogues, JCCs, day schools, youth groups, and campus-based Hillels? While our work has tradi-

tionally centered on a public affairs agenda, in cooperation with the national agencies and their local chapters, the focus going forward must be reengaging our largely suburban Jewish community with people and problems that beg for our attention. Succeeding in this endeavor will require mobilizing the Jewish community through its many grassroots gateways and establishing effective partnerships with community-based organizations locally and globally.

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS AS A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNITY-BUILDING

If the importance of integrating learning and doing is clear and the role of community relations agencies in pursuing justice is understood, the next step is to combine those into a strategy that builds strong, vibrant Jewish communities in partnership with community-based organizations. Thus, the third thesis of this article is: **Building communities of justice is an essential role of community relations organizations.** Before discussing techniques for building communities of justice, let us agree on a definition of "community." Robert Bellah offers us one in *Habits of the Heart* (1985):

A community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision-making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community is not quickly formed. It always has a history and so it is also a community of memory.

While the idea of community, if limited to neighbors and friends, is an inadequate basis for meeting our current needs, we want to affirm community as a cultural theme that calls us to wider and wider circles of loyalty, ultimately embracing that universal community of all beings.

Arnold Eisen translates this idea of community into Jewish terms in his 1995 essay, "Reimagining Jewish Community in America." A successful Jewish community, he suggests, "will either speak to actual needs, articulate

obligations which people recognize, provide fulfillment for which people yearn—or it will not elicit their energies or shape their lives.” He concludes, as a result of conversations with Jews across America, that he is not alone “in wanting and needing more abiding connection with others and more ultimate meaning than our society and culture ordinarily provide.” While we all want autonomy and freedom, we also want Jewish community in a broader sense. Eisen (1995) suggests three basic building blocks for the definition and construction of such an ideal Jewish community:

1. It must be local face-to-face, as near as the *re'a* or neighbor whom Leviticus 19 commands me to treat in a manner befitting love.
2. It must also *le'olam*: unbounded by time or space, grounded in the unique Jewish situation that is writ large in the world today as much as ever, and dedicated to a *tikkun* that is commensurably all-embracing.
3. Finally, on each of those levels, the “words” we speak as Jews must conform to the grammar of Jewish life, underlying and flowing from the conversation begun at Sinai. It must be founded on the Torah, that is to say, based on narrative or resulting in *just action*. It must include both study and deed—study as deed, deed as study, both of them arising out of community and reinforcing community. We will be a community defined by our conversation and our activities.

Eisen’s building blocks are an ideal fit with this article’s vision of community relations. It assumes an integration of our mandates to learn and do. It acknowledges our responsibility to go beyond study to engage in actions that reflect our responsibility to the wider community. Thus, we must organize within our Jewish community in order to give voice to our uniquely Jewish values as we interact with our neighbors and coalition partners in the broader community. For it is in the universal arena that the most pressing problems of our times must be grappled with and addressed. As Rabbi

Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1965), founder of the Maimonides School in Boston and a great Orthodox scholar, so thoughtfully reminded us more than thirty years ago:

The modern Jew is entangled in the activities of the Gentile society in numerous ways economically, politically, culturally, and, on some levels socially. We share in the Universal experience. The problems of humanity, war and peace, political stability or anarchy, morality or permissiveness, famine, epidemics, and pollution transcend the boundaries of ethnic groups. A stricken environment, both physical and ideological, can wreak havoc upon all groups.

If we agree that these are issues with which we Jews must grapple, then we must also agree that it is the responsibility of the community relations field to mobilize the Jewish community on behalf of these goals. The challenge is how to make that engagement relevant, manageable, and spiritually rewarding. The next part of this article highlights Boston as a case study of how one community has tackled this challenge.

#### THE BOSTON EXPERIENCE

The model of community relations that has emerged in Boston over the past ten years is firmly grounded in the texts of our Jewish history and uses those traditions as the driving force to assist God in repairing the world. It is a model that was clearly articulated in the 1998 Strategic Plan of Boston’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies’ (CJP): “As diverse as our community is, a set of core beliefs and an action agenda is emerging around which the vast majority of Jews can agree. There is a growing consensus on the importance of developing a Jewish community around the basic values and principles of *Torah*—serious Jewish learning; *chesed*—kindness, caring for Jews here, in Israel and the Diaspora; and *tikkun olam*—social justice for our Jewish people and for all humankind.”

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) has been the Boston federation’s primary vehicle for building a community commit-

ted to justice for all. It is doing this by forging an agenda grounded in serious Jewish learning but that also provides the inspiration for “re-capturing our soul” through social activism. While we have maintained the traditional base that sees community relations as safeguarding the political freedom that lets Jews and others thrive in America, we have added opportunities for Jews to engage, as Jews, in a variety of hands-on projects from Boston to Haifa to Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine. Our premise is simple: that we gain as much as we give when we work as partners with other community-based organizations committed to changing the status quo in the lives of vulnerable people.

Before describing Boston’s particular model, one caveat: So much has been written and spoken about what works in Boston that many readers undoubtedly are tired of hearing it. It is the author’s sincere belief that Boston is not unique, although it is special. To the extent that there is top-level commitment and leadership in place to the principles outlined in this article, Boston offers a model that can be replicated across the country. In fact, aspects of the model already are being implemented and improved on in places as diverse as San Francisco and Los Angeles, Detroit, and Minneapolis. What is unusual about Boston is the comprehensive vision that has infused all parts of the federation system—from resource development to planning and allocations, from Jewish education to social services.

To illustrate the Boston model I use just a few examples from our domestic and international programs. Each shares these characteristics: community building, partnerships within and outside the Jewish community, volunteer engagement, advocacy, and resource development. Each is but a small sampling of the many excellent programs that are engaging people at the grassroots and generating both human and financial resources.

#### **Greater Boston Jewish Coalition for Literacy**

Boston was the first community contacted by Leonard Fein, when he had the idea of mobilizing Jews to help children in grades K–

3 from urban neighborhoods learn how to read. This program, which began in 1996, was the perfect next step in efforts to reengage our largely suburban Jewish community with its inner-city roots. We already had a program called *Tikkun Ha'ir*, repairing our city, that focused on creating partnerships between synagogues and community-based organizations. That program led to the creation of a Tzedek Institute for Synagogues to assist synagogues in broadening their social action efforts to involve more people and provide more meaningful opportunities for action. The Literacy Program let us further expand the number of volunteers engaged in hands-on social action through synagogues and other Jewish organizations. Teams of volunteers were recruited and assigned to specific schools in four nearby urban communities, including Boston.

The literacy program is more than just another opportunity for volunteer participation, as important as that is. It has served not only to do good in terms of the impact it is making on the children and in the schools where tutors volunteer, but it has touched the Jewish souls of the volunteers themselves. In his recently published book, *Home Lands: Portraits of the New Jewish Diaspora*, Larry Tye (2001) chronicles the experience of one volunteer:

She reads to students, has them read to her, and shows that an adult is willing to take the time. Her students are 8 years old and younger; she is 59. They are Black, Haitian or mixed-race kids from the heart of the city; she is the white grandmother from prosperous Weston. She is Jewish, while most of them really knew a Jew before. But “they reacted fabulously to me truly,” she says. “I may be kidding myself but I think that the black and white thing, the Weston-Dorchester divide, disappears when I am working with that child. I am an adult working with a child who thrives on having a one-on-one with an adult.

“I felt like I am engaging in something that is very Jewish by working with these kids. There is something spiritual to me about taking what I’ve always thought of as a Jewish value, and

going out there and doing it.”

The literacy program is not only touching the souls of individual Jews but it is also mobilizing the Jewish community to engage in social justice pursuits not only as individuals but also as part of a larger communal effort. Through this and other programs, Jews in Boston are choosing to be part of the Jewish community while fulfilling their biblical mandate to make the world a better place. Programs such as these let us, as community relations agencies, offer ways for the community to fulfill their yearning for connection and fulfillment. We also know that tutoring a child is just a first step. We must build on that experience by becoming advocates for positive change in public education and programs that support families. As Leonard Fein (2001) reminds us:

Our advocacy agenda is different in style from our agenda as a caring community, but no different in its underlying concern. Those who become engaged in *bikkur cholim* within the congregation are allies of those who labor in the political arena to reform a health care system that leaves 42 million Americans with no health insurance. Those who spend an hour or two a week tutoring young children are confederates of those who find it unacceptable that our nation's schools are crumbling and that our nation's teachers are so radically undervalued.

The literacy program is but one example of the maxim that “if you build it, they will come.” As we enter our fifth year, this project has attracted more than 700 volunteers from age 12 to 82 who are each engaged in meaningful ways.

#### **Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project**

An equally compelling example, from the international arena, is the Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah Project. With help from the National Conference of Soviet Jewry, we set up this partnership just after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Having actively campaigned to allow Jews to choose to leave the Soviet Union, we believed it was our obligation to assist

those who chose to stay. In Dnepropetrovsk there are between 30,000 and 100,000 Jews, depending on who is counting. What matters most is how critical the relationship has been for both communities, and not just for the Jews. As Larry Tye (2001) describes in his recent book, “Most sister-city arrangements involve mostly ceremony, and quickly peter out, but this one between Jewish communities generated a kinship and mutual satisfaction that made it a model in the region and have both sides looking for ways to extend the relationships.... The Boston sister-city effort has had a cascade of effects on Ukraine that go beyond its particulars.”

In the words of our partner there, the chief rabbi of Dnepropetrovsk, “It's the ideal model for a relationship between two countries in the Diaspora. The idea that people from over the ocean care, and come, is unbelievable for people here.” As Tye (2001) goes on to explain, “It is exceptional for people in Boston, too.” Simply put, the Dnepropetrovsk Kehillah project has provided us, in Boston, yet another vehicle to “recapture our soul.”

Our work in Dnepropetrovsk began ten years ago with the shipping of medicines and food, with little if any personal connection. It has grown to include exchanges between children in the Jewish Day School there and children in Hebrew schools and day schools here. Through the Bureau of Jewish Education, we send children to participate in winter camps that let young people develop friendships and learn from one another about their starkly contrasting cultures. In cooperation with Harvard Medical School we established a women's health center that has treated over 10,000 women since it opened in 1987 and a pediatric clinic that has immunized 10,000 children who would otherwise be vulnerable to serious illnesses. In both cases, individuals are served without regard to income or religion. Jewish and non-Jewish doctors from Boston volunteer their time to train medical personnel in Dnepropetrovsk and provide seminars on best practices.

And that is just the beginning. There also are programs for children with special needs,



for homebound elderly, and for poor and vulnerable children and young adults. Each engages people in both communities and generates volunteer energy and resources. "All that attention says something not only about the city in the middle of Ukraine," Tye (2001) writes, "but about the wider relationship between rich and poor communities across the Diaspora."

### **Partnership 2000: Haifa**

What about our historic role with the Jewish state? While we continue to actively advocate on behalf of the state of Israel, our work in Haifa helps us connect directly to people in Israel around such issues of mutual concern as domestic violence, the environment, Arab-Jewish co-existence, and women's empowerment. While the federation is focused on programs in Israel that build Jewish identity, our Community Relations Council pursues initiatives that advocate a mutual social justice agenda. Without our participation, education and social service programs for youth and adults would take place, but without a specifically social justice and advocacy theme.

### **Other Hands-On Social Justice Projects**

That same theme and commitment to reaching out underlie other local and international projects. We recently launched a program that sent Jewish college students to El Salvador to work in villages side by side with local residents. In the words of one student, the program "helped me to see that the world is in greater need of repair than even I imagined and it is my responsibility, as a Jew, to help in its repair." The students received a subsidy and were expected, upon returning to Boston, to take leadership positions in existing social justice activities on campus (in cooperation with Hillel) and in the wider Jewish community. This program is part of a growing partnership with the American Jewish World Service that sends college students and adults to developing countries to learn and do so through a particularly Jewish context in places that few,

if any, Jews have ever been!

In addition to the programs described above, Boston's JCRC has forged partnerships with the Jewish Fund for Justice, SHEFA, the Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, and the Jewish Organizing Initiative. We also are mobilizing the Jewish community to help build thousands of units of low-income housing in urban Boston as part of an interfaith effort sponsored by the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization.

This article does not allow room for a more complete description of the many other program initiatives, all of which follow a similar path. Whether the program is outreach to young adults or teens, synagogues or Hillels, government officials or environmental activists, in each case we educate the community, train lay and professional volunteers, facilitate partnerships, mobilize the grassroots, and provide energy and resources to help maximize the likelihood of measurable outcomes. There are so many excellent partners to affiliate with that there is no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to social justice programming. We consider ourselves at the hub of a network through which many creative and exciting initiatives flow. This network includes local and national agencies with traditional and non-traditional partners as described. This redefined network serves the interests of our JCRC in building bridges between the Jewish community and the general community; at the same time it strengthens the sense of community based on shared values and a common vision of what makes us vibrant and relevant in modern society. None of this would work, of course, without the support of donors, many of whom have been attracted to the federation because of this particular model of community relations/social justice work.

### **The Boston Experience and the Relationship to Donors**

One of the most pleasant surprises has been the extent to which our redefinition as a JCRC and our reinvigorated partnership with our federation have stimulated increased donor interest and commitments. A few brief

vignettes best describe the success of our efforts:

**Example #1:** A couple walks into the 100<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of Boston's Jewish federation and no one recognizes them or greets them except for the JCRC Director. The woman is on the JCRC Board as a representative of a major national Jewish organization. He is President and CEO of a major corporation, but they live in a different federation area and have not been contributors to Boston's campaign. Historically, they have been major givers to another federation, but have lapsed due to lack of cultivation and excitement about the agenda. Both are excited about the new directions Boston is taking in its "Learning, caring and justice" agenda. They particularly care about the "justice" part of the agenda. The JCRC Director introduces them to the Federation's Endowment Director and President.

**Fast Forward:** Same couple, today, are major donors to federation's Community Capital Campaign, targeting \$1 million to the JCRC for social justice work with youth and college students. They are now personally engaged in Jewish study and understand the importance of integrating study and action. They are investing in Jewish education for youth that focuses on the active participation of youth in social justice programs.

**Example #2:** The JCRC Executive Director keeps running into a local community philanthropist at various secular events in the city. He is seriously committed to inner-city economic and social development and makes his gifts through the local community foundation. The JCRC Director has a breakfast meeting with him to outline the JCRC/Federation social justice vision and explore his interest. He is pleasantly surprised that federation cares about social justice and programs in the inner-city. He explains that when he came to Boston, ten years earlier, he called the federation and there was no response. His wife is not Jewish, and they have never been to Israel even though he grew up in an actively Jewish philanthropic family who are

large contributors in New York and Philadelphia. The JCRC Executive Director arranges a meeting with the Federation President.

**Fast Forward:** The individual makes a VIP trip to Israel with his wife and friends arranged by Federation's missions department. He meets and begins study with Doniel Hartman. He begins to target gifts from Community Foundation to JCRC social justice projects and, after several years, makes a gift to Federation's Community Capital Campaign that includes \$250,000 for social justice work of JCRC. He also begins to target funds to a secular/partnership project through JCRC.

**Example #3:** A federation lay leader discussed the federation annual campaign with potential donors who have never given to the federation. The only program that interests them is Literacy. First they become donors to the literacy program and agree to host a house party in cooperation with the federation and JCRC to raise necessary money for the project. They raise enough funds to support the first three years of the program. They develop increased interest in the work of the federation and start to make an annual campaign gift.

**Fast Forward:** They make a substantial gift to the federation's community capital campaign that includes \$175,000 for social justice programs of the JCRC (including but not limited to the literacy program).

These are only a few of the many examples where the work of the JCRC is engaging the interest of potential donors to the federation. In fact, while the JCRC is the only federation agency without a professional development staff, we have been the single most popular agency for targeting funds through the federation's Community Capital Campaign. What this reflects is donor confidence that the JCRC is at the hub of a network designed to advance the social justice agenda of the Jewish community in relation to the broader community. Many donors are discovering that they need not totally separate their Jewish and secular philanthropy, but can creatively inter-

twine them through JCRC social justice programs.

the renaissance agenda of increasing numbers of communities across the country.

### CONNECTION TO NATIONAL UJC/JCPA AGENDA

The model presented here is totally consistent with that expressed in the new UJC mission statement: UJC should “provide the strategic resources, assistance, and direction to help local federations fulfill their individual, regional, and collective responsibilities of *Tikkun Olam*, community building and Jewish renaissance.” It also fits with the model prescribed in the Report of the UJC/JCPA Partner-ship Committee, which states,

UJC should value JCPA and its CRC network, as unique points of entry to the Federation community. Many studies over the last fifteen years have revealed that social justice is an important, if not a primary, form of Jewish identification and engagement for significant numbers of people. Thus, while the “privatization of Judaism” and the focus of Jewish education has been extremely meaningful and renewing to some, many people—including, but not exclusively younger people—feel left behind or not related to by the organized Jewish community. Thus, UJC should value the explicit social justice message of the JCPA and understand this as providing a point of entry in our diverse community. At the same time, JCPA should seek clearer links between Jewish tradition and historical experience and the Jewish community’s involvement in social justice issues and other societal concerns (Gottesman, 2000).

This report provides an important challenge to the JCRC field. It reinforces the experience we have had in Boston as we continue to attract people who have felt left behind or not engaged. It also allows for the possibility of creating new and exciting opportunities for those who are already in, but are looking to reinvigorate their participation in communal life. While it preserves the traditional core of Jewish community relations practice it introduces a new dimension that is consistent with

### CONCLUSION

This article began with a set of theses, presents a successful model from one community that has tested those theses, and concludes with a challenge to the field that we must ramp up our role in community relations as “network manager” for social justice. That role will put us in an increasingly vital, non-competitive relationship with our local federation, synagogues, Hillels, JCCs, social service agencies, and local chapters of national organizations. It is a model that needs the support of the national structure, including most importantly JCPA and UJC. It is a model that requires us to better understand our particular Jewish values and history and then apply them in our work on issues of societal concern. It is a model that understands the essential role of community in providing meaning in the daily lives of people. It is built on the belief that there are many institutions that build community and that each, in its own way, serves those who want to build connections outside their narrow community. It assumes that all these different “gateway” institutions need viable programs for engaging in meaningful religious and social action activities. It also assumes that donors want to find ways to connect their Jewish philanthropy with broader interests in making the world a better place. It is based on the belief that JCRCs provide the ideal place in the community to initiate, coordinate, and facilitate the theoretical interests of community members with concrete ways of putting such theories into action.

Finally, it is based on the assumption that significant change only happens when we share a vision and then use it to organize the community one neighborhood, one synagogue, or one campus at a time. In that way, as Malcolm Gladwell (2000) reminds us so insightfully, we can change our social reality:

What must underlie successful social change in the end is a bedrock belief that change is possible, that people can radically transform their

behavior or beliefs in the face of the right impetus. This too contradicts some of the most ingrained assumptions we hold about each other and ourselves. We like to think of ourselves as autonomous and inner directed, that who we are and how we act is something permanently set by our genes and our temperament...but we are actually powerfully influenced by our surroundings, our immediate context, and the personalities of those around us...that's why social change is so volatile and so often inexplicable....Merely by manipulating the size of a group, we can improve its receptivity to new ideas.

In the end, Tipping Points are a reaffirmation of the potential for change and the power of intelligent action. Look at the world around you. It may seem like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push—in just the right place, it can be tipped.

Therein is our challenge and our opportunity. We, in community relations, possess the knowledge and skill to serve as “tipping points.” By understanding the unique network-connecting role we have, we can engage our community in the Jewish people’s age-old mission of making the world a better place.

#### REFERENCES

Bellah, Robert. (1985). *Habits of the heart*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.  
Combined Jewish Philanthropies. (1988, January). *Report of the Strategic Planning Committee*.  
Eisen, Arnold. (1995). Reimagining Jewish community in America. *The Reconstructionist*.

Fein, Leonard. (1994). *Smashing idols and other prescriptions for Jewish continuity*. New York: The Nathan Cummings Foundation.  
Fein, Leonard. (2001, February). *Building a just society: Do we still hear Isaiah's voice?* Washington DC: JCPA Plenum.  
Gladwell, Malcolm. (2000). *The tipping point*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.  
Gottesman, Sally. (2000). *A report of the UJC/JCPA partnership committee*. New York.  
Green, Arthur. (1992). *Speak my face, hear my words*. New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc.  
Heschel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua. (1965). *Between God and man*. New York: The Free Press.  
Raab, Earl. (1977, Winter). The end of Jewish community relations? *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*.  
Ruskay, John. (2000, Winter). Looking forward: Our three-pronged challenge and opportunity. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*.  
Sachs, Jonathan. (2000). *Letter in the scroll*. New York: The Free Press.  
Shrage, Barry. (1999). Seeing the glory of God in communities of justice. Speech given to Temple Emanuel Brotherhood.  
Shrage, Barry. (2001). *The fingerprints of God: The community, the federation, and the networks that bind us together*. Unpublished paper.  
Soloveitchik, Joseph B. (1965). *The lonely man of faith*. New York: Doubleday.  
Sternberg, Larry. (1994). Advocacy pronotes. Waltham, MA: Perlmutter Institute, Brandeis University.  
Tye, Larry. (2001). *Homelands: Portraits of the new Jewish diaspora*. New York: Henry Hold and Company.